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What Christians Believe.



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OSWEGO, N. Y.

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EXPLANATORY.

The sermons contained in this little book, were delivered to the congregation of the East Methodist Episcopal Church, Oswego, N. Y., during the fall and winter of 1878-9. They are now sent forth, possibly to a larger audience, with the prayerful hope that they may aid the reader to know and appreciate whatsoever things are true, and lovely, and of good report in the churches named, and may thus promote that "*charity which is the bond of perfectness.*"

I.

ROMAN CATHOLIC.

SERMON I.

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH.

And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church ; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven : and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. St. Matt. xvi : 18-19.

Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them ; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained. St. John, xx : 23.

Bigotry is the child of Ignorance. The bigot by his prejudices confesses lack of knowledge of the creed which he bitterly opposes. It is easy to construct a man of straw, and then pelt it with stones. Do you remember that when a child, and going along a strange lonely road, your imagination made each stump a blood-thirsty villain, in wait for the helpless passer-by, and every gleam from a phosphorescent rotting stick, an eye of goblin fierce? So do many good people look with frightened imagination upon the doctrines of all Churches except their own. Without doubt a large class of Protestants are

greatly alarmed when they reflect upon the progress of the Roman Catholic Church. The daylight of unprejudiced thought may chase away the frightful apparitions.

The series of sermons, of which this is the first, is given in the hope that they will increase in you the abounding grace of an intelligent christian charity. This particular discourse is not to make Romanists of you, but that you may know something of the creed and polity of a Church in whose ministrations so many millions of souls find comfort, and in the use of whose sacraments they expect to enter heaven.

The sermon is not designed to be controversial, because the day has gone by for religious controversy to avail in advancing the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Roman Catholics cannot convert Protestants to what they deem the only true faith, by means of the Inquisition, the fagot and the rack ; nor will Protestants bring Roman Catholics to embrace the doctrines taught by Luther, Wesley and Edwards, through invective and the cruel words of sanctified abuse. Neither will Orthodoxy induce intelligent scientific Scepticism to acknowledge and experience the power of vital godliness, by bitter denunciations of heresy

and unbelief. The christian world is seeing more clearly, that the Gospel means "Peace on earth, and good will toward men,"—toward all men. Therefore we will not try to convert men by calling them hard names. Let us put away such childish things.

I have read the words of Christ to Peter, given by St. Matthew, and his declaration to all the apostles, as recorded by St. John. I shall not undertake to say what the Protestant Churches understand these words to mean. We study this evening how the great body of Roman Catholic christians scattered over all the continents and many isles of the sea, most steadfastly receive them.

The Roman Catholic Church believes and teaches that when Christ said to Peter, "*Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church,*" he intended to invest Peter with the Primacy ; that is he gave him a dignity and authority over all the other apostles.

The present Pope, Leo XIII, is the legitimate successor of St. Peter through a long but unbroken line of Popes or Pontiffs who have occupied successively the Papal throne at Rome, the Holy City.

The Catechism of the Council of Trent, sets forth that the Pope is the Vicar of Jesus Christ. He is the Father and Governor of all the faithful ; of Cardinals, Archbishops, Bishops and Priests. He is the

Supreme Head of the Church on earth. His dignity and jurisdiction are not based on human constitutions, but emanate from God himself.

Not only is this jurisdiction over the Church given to the Pope, there has also been guaranteed to him the grace of Infallibility :—“ *Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven.*”

However it is not meant that the Pope is infallible as a man, a scholar, a priest, a temporal prince, a judge, or as a legislator.

“ He is neither incapable of sin in his life and conduct, in his political views, his relations with princes, nor even in the government of the Church ; but he is solely and exclusively infallible when in his quality of Supreme Doctor of the Church, he pronounces a decision in matter of faith or morals that ought to be accepted and held as obligatory by all the people.”

It is, therefore, an *official* or *doctrinal*, not a *personal* Infallibility.

This is not the popular Protestant notion of Infallibility, but it is the Catholic idea of it, and every Church ought to be allowed to define its own dogmas.

It being established to the satisfaction of all devout Romanists, that there is an infallible source, whence comes religious instruction, a mighty effect

is given to the truths and doctrines promulgated by the authority of the Church. Whoever hears, has only to obey. There is no appeal to the individual judgment and conscience.

The foundation being secure, the Church abides in strength. I venture the assertion, that careful study of the doctrines of this large body of christians, will show that its entire system of dogma and ecclesiastical polity is a logical outgrowth of the germinal ideas which Roman Catholics find in the text.

A growth, the Romanist would say, in the same sense as the oak is the product of an acorn ; that is, in the acorn existed, though in miniature, every feature that appears in the tree. The Protestant says, a growth, not by *evolution* but by *accretion* ; as a snow-ball grows when rolled about.

And must it not be acknowledged that if the power of the "keys" is what the Roman Catholic christian believes it to be, and if this power was granted only to St. Peter and his successors, the Popes, then all we Protestants are heretics,—schismatics,—recreant to the true faith, and ought at once to re-enter the fold. So the Romanist believes, and we shall not seek to-night to disabuse his mind of what we as sincerely hold to be his error.

Having examined the foundation stones of the Roman Catholic Temple, let us walk round about the structure, telling the towers thereof, and marking well her bulwarks.

We shall find much in the creed of this Church that is of exceeding "good report." For as to no nation or clime God has given all the beneficent products of nature, so to no people or Church is there allowed a monopoly of his truth. There is truth everywhere ; in Romanism and in Protestantism, with Jew and with Gentile, in America and in Africa. Let us therefore have charity.

An intelligent Roman Catholic believes that "all the doctrines of Christianity, in which the faithful are to be instructed, are derived from the Word of God, which includes scripture and tradition." (*Catechism of the Council of Trent.*) Here is one essential difference between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism.

The Protestant accepts only the Sacred Scriptures as authority in teaching doctrines ; and regards traditions as having no force except incidentally to confirm the Scriptures. The Romanist on the other hand, considers traditions as adopted by the Councils of the Church, of equal value with the Bible in the preservation and propagation of the truth. This

conclusion logically follows the premise assumed, namely, that the Church has been given in its organic capacity, the power to preserve and explain the Scriptures. Thus believing it can give, by a General Council, all the authority of a "*Thus saith the Lord,*" to whatever traditions it may approve.

The Roman Catholic Church has classified the truths revealed by the Almighty in four divisions, to wit:—The Apostles' Creed, The Sacraments, The Ten Commandments, and The Lord's Prayer.

The Creed contains all that can be known of God, the creation and government of the world, the redemption of man, the reward of the good, and the punishment of the wicked.

The Seven Sacraments are the signs and instruments of grace.

The Decalogue is the law given upon Mt. Sinai, and written on tables of stone.

The Lord's Prayer embraces all the christian's desires, hopes and prayers. (*v. Preface to Catechism of the Council of Trent.*)

Let us acquaint ourselves with these particulars. There is first the Creed.

By this is meant the Apostles' Creed, which is an early summary of the christian faith, believed by the Catholic to have been formulated by the Apostles

themselves. Protestants think it of later origin. It is accepted as authority by all christians—Greek, Roman Catholic, and the Protestant Churches, except possibly some of the Unitarian branches.

How many of you can recite the Apostles' Creed?

Perhaps I had better give it to you. It is brief, but full of truth. You will hardly find elsewhere such a body of religious instruction crystallized in so few words.

“ I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost ; born of the Virgin Mary ; suffered under Pontius Pilate ; was crucified, dead, and buried ; he descended into hell ; the third day he rose from the dead ; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty ; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost ; the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints ; the forgiveness of sins ; the resurrection of the body ; and the life everlasting. Amen.”

There is an ancient tradition accepted by many writers of the Church of Rome, that this creed was settled upon by the Apostles, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, just previously to their departure from Jerusalem, to preach the Gospel in all the regions round about. Each of the Apostles is

believed to have contributed at least one sentence. By this means unity in doctrine was secured among those whom they invited to accept the christian faith.

This creed has been developed and explained by several General Councils, and by some of the fathers ; and we may reckon among the symbols of the Roman Catholic Church, the Apostles' Creed, the Athanasian Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Creed of Pope Pius IV, contained in the decrees of the Council of Trent.

We shall find occasion to refer to these again in defining the doctrines of the Church.

A good Catholic is a firm believer in the reality and efficacy of the Sacraments. These are seven in number :—Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Orders, and Matrimony. Any one of these administered to a believer confers upon him grace which he cannot otherwise receive.

The word " Sacrament " primarily means a pledge. The oath taken by a soldier promising military service, might be called a sacrament. This, however, is not the meaning of the word as used by the Latin Fathers. The Church signifies by the term, " A sacred thing which lies concealed ; " a Mystery.

A sacrament is also a *sign*. A word is a sign for an idea. " A sign, besides what it presents to the

senses, is a medium through which we arrive at the knowledge of something else ; from a footstep, for instance, which we see traced on the ground, we instantly infer that some one whose footstep appears has passed."

The Sacrament of Baptism is a sign or witness that by the Holy Spirit, the soul of a sinner is cleansed from all the stains and guilt of sin, and enriched with the gift of justification.

But a sacrament is something more than such a sign or witness. The Church teaches it is not only that, but by divine appointment the sacrament has power to effect or produce what is "wrought in the soul by the invisible operation of the Holy Ghost." Sacraments have been instituted because of the inability of the human mind to attain knowledge except by the medium of sensible objects ; as pledges of God's purpose to redeem his promises ; to convey the sovereign remedies of the Gospel directly to the soul ; to distinguish the faithful by certain marks or symbols ; that the soul, in their use, may openly confess its faith ; and by their simplicity to subdue the pride of the human heart.

Baptism as we have seen, is at once the witness that the sins of the candidate are removed,—and it is the means whereby they are removed.

All the sacraments are to be revered with the most profound veneration, and received with ardent devotion, for in them "*exists the power of the Omnipotent.*"

They are not all of equal necessity. The most important are Baptism, Penance, and the Eucharist. Baptism is necessary in order to enter heaven. Even infants are not saved without baptism.

In an adult candidate for Baptism it is required that he be repentant, and have a fixed determination to refrain from future sins ; then he is baptised and taught that his original sin, and his actual guilt, however enormous, are remitted ; his soul is enriched with spiritual gifts ; the virtues are increased ; he is united to Christ, is sealed with a character that can never be effaced from the soul, and the portals of heaven which sin had closed, are opened to him again.

Confirmation is the second sacrament. "This sacrament is called Confirmation, because if no obstacle is opposed to its efficacy, the person who receives it, when anointed with the sacred chrism, by the hand of the Bishop, who accompanies the unction with these words: 'I sign thee with the sign of the cross, and confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of

the Holy Ghost,' is confirmed in strength by receiving new virtue, and becomes a perfect soldier of Christ."

Through Baptism a man is born to newness of life ; by Confirmation he grows to full maturity.

"In Baptism the christian is enlisted into the service, in Confirmation he is equipped for battle ; at the baptismal font the Holy Ghost imparts the plenitude of innocence, in Confirmation the perfection of grace ; in Baptism we are cleansed ; in Confirmation we are strengthened ; regeneration saves by its own efficacy those who receive Baptism in peace, Confirmation arms and prepares for the conflict." (*Pope Melchiades.*)

Only the Bishops are permitted to administer this sacrament ; Priests and Deacons may not presume to exercise the high privilege.

Confirmation is not absolutely necessary to salvation. Yet if possible it ought to be received by the faithful disciple.

"Of all the sacred mysteries bequeathed to us by our Lord," says the Catechism of the Council of Trent, "there is none that can be compared to the most holy Sacrament of the Eucharist ; for no crime, therefore, is there reserved by God a more terrible vengeance than for the sacrilegious abuse of this

adorable Sacrament, which is replete with holiness itself."

The word "*Eucharist*" may mean "the thanksgiving." The Sacrament is sometimes called "The Sacrifice," the "Sacrament of Peace and Charity," the "Communion," the "Supper," and "The Viaticum ;" but it is more especially called by this last term when administered to a dying person, it being thought the soul is thus furnished with spiritual food for its long journey.

The Eucharist differs from the other sacraments in two particulars : First, *they* are really Sacraments only when their administration has been completed ; the *Eucharist* is a sacrament as soon as the bread and wine have been consecrated by the priest. And secondly, in baptism and confirmation for instance, the water and oil are not changed in nature, whereas in the Eucharist "that which before consecration was bread and wine, becomes after consecration, really and substantially the body and blood of our Lord." Mark ! "*Really and substantially,*" not *chemically*, for the "accidents" of the bread and wine remain. They have the same appearance, taste and smell as before, yet really they have been invisibly and miraculously changed into the body and blood of Christ.

Now lest I should convey a wrong idea of the doctrine of the Church upon this subject, I quote from the catechism already named :

“ The Catholic Church, then, firmly believes and openly professes that in this sacrament, the words of consecration accomplish three things ; first, that the true and real body of Christ, the same that was born of the Virgin and is now seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven, is rendered present in the Holy Eucharist ; secondly, that however repugnant it may seem to the dictate of the senses, no substance of the elements remains in the sacrament ; and thirdly, the substance of the bread and wine is so changed into the body and blood of our Lord, that they altogether cease to be the substance of bread and wine. This is of course a mystery, and one that is not to be curiously inquired into.”

This sacrament, like the others, imparts grace to the soul, *if the communicant be in a proper condition to receive it*, just as daily food repairs the wastes of the bodily system. It also remits the venial or trifling sins which have been committed. It must be received at least once a year ; for the “ Church has decreed that whoever neglects to approach the Holy Communion once a year, at Easter, subjects himself to sentence of excommunication.”

Now if the body and blood of our Lord are truly and literally present in the Eucharist, there is great honor and dignity due the elements ; hence the "Worship of the Host ;" hence the withholding of the cup from the laity, in order to avoid the accident of spilling the wine—or blood, which would be deemed a great indignity to the Savior.

The Eucharist is not only a sacrament—it is also a true sacrifice. In this character it is known as the *Mass*.

"Our Lord himself at his last supper, offered to his Eternal Father, his precious body and blood under the appearance of bread and wine."

The Mass is the same sacrifice as that of the cross. It is more than a sacrifice of praise ; it is a sacrifice of propitiation.—"So acceptable to God is the sweet odour of this sacrifice, that through its oblation he pardons our sins, bestowing on us the gifts of grace and of repentance."

The difference between High Mass and Low Mass is simply that in the High Mass the ritual is sung or chanted,—in Low Mass, it is *said* by the priest.

The Mass, as often as it is celebrated, is a sacrifice which benefits not only the priest and the communicant ; it avails for all the faithful, living or dead, whose sins have not been fully expiated. Hence the

celebration of the Mass in behalf of the pious dead.

In such light does the devout Roman Catholic regard the Eucharistic feast—nor must he hold in mental reservation, one jot or tittle of implicit faith in the doctrine of his Church concerning it.

To doubt, is to be damned.

The sacrament of which I will next speak, is that of Penance.

“For those who fall into sin after Baptism, the Sacrament of Penance is as necessary to salvation, as is Baptism for those who have not already been baptized.”

Let it be remembered that in many passages of the Bible, where our Authorized Version has the word *repentance*, the Douay Version (which is in use by Roman Catholics,) has in the corresponding places the term *penance*.

Various meanings are given to this word *penance*.

It is used sometimes to express a change of mind, without any reference to the causes or motives producing such change.

It signifies the sorrow which a sinner feels, on account of the certainty of punishment for his transgressions.

It is also the godly grief of the soul, not because it fears the vengeance of a just God, but that grief

which springs from a sense of the enormity of the guilt of sins committed against a Holy and Merciful God.

This last is the signification in which Penance is held to be a Sacrament.

It is precisely what we Protestants consider to be the spiritual meaning of true repentance ; that "godly sorrow for sin," which itself needeth not to be repented of.

Penance has been constituted a sacrament, in order that all uncertainty as to the pardon of sin might be removed. The penitent by his words and actions declares he has turned away from his sins,—and the solemn "I ABSOLVE THEE," from the lips of the priest, is the unimpeachable evidence of the removal of his guilt.—"*Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them.*"

But the true Catholic must remember that genuine Penance includes sorrow for past sins, a purpose to sin no more, restitution wherever possible, repairing the injury done to another as far as may be, and *confession to the priest.*

Confession must be made at least once a year.

These requisites having been fulfilled, the penitent believes that "*Penance becomes the channel through*

which the blood of Christ flows into the soul, washing away all the sins committed after baptism."

St. James in his Epistle, writes: "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." Chap. v: 14-15.

In these verses the Roman Catholic Church finds authority for the Sacrament of Extreme Unction.

When the devout soul is in fear of death nigh at hand, and is alarmed by the thought of soon standing before the judgment seat of God, the priest is summoned to administer this comforting sacrament.

Its form is a solemn prayer, repeated as the priest successively touches with the anointing oil, the eyes, ears, nose, lips, hands and feet of the sick person: to wit: "By this Holy Unction, and through his Great Mercy, may God indulge (or remit, as some say,) thee whatever sins thou hast committed by sight, hearing, smell, speech, hands and feet."

As the grace of the baptismal sacrament removes original sin, and Penance remits mortal sins committed after baptism, so Extreme Unction secures the remission of venial or trifling sins, quiets the

fear of the soul, fortifies against the assaults of Satan in the dying hour, and enables one to await with patience the coming of the Lord.

This sacrament is of exceeding "good report" among our Catholic fellow-christians. Doubtless hosts of dying men and women have been enabled by the comfortable assurance of this sacrament, to say with exultant faith, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

The reality and efficacy of the sacraments already described being devoutly acknowledged by the Catholic, it is easy for him to believe the authority to administer them has been duly given by our Lord to certain officers of his Church, and that only such persons may, without sacrilege, minister in holy things. Therefore the Sacrament of Orders is of great dignity in the mind of the faithful Romanist. Indeed the perpetuity and success of the Church depends upon the right understanding and maintenance of Holy Orders.

Now this sacrament is not for all, but for those only who have been "Called of God as Aaron was," and a candidate receiving it in any one of its degrees is invested with invisible grace, whereby he is enabled to discharge the duties of his office.

The number of Orders is seven, and they are com-

prised in two classes, to wit: Minor Orders, such as Porter, Reader, Exorcist, and Acolyte; Holy Orders, as Sub-Deacon, Deacon, and Priest.

The work of the Porter corresponds somewhat to that of a Sexton in a Protestant Church; the Reader reads the Sacred Scriptures, and sometimes gives instruction therefrom; the Exorcist invokes the name of the Lord in behalf of those possessed by unclean spirits; the Acolyte serves those who minister at the Altar.

To a Sub-Deacon it belongs to prepare the Altar-linen, the sacred vessels, and the bread and wine for the Mass. He has also authority to read the Epistles in the congregation.

The Deacon aids the Priest in administering the sacraments, and at the Sacrifice of the Mass. He may also expound the Gospel to the people.

A Priest administers the Sacraments of the Church, celebrates the Mass, and preaches the Gospel.

“The Order of Priesthood, although essentially one, has different degrees of dignity,” which refer rather to the jurisdiction of the incumbents as rulers of the Church, than to any difference in the possession of sacramental grace.

The ascending scale of such authority is,—Priest,

Bishop, Archbishop, Patriarch, and the Sovereign Pontiff, or Pope.

The laity of the Roman Catholic Church render most joyful and hearty obedience to these their spiritual rulers—in the Kingdom of Christ upon earth.

Last but not least of the Sacraments is that of Marriage. The opinion of this Church concerning the sanctity and obligations of marriage is evident in placing it among the seven Sacred Mysteries of grace.

The Catholic finds warrant for so doing in the words of the Apostle :

“ For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh. This is a great sacrament, but I speak in Christ, and in the Church.”—(Douay Version.)

The indissolubility of the marriage bond is most emphatically insisted upon by the standards of the Church, because that fact ensures the stability of the family, and the right education of children in the religion and worship of the True God.

The influence of such instruction concerning marriage, is most salutary in these days of loose ideas of it, and worse practice by many who for trivial and

unlawful reasons seek the dissolution of the marriage bond.

Must not we acknowledge that in this country at least, the Roman Catholic Church aims to promote true morality, and succeeds in holding its membership to faithful performance of the duties of married life?

The records of the courts show that but few of her sons and daughters seek the unlawful liberty of release from the conjugal bond.

Shall we not say "God-speed" to any organization that so sincerely enforces the mandate of the Almighty: "*What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*"

There has now been given you a panoramic view of the chief articles of faith accepted by Roman Catholics.

I think careful examination of the Catechism of the Council of Trent respecting the Decalogue and the Lord's Prayer, will find but little that a Protestant cannot believe.

We should not of course agree with our brethren that the honor and invocation of Saints can be justified, even though such honor be entirely distinct from the supreme homage due the Almighty.

Nor would we, believing that "*There is one Medi-*

ator between God and men," invoke their prayers in our behalf. Yet as Protestants we ought to know that the Roman Catholic Church declares the "Saints" are invoked simply to obtain their intercession for "us ; that the proper use of images is to instruct in "the Bible History, and revive recollections of the "events which they record, that thus excited to contemplate heavenly things we may more ardently "adore and love God ; and that images of the Saints "are placed in churches not only to be honored, but "that admonished by their example we may emulate "their virtues."

Most of the Protestant Churches believe that death is the end of probation. The doctrine of Purgatory cannot, therefore, be received by us.

To reach heaven, the soul must be saved from sin in this life.

The Roman Catholic idea of sin and the future world differs somewhat from ours. It is briefly that every sin, however small, deserves punishment ; but some small sins do not deserve eternal punishment. Very few persons depart this life so pure as to be free from a debt to God's justice ; they must, therefore, suffer for those sins in Purgatory until the guilt of these venial transgressions is purified. These souls in Purgatory may be aided by the prayers of

friends on earth, and by the efficacy of alms and Masses offered in their behalf.

The devout Romanist believes this doctrine as heartily as we reject it.

Now I doubt not if, in the spirit of criticism, we should longer study the wonderfully developed system of dogmas which this Church steadfastly believes, there might be found much that a Protestant congregation could not commend.

But can we not praise the spirit of obedience and the fervent devotion to their Church, manifested by this people?

Perhaps more than other christians they implicitly accept their faith. The individual judgment and conscience are subordinated to the will of the Church.

There is much that is good in this denomination, and we think much also that is grievously wrong and obstructive to the progress of the truth. There is honest fear in the minds of many wise men—arising from its traditional policy and attitude toward civil governments.

Let us remember that any Church, Protestant or Roman, is dangerous to a free government when it lends its influence to a political party, as such.

It is to be feared that this Church is losing somewhat its power to regulate the lives of the younger

portion of its communion, especially those of Irish parentage.

For is it not true that young Irishmen furnish a large proportion of the names which make up the Police reports, and fill the criminal records? These have departed from the straight way in which the true Catholic is taught by his Church to go. It is not the fault of the Creed.

My hearers, one word more. Are you a Roman Catholic? Love your Church; receive its Sacraments, that they may lead you to love and serve the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls.

Are you a Protestant? Illustrate the faith that is in thee, by a well ordered Christian life. And upon you all, may the blessing rest, of Him who is the Great Head of the Church in all lands and of every name. Amen.

II.

PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL.

SERMON II.

THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

As my father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. St. John, xx. 21, 22.

Hold fast the form of sound words. II. Timothy, i. 13.

The Protestant Episcopal Church establishes its claim to be a valid and Apostolic Christian Church, somewhat on this wise.

It is well known that when the Apostles went forth after the day of Pentecost preaching the gospel of the kingdom of Christ, they traveled into many and distant lands, and great success attended the Word. In various parts of Asia, even as far east as India, in Northern Africa, and in Western Europe, Churches were planted, and converts multiplied.

It is certain that St. Paul preached the gospel in Greece, in Rome the Capital City of the Empire, and there is good evidence that he spent some time in Spain witnessing for the truth, after his release from an imprisonment of "two whole years" at Rome.

It is assumed with good reason, that the Church of England was established in the Apostolic age.

It is no great stretch of historic credulity to believe as many churchmen do, that St. Paul was the first Apostle to the British Isle, having crossed over from Spain during his long residence there.

Ecclesiastical history proves to the satisfaction of churchmen the existence in the first three centuries of three Orders in the ministry, designated Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, and this was while the Church remained comparatively pure.

The British Church had doubtless been modeled after the universal plan, having a three-fold ministry—the Word, and the Sacraments.

For several centuries the Churches in Rome, Britain, Gaul, Spain, Africa, Eastern Europe, and Asia, were accustomed to meet in councils, each Church having its own Bishop, who was equal in rank and authority with all other Bishops.

It was not until about the seventh century that the Bishop of Rome succeeded in getting himself acknowledged by the Western churches as Primate of the entire Christian World.

The Church in Greece, the Oriental Churches, together with those of Northeastern Africa, did not admit his Primacy, and they have remained to this

day independent of Rome, forming that part of the Universal Communion known as the Greek Church. Europe from Austria westward, bowed to the authority of the Imperial Bishop, and the Latin Church covered Western Europe, including Britain.

The British Church was brought under the authority of the Romish power in this way: In 596, A. D., the Church at Rome sent Augustine and other Missionaries, to convert the Saxons who had invaded Britain to Christianity. Very likely it was not aware that a fully developed Christian Church had been in existence upon the island almost as long as the Church of Rome itself. However, the Saxons were converted, and Rome usurped the privileges and government of the Church in Britain. Thus says Bishop Randall:

“It is evident that the Church was established in England, and, from a source entirely independent of Rome, nearly five hundred years before the Romish Church sent thither its emissaries.”

It is furthermore shown that during the darkness of the Middle Ages, the Pope's supremacy was continually resisted by some of the purest and strongest of the English Bishops, and the errors of Rome were constantly denounced, while the time was most

earnestly prayed for when the Ancient British Church could throw off the papal yoke.

In the sixteenth century that glad day dawned upon England. The Reformation swept over the continent. Luther and his coadjutors were compelled to leave the Roman Catholic Church and rejecting its errors, they also threw away the divinely ordained ministry, with its three-fold orders, and established essentially a new Church.

The British Church on the other hand renounced the authority of the Pope, which she believed never of right, to have been upon her, purged herself of the superstitions and errors imposed by the Romish hierarchy, and asserted her original independence.

“The English Church, by the help of her divine Head, reformed herself. She did not thereby lose her identity, much less her Apostolic existence.”—(Bishop Randall.)

“The errors of the Church were not the Church herself; and in quitting them she did not quit herself, any more than a man changes his face when he washes it, or loses his identity when he recovers from a disease. The English Church after the Reformation was as much the English Church, as Naaman was Naaman after he had washed away his leprosy in the river Jordan.”

The foregoing statements are, of course, a mere outline of the argument by which the Catholic and Apostolic Constitution of the Church of England is shown to the satisfaction of the intelligent churchman. The full argument would require the marshaling of a host of references, dates, authorities and historic facts.

The identity of the Church of England with the Ancient British Church being acknowledged, and its orders thereby proven to be valid and truly Apostolic, it can be shown that the Protestant Episcopal Church may lay just claim to the possession of the Apostolic succession.

The connecting link between the Church in America and the Church in England is as strong as any part of the golden chain of divine authority and unction uniting the three-fold ministry, the Word, the Sacraments and the Church.

In the early colonial era of American history, members of the English Communion were not numerous, and those who still cherished in their new homes, the creed and ritual of their mother Church, suffered persecution therefor.

In Massachusetts, the Puritans denied to Churchmen certain political privileges, and it was made a

penal offence to celebrate Christmas with religious services.

The war of the Revolution suspended the relation which the English Church sustained to her missions in America.

But in the year 1794, Rev. Samuel Seabury was elected Bishop by the Clergy in Connecticut, and soon afterwards was consecrated by three Scotch Bishops.

Shortly after other Bishops were consecrated by Prelates in England, and the Church was established in the United States, having the three Orders in its Ministry,—Bishops, Priests, and Deacons,—the Sacraments could be lawfully administered and the Word of God faithfully preached.

The Bishops aforementioned have consecrated other Bishops, these Bishops have ordained Presbyters, Elders, or Priests, and Deacons, and thus down to the present time. So that my friends, Rev. Dr. Burrows and Rev. Mr. Parker, may consistently claim that they have been ordained and so authorized to dispense the word and administer the sacraments by a Bishop who had been consecrated by another Bishop, and so on, following the stream of successional grace up through the ravines of American, English, and early British history, to the time of

St. Paul or some other Apostle, who consecrated the first Bishop of Britain.

The succession is therefore unbroken from the Apostles to Bishop Huntington of this Episcopal diocese.

Now a Protestant Episcopal churchman most firmly believes that the validity and effectiveness of ministerial orders depend upon the Apostolic succession. The minister must have been ordained by a duly qualified Bishop. Hence, while the clergy of this Church give to us Dissenters all due social courtesy, and the christian amenities, they cannot consistently, nor in good conscience, recognize our orders, and admit us to their pulpits.

And though some of them privately may not put much stress upon the dogma of Apostolic succession, still Church order forbids such ministerial exchanges, and every man should be loyal to the doctrines and discipline of his Church.

The Episcopalian, as is evident from what has already been said, believes in a three-fold ministry. He is firm in the faith that such distinctions among the clergy were the order in the primitive Church, and that for fifteen centuries from the time of the Apostles there was no other ministry in the Christian Church.

If it be charged against the Episcopal Church that by its adherence to the dogma of Apostolic succession it thereby disfellowships other Churches which do not hold the same doctrine of orders, the answer is : If this doctrine be true, we are justified in conforming to it, and are compelled in loyalty to God, to maintain order in the Church.

Practically this Church says of the other Churches, as Christ said of the man who cast out devils in His name, while he followed not the disciples,—“*Forbid him not ; for he that is not against us is for us.*”

And indeed the Episcopal Church could ill afford to have other Churches less prosperous, since at least one half of its communicants come from the Denominations.

Perhaps some of you who have carefully followed me in this brief historic unfolding of the Episcopal Church, have learned some things you did not know. Remember them. “Buy the truth, and sell it not.”

Will it not be of interest now, to inquire concerning the general creed and doctrines of this Church, and especially when we note the fact that its comparative growth in the last two decades has been greater than that of any other Christian Church in America ?

You will remember that I said in the discourse

upon the Roman Catholic Church, referring to the Apostles' Creed, that it is accepted by all christians, with few exceptions, as an authoritative epitome of the fundamental doctrines of the Holy Book.

The Protestant Episcopal Church heartily receives it. I think there can be no regular public service in that Church, in which this very ancient symbol of the faith of the soul in the power and blessedness of Christianity, is not unitedly repeated.

It must be acknowledged even by those who are not stated worshippers in this communion, that there is a solemnity, dignity and beauty in such an united pouring forth from hundreds of lips and hearts of the simple but comprehensive "I believe."

I could wish that other Communion would practice the commendable custom.

The Episcopal Church does not believe that the creed was drawn up by the Apostles themselves; but that the greater part of it was derived from the very days of the Apostles there is evidence in the testimonies of the most ancient writers.

In the Epistles of St. Ignatius, who was Bishop of Antioch in the latter part of the first century, and who had probably known personally many of the Apostles, most of its articles may be found. St. Ambrose of Alexandria, who flourished the first part

of the third century, gives the entire creed. Its antiquity is thus evident.

I do not need to revert to each of its articles, or try to explain in what sense they are to be understood.

The Nicene Creed as it stands in the prayer book, and which may be said in place of the Apostles' Creed, sufficiently unfolds its meaning, and, therefore, I will repeat it to you :

“ I believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, And of all things visible and invisible ; And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, Begotten of his Father before all worlds : God of God. Light of Light, very God of very God, Begotten not made, Being of one substance with the Father : By whom all things were made ; Who, for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary. And was made man. And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried ; And the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures ; And ascended into heaven, And sitteth on the right hand of the Father. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead ; Whose kingdom shall have no end.

“ And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life, Who proceedeth from the Father and

the Son, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, Who spake by the Prophets. And I believe one Catholic and Apostolic Church.

“ I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins ; And I look for the Resurrection of the dead, And the Life of the world to come. Amen.”

Surely there is not in my congregation this evening a devout disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, whether Romanist, Churchman, or Dissenter, who cannot say with heartiest, happiest faith : “ *Amen.*”

Perhaps you noticed there is one Article of the Apostles' Creed that is omitted in the Nicene Creed, viz : “ He descended into hell.”

In the Episcopal service, when the Apostles' Creed is recited, it is permitted instead of saying, “He descended into hell,” to say, “ He went into the place of departed spirits.” Such is thought to be the meaning of the words ; and the Nicene creed indeed implies the same truth in the article “ He suffered,” that is, died, “and was buried.”

In order to give you in as brief a manner as possible some acquaintance with the more fully developed faith of the Protestant Episcopal Church, I will review the “ Articles of Religion,” which are an abridgment or modification of the Articles of Religion of the Church of England.

They are thirty-nine in number, and were adopted by the bishops, clergy and laity of the Church in the United States, in convention, September 12th, 1801.

The first five of the Articles are an exposition of the creed concerning the Trinity, the Son of God, the descent of Christ into hell, His resurrection, and the Holy Ghost.

I need not give them, as they state what all orthodox Christians believe,—Protestant and Romanist ; except that as we have already seen, the “ descent into hell ” means only the departure of Christ to the invisible world, but not as the Romanist believes in order to liberate from suffering those who were held in painful captivity and to impart to them the fruit of his pain. For says the Roman Catholic, all who had died since Adam had been detained in purgatory ; the good in “ Abraham’s bosom,” the bad in Tophet. Christ descended to open the gates of heaven to those who had been freed from the stains of sin, by purgatorial fires.

The Protestant Episcopal faith rejects this idea.

Article VI. declares the sufficiency of Holy Scripture for salvation, and by implication rejects traditions. The names of the canonical books are given as they appear in our common version, the Apocry-

pha being omitted, which is not done by the Roman Catholic Church.

Article VII. recites that the Mosaic ceremonial and ritual law is not obligatory, but that the moral law of the Old Testament is still in force.

In Article VIII. the Apostles' and the Nicene creeds are endorsed.

Then follow articles setting forth original sin, or the corruption of our nature ; that we are inclined to evil, and by nature deserving of God's wrath and damnation ; that unaided by the grace of God we cannot turn away from our sins, the will being enslaved by sin ; that we can be justified or pardoned only through faith in Jesus Christ ; that good works are evidence of faith, as a tree is known by its fruit ; that we cannot merit God's favor ; that after we have done all, we are unprofitable servants ; that Christ alone is without sin ; also that after we have received the Holy Ghost, " we may depart from grace given, and fall into sin, and by the grace of God rise again, amend our lives, and being truly repentant, receive forgiveness."

Article XVII. treats of the doctrine of Predestination and Election, and is somewhat ambiguous, or at least so comprehensive in its statements, that it is susceptible of being interpreted as Calvinistic, or as

Arminian, according to the predilection of the person studying it.

But whether the Article is Calvinistic or not, it is certain the greater part of the clergy and laity of the Church of England and of the Protestant Episcopal Church are thoroughly Arminian in their views of the subject of election.

Succeeding articles declare the truth that only by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ can men be saved, and not by their sincerity, or faithfulness to the light of nature ; that the Church is a congregation of faithful men, in which the Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments administered according to Christ's ordinance ; that the Church has no authority to enforce the belief of anything that is contrary to God's Word. The Romish doctrines of Purgatory, pardons, worshiping and adoration of the Saints are declared to be grounded on no warranty of Scripture, but are repugnant to the Word of God. No man is to preach and administer the sacraments, unless he has been lawfully sent by men who have authority thus to act ; public prayer and the sacraments are to be observed and ministered in the tongue of the people, contrary to the custom of the Roman Catholic Church which everywhere uses the Latin language.

In Article XXX. the sacraments are defined as

badges or tokens of a christian's profession, as well as sure witnesses and effectual signs of grace and of God's good will toward us, by which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our faith in him.

There are only two sacraments, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord.

Confirmation, Penance, Orders, Extreme Unction, and Matrimony do not have the nature of sacraments.

Baptism is a sign or mark of difference, whereby christian men are distinguished from others. It is also a sign of the new birth, and of our adoption into the family of God.

Infant baptism is to be retained in the Church, as most agreeable with the institution of Christ.

The Lord's Supper is a sign of fraternal christian love, and a sacrament of our redemption by the death of Christ. Those who worthily and in faith receive it—partake in an heavenly and spiritual manner of the body and blood of Christ.

The dogma of Trans-substantiation is rejected. The Eucharist is not a sacrifice, as is taught by the Romish Church in the Mass. Such dogmas are declared to be blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits. The laity are to take the cup as well as the bread. The celibacy of the clergy is not enjoined.

Excommunicated persons may be received back into the Church after due penitence.

Forms of worship in the Church may be varied according to the diversity of countries, times and manners, but no person should violate the traditions and ceremonies of the Church which are not contrary to the Bible.

The concluding articles relate to the consecration of Bishops and the Ordination of Ministers, the denial of any temporal or civil power to the Church; denial of a community of worldly goods, and admission of the lawfulness of civil oaths administered by a magistrate.

Assent to all the articles is not enjoined upon every person who comes into the Church, but those who receive authority to teach in her communion must believe them.

The foregoing outline of the doctrines of the Episcopal Church indicates that many of the articles have the nature of a protest against some error or false dogma of the Roman Catholic Church.

We thus see the significance of the organic name *Protestant* Episcopal Church. While claiming to have a valid Episcopacy traceable to the Apostles, this Church magnifies her character as a permanent and effectual PROTEST against the senseless dogmas

and soul-destroying errors of the Church of Rome. The Articles of Religion beside being an antidote to the poison of false doctrine, embrace most of the grand truths accepted by all Protestantism, and they are not, therefore, the peculiar faith of the Episcopal Church.

The Church, however, in making them the standard of her belief, occupies a position strongly fortified by the Word of God, and proves herself not only PROTESTANT but also SCRIPTURAL. For see; the Episcopal Church plainly teaches the doctrines of human depravity, not *total* depravity, the necessity of a change of heart, as shown in Article X. and in many prayers: "*O God make clean our hearts;*" "*Create in us new and contrite hearts,*" and numerous other petitions like these. Also the doctrine of the Trinity, justification by faith,—in short as regards the fundamental truths of God's Word it is evident the Episcopal Church has not departed from the "*faith once delivered to the saints.*" Therefore, side by side press along down the path of time, toward the eternal land, Churchman and Presbyterian, Baptist and Methodist, each and all clinging to the inspired Book as the only charter of human liberty, and only guide in matters of religious faith. And we find, especially we Methodists and Arminians,

but little reason for argument and strife with our Episcopal friends and fellow-christians. "*Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*"

Very likely most of my non-Episcopal hearers are quite ready to admit that this Church may consistently claim to have a genuine Apostolic Ministry, and may be truly "*Protestant*" as to the superstitions of Rome,—while at the same time its modes of worship are so peculiar and so formal, as to need some reasonable explanation or justification. And you are saying :—" Please tell us by what arguments the Episcopal Church proves the lawfulness of the use of a Liturgy or forms of prayer, and a ritual in the public service."

Doubtless many christians are conscientiously opposed to "forms." They say "*The letter killeth.*" They do not believe there can be any sincerity in the repetition of the same prayers Sabbath after Sabbath, year following year. It seems so heartless,—a mockery of God.

I know some christians who will not say even the Lord's Prayer in unison with the congregation. Let us respect their conscientiousness and at the same time pray that their judgments may be enlightened.

In finding the reasons for the use of a Liturgy in

the Episcopal Church, I am somewhat indebted to a lecture by Bishop Randall, of Colorado, in answer to the question, "WHY I AM A CHURCHMAN." From the same source I have gleaned other suggestions already given in this sermon.

It is claimed by the Church that the use of a Liturgy in divine service is authorized by the Scriptures ; for it can be shown therefrom that since the erection of the Tabernacle forms have been used in prayer and blessing.

"When an Israelite brought to the priest '*the first fruits,*' he was required to repeat a form of words."

The careful student of the Jewish tabernacle and temple worship will find overwhelming proof of the continued use of a Liturgy.

It is not disputed that Christ himself joined with the Jews in the service of the Temple and the Synagogue.

"What the stated public prayers were in the time of our Lord it is now impossible exactly to ascertain ; it is probable that many of the eighteen prayers which are said to have been collected by Rabbi Gamaliel, the master of St. Paul, were then in use.

We know it was customary for the more eminent doctors of the Jews to compose forms of short prayers, which they delivered to their scholars.

John the Baptist gave his disciples such a form ; and Jesus Christ, at the request of his disciples, gave them that most perfect model emphatically termed *The Lord's Prayer*.—(Horne's Introduction, Vol. III., p. 296.)

As further evidence that our Lord did not intend to discountenance the use of a Liturgy, it can be shown that all the petitions of that wonderfully comprehensive prayer may be found in different portions of the Jewish Liturgy.

Remember also that our Savior in the garden prayed three times, "using the same words." On the Cross he prayed, and the prayer was simply quotations from well-known Psalms.

It is asserted that "for fifteen hundred years, Liturgies were everywhere used in the Church of Christ," and so was kept the injunction of the Apostle, "*Hold fast the form of sound words.*" Furthermore the devout worshiper by the forms of a Liturgy, declares, and with much truth,—that all religious services are formal. The minister leading in extemporaneous prayer, uses his own words as a form for the congregation, in which they are supposed to address their prayer to God. And the *form* does not vary much from January to December, as a study of the prayers of any pastor in his pulpit will show.

It is also certain that the most appropriate and expressive sentences in extemporaneous prayers are those taken from the Bible, and especially from the Psalms of David. Therefore the most effectual prayer is one composed of language not our own except as it becomes such when repeated sincerely and in faith.

Another reason why Episcopalians cling to the Prayer Book, with its unchanging Liturgy and Confessions, Creeds and Prayers, is that it has become an anchor to hold the faith of the worshiper.

“Every cardinal doctrine of the Gospel is regularly brought to the attention of the congregation throughout the year, so that if they are not thoroughly instructed in every part of the Gospel system of salvation, it is their own fault.”—(Bishop Randall.)

The simplicity, chasteness and beauty of the language of the Book of Common Prayer, minister to the esthetic, the moral, and the spiritual instincts of our nature.

But in commending the Prayer Book I can do no better than to quote from the lecture to which reference has already been made.

“Of the excellence of the English Prayer Book, of which our own is almost an exact copy, Dr. Adam Clarke, the distinguished Methodist, thus speaks :

‘ It is the greatest effort of the reformation, next to the translation of the Scriptures into the English language. . . . As a form of devotion it has no equal in any part of the Universal Church of God. . . . Next to the Bible, it is the Book of my understanding, and of my heart.’

Robert Hall, the eloquent English Baptist, thus speaks of it: “ I believe that the evangelical purity of its sentiments, the chastened fervor of its devotions, and the majestic simplicity of its language have combined to place it in the very first rank of uninspired compositions.”

Dr. Doddridge, the eminent commentator, thus speaks of it: “ The language is so plain as to be level to the capacity of the meanest, and yet the sense is so noble as to raise the capacity of the greatest.”

My hearers,—whether you are Romanist, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, or of any other name,—I think you believe in, and bless God for the existence, and the success of the Protestant Episcopal Church in teaching sinners the way of truth and life.

Its creed we all believe is derived from the word of God. Its form of worship tends to fasten that creed in the mind of every worshiper in its sanctuaries.

Hundreds and thousands of rejoicing saints have gone up to heaven from the homes where its service and labor is loved, and thousands more are on the way.

I have not preached this sermon to induce any one to unite with the Episcopal Church, but to show you, as best I might, the catholicity of its doctrines, and the beauty of its Ritual.

If providential circumstances, and knowledge of its excellencies, leads one to make it his spiritual home, well might he say—“*How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel.*” “*The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; Yea, I have a goodly heritage.*”

Let us who are not of its communion, bless God, that its inflexible devotion to the fundamental truths of the Bible, is one of the mightiest bulwarks against modern infidelity. For he who has from childhood repeated at every service the Apostles' Creed, will have received enough of its truth to forbid his wandering into the mazes of liberalism, and the darkness of unbelief.

Let us be glad, that it baptizes the children, receives them into the fold by confirmation, and trains them in the “nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

Finally let us rejoice for what this, and all other

Churches have done to bring men to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And God grant that we may all become members of the "*Glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, nor any such thing;*" and be admitted to the fellowship of the Church triumphant, which is "*without fault before the throne of God.*"

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore. Amen.

III.

PRESBYTERIAN.

SERMON III.

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

For whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. Romans, viii. 29, 30.

That ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints. Jude, 3.

I have found it difficult to obtain exact historical statements concerning the beginning of the system of church government, known as Presbyterianism. For, be it remembered, strictly speaking, Presbyterianism is an ecclesiastical polity that is not necessarily allied to any particular system of christian doctrine.

The Presbyterial mode of government has been in existence among some of the Churches in Europe since the Reformation, and there is evidence that it prevailed even previously to that time in various portions of the Church universal.

Presbyterians themselves believe that the government of the Apostolic Church was after this order,

and they find testimony in the writings of the Fathers, "abundant and clear, that, the Church, in general, continued to enjoy the primitive Presbyterian form of government for at least two centuries," until the time when the evils of ecclesiasticism began to be engrafted upon Christianity, corrupting both the doctrines and the government of the Church.

You will be aided in understanding this system of church government, by a statement of the belief of all Presbyterians as to the ministry of the Church. We have already learned that the Roman Catholic and the Protestant Episcopal Churches firmly hold the doctrine of three orders in the ministry: Bishops, the successors of the Apostles; Priests or Elders, and Deacons.

Presbyterians believe the Apostles left no successors other than those officers of the Church variously called Bishops, Presbyters, Elders, Pastors or Teachers. There is only one office in the ministry and only one grade of that office. All the words used as titles of such officer are synonymous.

Rev. Mr. Stebbins and Rev. Dr. Tully, Presbyterian pastors in this city, may as rightly be called Bishops, as the highest dignitaries of any Church having an Episcopacy.

In addition to this one office in the ministry, the

New Testament recognizes or provides for other officers in the Church, such as Deacons, who are appointed by the Church and solemnly ordained by prayer and the laying of hands. Their work is to "attend to the temporal concerns of the Church, especially to superintend her benevolent operations." There are also in each Church "Ruling Elders," who are chosen by the people for the purpose of exercising government and discipline in conjunction with the Pastor.

The local government of the Church is by the Session, which comprises the Pastor, the Ruling Elders and the Deacons.

A Presbytery includes the Ministers and one Ruling Elder from each society within a certain district.

A Synod is a larger convention similarly composed.

The General Assembly is the highest judicatory of the Church, and consists of Pastors and Ruling Elders elected by each Presbytery.

Now since the words elder and presbyter literally mean the same, it will appear from the brief outline just made of the government of the Church, that its name "Presbyterian" is well chosen.

Let us now, going up the stream of time, glance at the history of Presbyterianism as a Church.

Presbyterianism in America is older than the Republic. Patriotic Presbyterians enthusiastically boast that it was a mighty agency, through its truly elective and representative system of church government, in implanting the ideas of civil freedom and a republican government, in the minds of the early colonists.

Says Dr. Wm. D. Smith : "The secret of our success as a Republic is, that we have a government, whose principles are the republicanism of the Bible, which is only another name for Presbyterianism. To Presbyterianism, then, as derived from the Bible, we are indebted for our excellent form of government."

Secular historians have also acknowledged that there is a natural and strong affinity between Presbyterianism and republican forms of government.

Mr. Bancroft says : "Calvinism is gradual republicanism." He also declares that the Monarchs of England in the seventeenth century, feared Presbyterianism as republicanism.

In one volume of his History of the United States, he writes : "The first voice publicly raised in America to dissolve all connection with Great Britain, came not from the Puritans of New England, the Dutch of New York, nor the planters of Virginia, but from the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians."

The Presbyterians of Mecklenburgh Co., North Carolina, in May, 1775 declared themselves independent of the Government of Great Britain.

That the early Presbyterian Colonists should have been Republican in sentiment here in their new homes, was not strange, because it was "for having endeavored to infuse those principles into the governments of Europe," that many of them had been persecuted and obliged to flee to America.

Persecution does not usually *cure* the persecuted of their faith.

The Puritans of England were, long after their rise, unquestionably Presbyterian. But Presbyterianism proper, dates its origin from what is known as the Westminster Assembly, which convened about the middle of the seventeenth century.

King Charles I. and Parliament were fiercely opposing each other. Puritanism had become strong. Many of the clergy of the English Church were non-conformists. The civil war began. "The Scotch, with an army of twenty thousand marched to the assistance of Parliament," and tried to persuade that body to establish Presbyterianism.

An Assembly was called "of learned and godly divines, and others, to be consulted with by Parliament for settling the government and liturgy of the

Church of England, and clearing the doctrine of the Church from false aspersions and interpretations.”

The real purpose was to bring the Church into closer agreement with the Church of Scotland and the reformed Church on the continent.

The Assembly met. It was composed of one hundred and twenty divines, six deputies from Scotland, ten English Peers, and twenty members of the House of Commons. There were a few churchmen among them who immediately withdrew as soon as the King declared the Assembly illegal.

Those who remained being mostly Presbyterian in opinion, began their work.

They believed the Church of England had become corrupt and was no better than the Romish Church.

“The Assembly had before it two great tasks ; namely, to provide first a scheme of doctrine and next a scheme of government for the national Church, which was to rise upon the ruins of the Episcopal Church of England.”

After four years' labor the Confession of Faith was completed ; and one and a half years thereafter, the Shorter and the Larger Catechisms were adopted, and all, by authority of Parliament, were published for public use, and an ordinance established forbidding the use of the Book of Common Prayer.

“These are still the standards of faith and discipline in all the orthodox Presbyterian Churches in the world.”

A few years later Parliament passed an act by which a Presbyterian Church superseded the Church of England as the national establishment. The act, however, finally failed of execution because of dissensions and divisions that arose between the Presbyterians and Independents.

With the Restoration after Cromwell, came the re-establishment of the English Church, and the “Act of Conformity” made Presbyterianism dependent on the voluntary offerings of its adherents. This was its greatest good fortune, and Presbyterians of that day might well have sung :—

“Behind a frowning providence

“He hides a smiling face.”

Presbyterianism, we have seen, is a distinct system of church government; it is likewise a peculiar body of christian doctrine. The theology of Presbyterianism is known as Calvinism. The various Presbyterian organizations agree substantially in accepting the chief features of that system of faith.

In the anatomical museums one may find skeletons of different species of quadrupeds; for instance, of the horse, ox, sheep, deer, dog, and cat.

Now while there are great dissimilarities between these, as in the length or size of certain bones, there is at the same time a wonderful resemblance in the skeletons. A person not skilled in physiology and anatomy, might find it hard to tell which skeleton belonged to a dog and which to a sheep.

Careful study of the skeletons would show that they have something in common ; certain relations of bone to bone appear in each specimen.

We are searching among the dry bones : the theologies, confessions, creeds and politics of different christian Churches. We find they all have creeds and confessions, and believe these are as necessary to the existence, life and growth of these organizations, as the bony framework is essential to physical being.

Governments must have constitutions, States must have organic and statute law, and Churches must have creeds.

As he alone is an intelligent American citizen, and able to appreciate the government under which he lives, who knows something of the history and spirit of the other governments of the world, so only that christian is an intelligent, loyal and appreciative Romanist, Churchman, Presbyterian or Methodist,

who understands the doctrines and spirit of Churches other than his own.

And in the measure of his acquaintance with the various doctrines and systems of church life and government, will be the ability to do effective work for his own Church. For ignorance will engender bigotry, and a bigot is a person whose social and religious influence is best represented mathematically by a *minus* quantity.

Moreover, knowledge of what other christians believe ought, and doubtless will, make a member of any religious organization more satisfied with his own faith, and hence more earnest in endeavoring to build up his own Church.

My study of the creed and polity of the Roman Catholic Church has had the effect to increase my respect for that venerable Church, containing so much truth in its theology, and at the same time knowledge of what I deem great errors and superstitions, makes me the more devoutly thankful that I am not a Romanist, but a Protestant.

May we not find profit in learning that the principles of religious, soul-saving faith are not all hidden away in the theological museum of any one Church? Knowing this, that most blessed grace, and most comely development of character, of which

the Apostle writes,—“ *Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is Charity,*” shall abound in all our lives.

I alluded to the similarity in structure of the skeletons of species of quadrupeds, which is revealed by the study of comparative anatomy.

We have also found in the examination of the framework of creed and polity in the Roman Catholic and Episcopal Churches, certain truths held in common, which truths are essentially fundamental to Christianity.

There can be no doubt a search through the Presbyterian museum will discover bone corresponding to bone, and similarity with these other faiths that will astonish one who has been heretofore unaware of the fact.

To be certain of this, let us inquire briefly—What do Presbyterians believe?

Now who can answer the question more correctly, than Presbyterians themselves?

Therefore I shall not ask Romanists, Churchmen, Baptists or Methodists even to tell us, but rather shall I seek for light in the Presbyterian standards, and listen to testimony from orthodox Presbyterian lips.

The Confession of Faith, together with the shorter

and larger Catechisms, constructed by the Westminster Assembly, are the acknowledged and adopted standards of doctrine in all Presbyterian Churches.

These Catechisms, and Confession have very much in common with the faith of other orthodox Protestant Churches. Let me name some of the truths in which all agree.

The Scriptures are a sufficient and only rule of all that man is to believe concerning God, and our duty to God; Scripture must be interpreted by Scripture, not by the traditions of the Fathers, the judgment of scholars, or the decisions of ecclesiastical councils; every man must interpret the Bible for himself. Likewise concerning the Being and Attributes of God; the doctrine of the Trinity; the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ; the depravity of human nature; necessity of an atonement by a divine Savior; pardon of sin and justification by faith alone.

Also that there are only two Sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and these are efficacious means of grace only when rightly used, their efficacy depending entirely upon the power of the Holy Ghost, and the faith of the recipient. They are outward visible signs, signifying an inward spiritual grace.

An intelligent Presbyterian can as devoutly as a Roman Catholic or Episcopalian, and without mental

reservation, repeat the Apostles' Creed the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and all other things which a christian ought to know and believe for his soul's health.

I think a Presbyterian could adopt all the thirty nine Articles of the Protestant Episcopal Church, except perhaps those referring to the ordination of ministers.

He would of course so interpret the article about election as to make it emphatically and unequivocally Calvinistic.

This sentence suggests to us what is most specially characteristic in the doctrines of the Presbyterian Church, to wit: the cluster of what Presbyterians believe to be Bible truths, known as Calvinism.

The Presbyterian Church is pre-eminently Calvinistic in its authorized statements of christian doctrine. Many of the laity and a few of its clergymen, may not in their private faith accept these dogmas, but by just so much as they depart from Calvinism, they depart from true Presbyterianism. Arminian Presbyterianism is self-evident nonsense.

Let us see what the Church teaches in her standards.

It is difficult for an Arminian to state fairly in his own language just what is taught concerning election

and predestination by the Presbyterian and other Calvinistic creeds ; therefore I will give the words of the Confession and the Catechism, with comments thereupon by eminent Presbyterian divines, premising with the statement, that underlying the system of Calvinistic dogma, is the proposition :— God is in himself, and in all his purposes and actions relating to his creatures, *Absolutely Sovereign*.

“ Presbyterians hold that God eternally foreknows all events that come to pass as certainly future, because he has predetermined them to be so.”— (A. A. Hodge, D. D.)

Hence we have what are called the “ decrees.”

Hear what the Confession saith :

“ God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass ; so as thereby neither is God the author of sin ; nor is violence offered to the will of the creature, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.

By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others fore-ordained to everlasting death. The angels and men, thus predestinated and fore-ordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed ; and their number is so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.

Those of mankind who are thus predestinated, God hath chosen by his own good pleasure, out of his mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith and good works in them, unto everlasting glory.”

These persons are “redeemed by Christ, and effectually called unto faith in Christ by His Spirit working in due season ; are justified, adopted, sanctified and kept by his power through faith unto salvation.”

“The rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice.”

In the exact words of the Confession, “Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.”

Now if it be objected to this doctrine that it is derogatory to the justice and love of God, to say he ordains the damnation of the non-elect, and does not redeem them, in the same sense, as he does the elect, and call them by an effectual call, it is replied:

“Since all men came into the world under the just wrath and curse of God, that is, since original sin truly deserves punishment, it follows that the

salvation of men is *absolutely* and *solely of grace*; that God was free in consistency with the infinite perfections of his nature, to save none, few, many or all, according to the sovereign good pleasure of his will."—(Dr. A. A. Hodge.)

If it be said that the doctrine of election as taught by Presbyterian Calvinists, substantially destroys the moral freedom of the human will, it is answered :

"We do not teach that God ever forces the wills of free agents, or induces them to act in any manner inconsistent with their freedom."

It is maintained that God's purpose in predetermining all events of every kind, is not inconsistent with the freedom of free agents, for it is absurd to suppose that he who made man a free agent cannot govern him without destroying his freedom ;" and the "scriptures teach both the freedom and responsibility of man, and the predetermination by God of all events, even the sinful acts of men."—(Hodge.)

Very likely many of my hearers may not see the logic of the quotations, and will not by reason of them accept this theory of salvation, still must not we Arminians admit that the faithful preaching of Calvinism does not tend to make men indifferent to religious duties, as it most certainly would do, if they

saw in it that *fatalism* charged against it by unintelligent controversialists.

Let us rejoice that this magnifying of God's free grace in the redemption, effectual calling and certain salvation of the elect, is a mighty comfort to millions of souls, who are "*working out their own salvation with fear and trembling,*" believing that "*God worketh in them both to will and to do of his own good pleasure.*"

It is a fact, that a very large portion of the Church here on earth are devout, conscientious, zealous believers in the system of doctrines of grace called Calvinism. That faith is inwrought within the fibres of the spiritual being.

Their children are instructed therein, as they learn the Catechism so faithfully taught in every well regulated Presbyterian home, and Sunday school.

We are bound to respect the conscientiousness of christians, who thus openly and consistently maintain what they deem "*the faith once delivered to the saints.*"

Nowhere among the Churches are the ministers more firmly held to personal belief and faithful declaration of the acknowledged creed of their Church.

A Presbyterian pulpit is not long permitted to preach doctrines contrary to the standards of the denomination.

And this is consistent. The officers of an army must know the principles of military science, and keep the rules of war.

The legislators of the people should be true to the constitution. The pulpit must be loyal to the Church that gives it authority to instruct the people.

True a large number of communicants and a few clergymen, of the Presbyterian Church, do not believe in Calvinism; some of them received their religious and doctrinal education in families belonging to Churches holding the Arminian faith, and they never can become conscientious Calvinists. Their home is in the Presbyterian Church, on account of reasons other than doctrinal.

Neither my Arminian hearer, can you and I be Calvinists. We should always be thinking if God, as Dr. Hodge says, "was free, in consistency with the infinite perfections of his nature, to save none, few, many or all, according to the sovereign good pleasure of his will," why did he not elect all?

And the devout Calvinist does not fail to make prompt answer in the words of Scripture: "*Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?*"

And so my friends better than controversy will it

be for us who are Arminians, simply to say that one is no less a christian because of being a devout and zealous Calvinist. Mr. Froude, I think, has made mention of the salutary influence of Calvinism upon national life ; let us confess how much it has done in molding the christian characters of men and women who have rendered illustrious service in the vineyard of the Lord.

The doctrine of predestination and election, involves that of the Final Perseverance of the Saints ; a dogma most full of comfort to the devout believer thereof ; a faith which assures him that, " though if left to himself every believer would instantly and certainly fall, and although most believers do experience temporary seasons of backsliding, yet God, by the exercise of his grace in their hearts, in pursuance of the terms of his eternal covenant with his Son, infallibly prevents even the weakest saint from final apostasy."

And so the trembling christian journeys on toward heaven, with a lighter heart, believing that nothing can separate him from the love of God.

You have heard briefly of the doctrines in which the Presbyterian Church differs most widely from some other branches of the christian faith.

Concerning the means of grace, the sacraments,

Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the just penalty due to sin, future rewards and punishments, endless suffering, and eternal happiness, it does not differ from its sister Protestant orthodox denominations.

No Liturgy is in use in the Presbyterian Church. The simple, unostentatious, extemporaneous prayer, is believed to be the most acceptable way by which to approach the throne of the heavenly grace.

The Ministry of the Word holds the chief place in the public service.

You who are Presbyterians, be glad and rejoice in God that it is your good fortune to have been reared under the influence of Presbyterianism ; to have been taught its solid theology ; to have become proficient in its habits of religious propriety ; and to hold fast its doctrines with a pure heart and an intelligent conscience. Let me exhort you to hold fast the faith you believe "once delivered to the saints," and "*work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*" Amen.

IV.
BAPTIST.

SERMON IV.

THE BAPTIST CHURCH.

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.. St. Mark, xvi. 15, 16.

A peculiar people zealous of good works. Titus ii. 14.

A few days ago, down in the State of Rhode Island, an incident occurred which very opportunely serves me for an introduction to this discourse upon the Baptist Church.

Near the city of Providence, or perhaps quite within its limits appears the shaly gneissoid rock which so abundantly crops out and forms the iron-bound coast of a large part of New England.

Down into a mass of that rock a drill was sunk by repeated blows from strong arms, until a place was found for the dull and inert powder, whose power, unloosed by a spark of fire, should rend the fetters which held the block of stone in its native bed.

The charge was placed; the wires were laid to form the electric circuit, the key was touched, the

smothered rumbling of the riven rock told of the resistless power which tore it from its birth-place, and the quarryman rejoiced that the work had been successfully done.

That shapeless fragment will be lifted from its place, the sharp chisel will give it regular form, its sides will be polished, inscriptions will be engraved upon it, and in a park close by, those who pass, citizens or strangers, will read what is written thereon, and be reminded of some of the events which attended the planting of the colony of Rhode Island, and the founding of the city of Providence.

For on the spot whence that rock has been lifted up and borne away to the park, stepped from his Indian Canoe with five companions on a day in June, 1636, ROGER WILLIAMS.

And who was Roger Williams? And why lift from its resting place for innumerable past ages that mass of rock?

A bit of history will tell, and at the same time will show to whom the American people owe a large debt of gratitude, for his courageous advocacy and vindication of the liberty of conscience, and the right to worship God according to the dictates of the individual judgment.

Are you aware that the Puritans who settled Mas-

sachusetts had not arisen to the sublime conception of absolute freedom in religion ; and that there ought to be no persecution of a Church or an individual because of non-conformity to the dominant faith ?

Some of the Puritans had been active participants in the revolution in England, when King James I. was beheaded, the House of Lords abolished, and all political distinctions were levelled.

They had hoped and labored to establish a Commonwealth that should be permanent.

But failing in this, they were compelled by the Restoration to flee their native land, to find a place where they might enjoy political rights and freedom to worship God.

They brought with them to America the idea of POPULAR SOVEREIGNTY.

As Bancroft sententiously says—" Puritanism was Religion struggling for the People."

Here was the grand attempt to found a State in which no distinction of birth, rank, social caste, or wealth should be allowed to increase the political rights of one, or decrease the political privileges of another. There should be in Massachusetts, no King, no Lords, no Aristocracy—nothing but the *people*. Magistrates and Governors must be elected by the people, not appointed by the Crown.

The Puritans hated political inequality and oppression.

Yet strange as it may seem to us, they had not also seen the inconsistency and gross impiety of ecclesiastical or religious bigotry and intolerance. They still maintained the monstrous heresy, that "the civil magistrate should be subordinate to the authority of religion."

The Puritans held this principle no less firmly than the Roman Catholics. The will of God must be the criterion of justice.

But who should interpret that will? The Romanist answered, "the Infallible Pontiff." The Puritans said, "the majority of the Church."

And so the Church used the law and secured positive enactments against what it deemed irreligion and heresies.

"To say that men ought to have liberty of conscience is impious ignorance."

"Religion admits of no eccentric notions." "God forbid our love for the truth should be grown so cold, that we should tolerate errors."

These were sentiments of the leaders among the Puritans, and they were the producing cause of their intolerant cruelty in persecuting those who would not believe the prevailing faith.

And so, Episcopalians were forbidden to celebrate some of the special services of their Church ; a system of church government was established for the congregations, which effectually excluded the Presbyterian modes of discipline.

And as Bancroft in his history, from which this account is condensed, says, they sought "to control opinion by positive statutes, to substitute the terrors of law, for convincing argument."

"A particular form of worship had become a part of the civil establishment, and irreligion (that is any religion different from Congregational Puritanism) was now to be punished as a civil offense."

Quakerism had arisen in England. The Quakers were people who were "impatient of the slow progress of the reformation, the tardy advances of intellectual liberty."

Some of them came to Massachusetts. The Puritans deemed their principles subversive of religion and social order. Quakerism was declared to be heresy. Their books were burned ; they were imprisoned for awhile, and then sent back to England.

That was the reception given to the first two Quakers who came to Massachusetts, and these two were women.

“In one year,” says Bancroft, “eight others were sent back as soon as they had landed.”

Some of these banished Quakers returned, but only to be whipped, imprisoned and again sent away. Whoever entertained “any of this accursed sect, were to be fined.”

“A Quaker after the first conviction, was to lose one ear ; after the second, the other ; after the third, to have the tongue bored with a red-hot iron.”

But very naturally the Quakers continued to come. The surest and quickest way to give vigor and victory to any truth, or any error, even, is by evil means to oppose and persecute its adherents.

The blood of its martyrs is the perpetual seed of any faith, or of any heresy.

The penalties already established not proving effectual, the “General Court ordered the Quakers banished on pain of death,” if they refused to go.

Thus the Puritans, some of whom had fled from England because their own lives were endangered by bigoted persecution, became themselves persecutors even unto death. So strange a thing is human nature ; so entirely inconsistent with some of its best instincts.

In obedience to the cruel law of banishment, four persons, three men and one woman, suffered death.

But they died maintaining their faith, and one of them almost with his last words asked his deluded persecutor : " What do you gain by taking Quakers' lives ? For the last man that ye put to death, here are five come in his room. If ye have power to take my life, God can raise up ten of his servants in my stead."

The result proved the dying Quaker a true prophet.

It is not to be supposed that measures so cruel could receive the unanimous approbation of the people. There was a gleam of light amid the thick darkness of such intolerant religious zeal.

Among the early colonists was a young man a little more than thirty years of age. He had been a " godly and zealous minister of the Church of England." He became a Puritan, and was a fugitive from English persecution. " But his wrongs had not clouded his understanding." He discovered the principle that would remedy religious intolerance and persecution. He announced his discovery under the simple proposition of the *sanctity of conscience*.

Do you ask what the sanctity of conscience meant ?

This. That every law compelling men to attend divine service should be repealed ; that there should

be no taxes to support a State Church ; that every form of religious faith should be equally protected ; that the mosque of the Mohammedan, the altar of the fire-worshiper, the cathedral of the Romanist, the synagogue of the Jew, and the meeting house of the Puritan, should have over them the protection of the government. Presbyterian, Congregationalist, Churchman, Romanist, Pagan, Quaker, every man, whatever his religious belief, must have equal political rights with all other men, and be amenable to the civil law, only for violations of its ordinances.

Said this young man, " The doctrine of persecution for cause of conscience is most evidently and lamentably contrary to the doctrine of Christ Jesus." " No one should be bound to worship, or maintain a worship, against his own consent."

The civil magistrate must have no spiritual power. Civil law must not invade the domain of conscience. The magistrates could not endure such doctrine. It seemed to them subversive of all religious order. To tolerate heresy was treason to the State. This young man must not be allowed to preach such destructive notions.

" The ministers got together and declared any one worthy of banishment, who should obstinately assert

‘ that the civil magistrate might not intermeddle even to stop a church from apostasy and heresy.’ ”

The Church at Salem, where he had preached, renounced the doctrines of liberty of conscience which at first they had willingly received from him, and “ even his wife, under a delusive plea of duty, was for a season influenced to disturb the tranquillity of his home by her reproaches.” But the young man declared himself not subject to the spiritual jurisdiction of the Church or State. He declared himself ready to be bound and banished, and to die in New England, “ rather than renounce the opinions which had dawned upon his mind in the clearness of light.”

Very soon the General Court pronounced against him the sentence of exile. He succeeded in obtaining permission to remain in the Colony till spring. The Court soon regretted their leniency, for “ his opinions were contagious ;” “ and it was resolved to remove him to England in a ship just ready to sail.” The officers repaired to his house, but he was not to be found. He had left his home, in the severity of mid-winter, and gone forth into the wilderness. “ For fourteen weeks he was sorely tost in a bitter season, not knowing what bread or bed did mean.” Often in the stormy night, he had neither fire, nor food, nor

company ; “ often he wandered without a guide, and had no house but a hollow tree.” But though he had found no justice among the Puritans, his fellow white men, and servants of Jesus Christ, he was not without friends in his place of banishment. The Indians whose cause and rights he had ever defended against the injustice of the white settlers, welcomed him, and he became an Apostle of Christianity to them, and “ through his long life their friend and benefactor.”

After a few months, having been joined by five companions, in company with them, in a frail Indian canoe, they embarked on Narragansett Bay to find somewhere on its shores a place to found a new Colony, which “ might be a shelter for persons distressed for conscience.”

Tradition has marked the spot where they landed, the first inhabited nook of Rhode Island.

To express his unbroken confidence in the mercies of God, which had brought him to this spot, “ he called the place Providence ; a name which that goodly city will ever retain,” a perpetual monument to the firm and merciful piety of the noble man, Roger Williams, the hero of this little story, the man in whose honor that mass of unshapen rock, blasted from its native bed, will take form under the chisel of the sculptor and testify of the gratitude of

the little State, to him who laid the foundations of its institutions in liberty of conscience, and equality of political rights.

But what has all this to do with the subject of the sermon to-night? *Much every way!* Roger Williams was a Baptist; and "he was the first person in modern Christendom to assert in its plenitude the doctrine of the liberty of conscience."

Well may every true Baptist rejoice that the founder of their Church in America has bequeathed to the denomination a legacy like this.

The Baptist Churches rapidly increased in number as colonists continued to flock to Rhode Island the only place where perfect religious freedom could be enjoyed.

These Churches by their influence accomplished a work whose fruits we enjoy to-day. That we have no State Church with its manifold evils, is due not to the Congregational Puritans of Massachusetts, the Dutch of New York, the Roman Catholics of Maryland, the Presbyterians of North Carolina, but to the Baptists of Rhode Island.

All honor to brave godly Roger Williams, and the Baptist denomination of the little colony. Had this Church never done for the world anything beside giving to it, as it did, a "truth that is destined to

establish a perpetual religious peace," its divine mission would have been grandly demonstrated.

"If Copernicus is held in perpetual reverence, because on his death bed he published to the world that the sun is the center of our system ; if the name of Kepler is preserved in the annals of human excellence for his sagacity in detecting the laws of planetary motion ; if the genius of Newton has been almost adored for dissecting a ray of light, and weighing heavenly bodies as in a balance, let there be for the name of Roger Williams at least some humble place among those who have advanced moral science, and made themselves the benefactors of mankind."—(Bancroft.)

But you are already asking, had the Baptist Church a history prior to the settlement of Rhode Island? Let us see. It is a matter of historic controversy as yet, whether there were any Baptists in Great Britain before the Sixteenth century.

In 1535 there were persons called Anabaptists (from a word meaning to baptize again,) alluding to the custom of rebaptizing those who had received the sacrament by affusion or sprinkling ; and sixteen of these were ordered put to death by Henry VIII. They were bitterly persecuted during the whole of that century. Cromwell in the Seventeenth century protected them, but they were persecuted under Charles II. and

James II. This persecution drove Roger Williams to America. In 1640, there were seven Baptist congregations in London, and about forty on the island. Over on the continent, in Germany and Piedmont it is thought by some Baptist historians, there were Baptists existing under different names, down to the Reformation. In the middle of the Sixteenth century there were many Anabaptists in Germany and Holland, known as Mennonites, from Menno, who organized the sect. And these christians were remarkable for their devotion to the principles of their order. Romanists and Protestants, even Luther himself, joined hands in persecuting them unto death. Some zealous historians believe the succession of Baptist Churches can be traced from the days of the Apostles ; but the claim is not generally maintained by the denomination. They do believe, however, that the principles characteristic of Baptist Churches to-day, are the principles of the Bible ; the truths preached by John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, and the Apostles.

In common with other Evangelical Churches our Baptist brethren believe and teach those truths which are commonly considered fundamental to the christian faith.

A walk through the Baptist theological museum,

will discover to us the similarity of the dry bones to the skeletons which other Churches have mounted to show forth what truth they hold as vital to religious life.

This large christian body does not regard it necessary to have a carefully formulated creed, together with definite articles of religion, which shall be held as authoritative in determining whether one is a true Baptist or not. They accept no authority other than the Bible. They believe it to be the true center, and standard of christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds and opinions should be tried.

The system of government in this Church, precludes the possibility of a creed, obligatory upon all Baptist Churches. In church government, each separate society is entirely independent of all other Churches, persons and bodies, civil or ecclesiastical, and is governed by its own members.

Baptists, therefore, hold, that Churches governed by Popes, Bishops, Synods, Presbyteries, Conferences, "or in any other way than by their own members, directly and exclusively, are not constituted on the model of the primitive Churches, nor governed by the gospel rule."

But they do not disfellowship other Churches

simply because of differing with them in government. They do not maintain that one form of government is necessarily essential. They prefer the congregational mode, believing it the primitive mode. They seek no controversy with Churches that choose another plan of government.

They believe there are but two orders of office in the Christian Church, namely pastors, variously called in the New Testament, "bishop," "overseer," "presbyter" or "elder," and deacons, who are appointed to look after the poor, to have charge of certain society meetings in the absence of the pastor, and to assist in the communion service. Sister Baptist Churches, of like faith and practice, usually unite in County, State, and National associations, but these bodies have no legislative or executive authority. Their only power is the aggregation of christian influence thus secured. Every Baptist Church is a pure democracy, in which the majority rule. The Baptist denomination in general, is a collection of separate democracies, each one of which is a church government in itself. Still while there is no association with power to formulate a creed or confession, there is quite general agreement among these christians concerning the faith.

Among the Northern Baptist societies there is in

general use a form called the "New Hampshire Confession of Faith;" while the "Philadelphia Confession of Faith" is in use in the South. They differ only slightly,—the same truths being embodied in each. They are adopted by individual Churches only for the sake of convenience, and because they sententiously outline Bible doctrines.

The theology finding most general belief among Baptists is a somewhat modified Calvinism. At least the article on election might possibly be accepted by an Arminian. I give it: "We believe the Scriptures teach that election is the eternal purpose of God, according to which he graciously regenerates, sanctifies and saves sinners; that being perfectly consistent with the free agency of man, it comprehends all the means in connection with the end; that it is a most glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, being infinitely free, wise, holy and unchangeable; that it utterly excludes boasting, and promotes humility, love, prayer, praise, trust in God, and active imitation of his free mercy; that it encourages the use of means in the highest degree; that it may be ascertained by its effects in all who truly believe the Gospel; that it is the foundation of Christian assurance; and that to ascertain it with regard to ourselves demands and deserves the utmost diligence."

A thorough Calvinist can see the full-fledged theory between the lines of this article ; and very likely the majority of Baptist pulpits in defining the doctrine would do so after the manner of the strictest advocates of sovereign grace. Nevertheless, the words above given are considerably milder than those of the Westminster Confession on the same subject.

There are some features in the faith and practice of our Baptist brethren, which entitle them to be known as "a peculiar people." Were it otherwise what reason for the existence of this Church as a distinct christian organization ?

You are doubtless aware in what these peculiarities consist. But see how satisfactorily, to themselves at least, Baptists show that they are nothing less than vital principles of Bible faith, which they are not at liberty to ignore,—nor to countenance their violation by other christians and Churches.

The denomination believes the scriptures teach that a visible Church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers.

Before a person can be received into the Church, he must give satisfactory evidence of having been "born again," converted. None are members of the invisible Church, who are not God's children by adoption.

After conversion a person is eligible to receive christian baptism. And baptism is the immersion of the believer in water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. It is believed that immersion shows forth in a solemn and beautiful emblem, our faith in the crucified, buried and risen Savior, with its effect in our death to sin, and resurrection to a new life. We are buried with Christ in baptism.

Baptism is a prerequisite to the privileges of Church relationship, especially the Lord's Supper, in which sacrament the members of the Church, by the sacred use of bread and wine, commemorate together the dying love of Christ.

With this view of the import of baptism, it is evident the *mode* is an essential element of the sacrament.

The Baptist believes that in order to be baptism it must be performed by immersion. Sprinkling, or pouring, is not baptism, for to *baptize*, they say, means to *immerse*.

Appeal is made to the meaning of the Greek word, translated in our version "baptize," and to its Latin equivalents, a large array of classical authorities, being called as witnesses, that it can only mean to *immerse*.

They also relate the circumstances of its early celebration, its significance as a "burial with Christ," the practice of the Apostolic Church, and numberless admissions of the point in issue, by scholars of other Churches.

Now summarize a little. A Baptist maintains that only believers are to be baptized; hence infant baptism is nonsense; baptism is baptism only by immersion; baptized believers only have any right to the Lord's Supper.

How can they, therefore, consistently invite or allow me, having only been sprinkled, and that in infancy, to commune with them? Do they keep me away from the Lord's table, or is it I who am responsible for neglect of this sacrament, having refused to comply with the essential conditions of its reception?

Close Communion, as it is generally termed, is the only logical and consistent course for Baptist Churches to pursue. If their premises are right, the conclusion is surely just as it should be.

But says one, whose prejudices are all awake: Why will they not commune with those believers in other Churches, who have been immersed?

For the consistent reason that such persons have violated the New Testament order in communing

with unbaptized believers, and are therefore not considered in good standing. They do not feel willing to countenance such laxity in christian discipline.

Let us honor them for stern steadfastness in maintaining what they believe to be a Bible precept, rather than criticise and censure, because they differ with us concerning the intent and mode of christian baptism, and believe it to be an irrepealable condition of coming to the Lord's Supper.

It is said that many Baptist Churches in England, and a few in the United States, are allowing these restrictions to be ignored, but such cases are exceptional, and departures from Baptist order.

We must not suppose, these christians are peculiar in one or two items of faith alone. The text is especially applicable to them, if read in another sense: "*A peculiar people zealous of good works.*" That is a blessed peculiarity. Would it were so general, that it might cease to be a *peculiarity*.

Are we not warranted in inferring from our brief study of Baptist history that to this denomination is attributable, the peculiarity named.

Zealous in all their history for freedom of conscience ; supporters in every land of social and political order ; it is the only Church of all the older denominations, Romanist, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Congrega-

tional or Lutheran, that has never persecuted a single individual on account of his religious or political opinions.

Surely this is one of their joys to-day, that they have believed, and have let believe.

I must not forget to mention the unwearied zeal of this Church in missionary labor. It has grandly heeded the cry: "Come over into Macedonia and help us," and to the ends of the earth its missionaries have gone, baptizing believers, and preaching the Gospel of Him who said, "Lo I am with you alway."

Has not their success proven the promise true?

Not many years ago the grave of Roger Williams was opened that the dust of his body might be removed to another place.

It was found that the roots of an apple tree which had penetrated the coffin-walls as they moldered, had followed from the skull along the trunk, arms and legs of the body with a curious fidelity.

"It was as if to say, that the righteous are fruitful of good even in the dust of their moldering."—
(W. R. Williams, D. D.)

His body had blossomed forth in the flowers which filled the boughs of the apple-tree, and ripened in the

luscious fruit which bent the branches. Beautiful symbol of the "fruitage under God's blessing of the sufferings and sacrifices of the weary pilgrim and exile who there found repose."

We cannot tell just how much of our national order and happiness is due to the existence two centuries ago, and from that time till now, of this zealous denomination ; zealous for freedom of conscience, for spiritual life, as requisite to church fellowship, and firm adherence to what they deem the only mode of baptism, and pre-requisite of the communion. I am not a Baptist, neither is the larger part of the congregation of that faith ; but whatever the Church of our choice may be, could we not all most heartily join with our Baptist brother in the Covenant he made when admitted to the Church ?

Do you ask what that Covenant is ? Listen !

"Having been as we trust, brought by divine grace to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ, and to give ourselves wholly to him, we do now solemnly and joyfully covenant with each other, to walk together in Him with brotherly love, to his glory as our common Lord. We do, therefore, in his strength engage, that we will exercise a christian care and watchfulness over each other, and faithfully warn, exhort and admonish each other, as occasion may require ; that we

will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, but will uphold the public worship of God, and the ordinances of His house ; that we will not omit closet and family religion at home, nor neglect the great duty of religiously training our children, and those under our care, for the service of Christ and the enjoyment of heaven ; that as we are the lights of the world, and the salt of the earth, we will seek divine aid, to enable us to deny ungodliness, and every wordly lust, and to walk circumspectly in the world, that we may win the souls of men.

That we will cheerfully contribute of our property according as God has prospered us, for the maintenance of a faithful and evangelical ministry among us, for the support of the poor, and to spread the Gospel over the earth.

That we will, in all conditions, even unto death, strive to live to the glory of Him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.

‘ And may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make us perfect in every good work to do His will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.’ ”

V.

CONGREGATIONAL.

SERMON V.

THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.

But be not ye called Rabbi ; for one is your Master, even Christ ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth : for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters : for one is your Master, even Christ. St. Matthew, xxiii. 8-10.

Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. St. Matthew, xviii. 20.

One day in the month of September, 1620, out on the then almost unknown Atlantic, was sailing, a thousand miles from any land, a ship not larger perhaps than some which cut the waters of this, our inland sea.

Its prow was turned toward the West—toward the New World. On board that ship were a hundred souls and one ; men and their wives ; children and infants. Many days have passed since the white hills of their native England had faded from their vision, in the increasing dimness of the distant horizon.

Onward they sail, not knowing whether the fitful winds would carry them to a new home in a strange land, or dash their vessel upon the breakers of some inhospitable shore.

For two months, and those fierce in storms, they plough the wild Atlantic.

One of the company has died, and now just one hundred souls look every day to catch the sight of land rising out of the western waves.

They had heard of the land called America, and they propose, if God will, to anchor the ship near the mouth of the Hudson; but through the self-will and ignorance of the captain, on the 9th day of November they find themselves near the most barren and inhospitable part of the Massachusetts coast, and are soon safely moored in the harbor of Cape Cod.

“The season was already fast bringing the winter.” They had been poorly supplied with provisions, and the rough and wearisome voyage had somewhat wasted their strength, but had not impaired their courage.

“The bitterness of mortal disease was their welcome to the inhospitable shore.” Some of the men were set on shore to find a suitable place to found the colony, but were soon “tired with marching up and down the steep hills and deep valleys, which lay half a foot

thick with snow." A heap of maize was discovered ; and further search led to a burial place of the Indians ; but they found " no more corn nor anything else but graves."

And now in the shallop or boat of the vessel, some of them cruise along the ragged shore, "the spray of the sea freezing as it fell on them, making their clothes like coats of iron," and they "find neither people, nor any place inviting a settlement." They continue the search and after many weary days a harbor is found and soon the *Mayflower* is piloted to the place, and on Friday, the 15th day of December, the Pilgrims, men, women and children disembarked, and a new home was theirs.

Mrs. Hemans, in graphic verse has given us a picture of that memorable event. Perhaps you will hear her words repeated with a new delight.

"The breaking waves dashed high
On a stern and rock-bound coast,
And the woods against a stormy sky
Their giant branches tossed.

And the heavy night hung dark
The hills and waters o'er,
When a band of exiles moored their bark,
On the wild New England shore.

Not as the conqueror comes,
They, the true-hearted came ;

Not with the roll of the stirring drums,
And the trumpet that sings of fame.

Not as the flying come,
In silence and in fear ;
They shook the depths of the desert's gloom
With their hymns of lofty cheer.

Amidst the storm they sang,
And the stars heard and the sea ;
And the sounding aisles of the dim woods rang
To the anthem of the free.

The ocean eagle soared
From his nest by the white wave's foam,
And the rocking pines of the forest roared,
This was their welcome home.

There were men with hoary hair
Amidst that pilgrim band:
Why had they come to wither there
Away from their childhood's land ?

There was woman's fearless eye,
Lit by her deep love's truth ;
There was manhood's brow serenely high,
And the fiery heart of youth.

What sought they thus afar ?
Bright jewels of the mine ?
The wealth of seas, the spoils of war ?
They sought a faith's pure shrine !

Ay, call it holy ground,
The soil where first they trod ;
They have left unstained what there they found ;
Freedom to worship God !

“Freedom to worship God !” And was it for this
they had left their native homes, braved the perils of

an unknown sea, and the greater dangers of a bleak rock-bound coast? Had it not been their right and privilege, in the land of their birth to serve and praise the Lord of Heaven, according to the dictates of their own conscience? Had any power dared to come between the soul and its God?

Alas, the history of the christian faith shows how prone have been both civil and ecclesiastical authorities in every age, to say to the conscience of the individual: Thus far mayst thou go, and no farther. Forgetful of the Master's word, "Put up thy sword into its place," men in the name even of that Lord Jesus, have used the sword, the dungeon, the fagot, gibbet, and the rack, to compel men to submit their consciences to the mandates of political and ecclesiastical law.

This band of Pilgrims had endured the severity of cruel power. They had known the bitterness of bigotry and of persecution for opinion's sake.

Let us trace their history backward a few years previous to the emigration to America. That ship's load of souls we first saw out on the Atlantic, had set sail from Delft Haven, a harbor of Holland. But why were these English people in Holland? Let us see. We have already learned that the Reformation in England resulted during the reign of

Henry VIII. in the re-establishment of the English Church, and the dis-establishment of the Papal Church. But Henry VIII., though defying the authority of the Pope, enforced the doctrines of the Romish hierarchy. England was merely transferred from the power of the Romish Pope, to the equally corrupt and arbitrary will of a dissolute King. "Death was denounced against the Catholic who denied the King's supremacy, and the Protestant who doubted his creed. Had Luther been an Englishman he might have perished by fire." After the death of Henry VIII., and during the reign of Edward VI. a truer Protestantism began to prevail.

The combined influence of Luther's and Calvin's doctrines began to be apparent. Luther, as a Reformer, had chiefly insisted upon the paramount value of character and purity of conscience, while he was indifferent to some of the external ceremonies of the Papal Church, which Calvin denounced as idolatry. Bancroft aptly says: "Luther resisted the Roman Church for its immorality; Calvin for its idolatry." "Luther permitted the cross and the taper, pictures and images, as things of indifference; Calvin demanded a spiritual worship in its utmost purity." And so the Calvinists in the Church of England insisted that no ceremony should be

tolerated in religious worship, "unless it was clearly enjoined by the Word of God." This party soon came to be known as Puritans. Some of them were in favor of immediate separation from the national Church; others would remain in order to reform the Church. Both parties were bitterly persecuted. In the reign of Mary, Rogers and Hooper, "the first martyrs of Protestant England," were put to death. Queen Mary was a Romanist and the Puritans, but especially the Separatists who utterly denounced Romanism, sought safety in flight and self exile. On the death of Mary many of them returned to England.

Queen Elizabeth was instrumental in the re-establishment of Protestantism within the Church. Nevertheless, with the Puritans she had no sympathy. They were declared more dangerous than the Romanists themselves. They were ordered to conform to the ceremonies of the established Church. Courts were organized for the detection and punishment of offenders. I thus particularize that you may be reminded how great are our privileges who "worship God according to the dictates of our own conscience." It was proposed to banish them; this measure was not adopted—but a law of savage ferocity declared, that those who should be absent from the English

service for one month, should be interrogated as to their belief, and, if guilty of non-conformity, they should be put to death.—(v. *Bancroft, Vol. I., Chap. VIII.*) Many of them sought safety by flight to Holland.

Near the close of the reign of Elizabeth, in the North of England a Church of Separatists had been formed by one John Robinson. They were strict Calvinists, in doctrine, and zealously rejected all ceremonies. They could not escape persecution. The malice of intolerance pursued them. “Despairing of finding rest in England they sought safety in flight to Holland. But they were not allowed to depart in peace.” At their first attempt all were arrested and imprisoned. Being finally released, the following spring the design was renewed. “An unfrequented heath in Lincolnshire was the place of secret meeting. As if it had been a crime to escape persecution, the embarkation was to be made under the shelter of darkness. After having encountered a night storm, just as a boat was bearing a part of the emigrants to the ship, a company of horsemen appeared in pursuit, and seized on the defenceless women and children who had not yet adventured on the surf.”

“Pitiful it was to see the heavy case of these poor

women in distress ; what weeping and crying on every side." "But when they were apprehended, it seemed impossible to punish and imprison wives and children for no other crime than that they would go with their husbands and fathers. They could not be sent home, for they had no homes to go to ; 'so that at last the magistrates were glad to be rid of them on any terms, though, in the meantime, they, poor souls, endured misery enough.'"

Such was the flight of this people from their native land.

They arrived in Amsterdam and began the eventful wanderings which gave them the name of "Pilgrims." But they did not find in Holland a country which satisfied their desires. They could not familiarize themselves with its language, the dissoluteness of society filled them with alarm, lest their children should be contaminated by the prevailing vices. They were homesick with the "desire to live once more under the government of their native land." But they could not return to England and enjoy their religion ; to remain in Holland they dared not do for the sake of their children. Whither should they go ? The wilds of America offered them a home.

"The Speedwell, a ship of sixty tons, was pur-

chased in London, the Mayflower, of one hundred and eighty tons, was hired in London." The two ships could carry only a small part of the people.

Robinson, their leader, remained, and Brewster, a ruling elder, led the emigrants. A solemn fast was observed. "Let us seek of God," said they, "a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance." Robinson gave them a farewell charge:—"I charge you, before God and his blessed angels, that you follow me no further than you have seen me follow the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord has more truth yet to break forth out of his holy word. I cannot sufficiently bewail the condition of the reformed Churches, who are come to a period in religion, and will go at present no further than the instruments of their reformation. Luther and Calvin were great and shining lights in their times, yet they penetrated not into the whole counsel of God. I beseech you, remember it,—'tis an article of your church covenant,—that you be ready to receive whatever truth shall be made known to you from the written word of God."

The two ships set sail. In a few days they reach Southampton, England, and a fortnight after start forth on the broad Atlantic. The Speedwell soon springs a leak. They return to Dartmouth.

The ship repaired they again weigh anchor, but soon the captain of the *Speedwell*, "dismayed at the danger of the enterprise," turns backward. The timid and irresolute are allowed to abandon the journey, and the winnowed company, in all one hundred and one souls, in their hired vessel, the *Mayflower*, are again driven forth by a favoring breeze, out upon the ocean, in search for the New World, a place where they can find "*Freedom to worship God.*"
—*v. Bancroft, I., Chap. VIII.*

We have already been with them on the long voyage, of more than sixty days. We have seen them anchored in the harbor of Cape Cod, and noted their wanderings up and down the rocky, sterile coast in search of a fair place to establish a colony. They have found it at Plymouth. The *Mayflower* has returned to England.

Ere yet they had reached America, even while on the bosom of the deep, a system of civil government had been agreed upon, and a Governor chosen. They were already a Church, and with the landing of the Pilgrims, democratic liberty, and independent christian worship at once existed in America. It would be interesting to trace the sufferings and discouragements of the little band, during the severe winter which soon made the land more drear, but the time

does not suffice. A glance at the form of government must not be denied you. It was extremely simple. For a long time the whole people, that is the adult males, formed the legislature ; but after a few years, increase of population led to a representative system. Let us cherish the memory of these men who founded a State upon the principles of democratic liberty. We ought to be interested in studying the character of the Puritan Pilgrims since they are the ancestors of one third of the population in the United States, while the principles of government which they established, have become the foundation and protection of all our free institutions.

But to-night we are more specially interested in the study of their religion. I have said here was a Church. Let me also say, here at Plymouth was the first Congregational Church in America. For this Church was emphatically Congregational.

Let us see what is peculiar in the ecclesiastical polity thus named. Congregationalists claim, that their system of government is a substantial return to the order and practice of the Apostolic Church, which order had been corrupted by the tendencies that culminated in the papacy, and that there are traces of dissent from episcopal authority in the history of every century since Christ. The two funda-

mental principles of their government, are : (1) That every local congregation of believers, united for worship, sacraments, and discipline, is a complete Church, and is not subject in government to any ecclesiastical authority outside of itself; and (2) that all such local churches are in communion with each other and are bound to fulfill all the duties involved in such fellowship.

Now it follows from these principles, that "every company of professing christians united by covenant for christian worship, is a true Church of Christ;" that every member of a Congregational Church has equal essential rights, powers and privileges with every other member; and that the membership by majority vote have the right to admit, discipline, and dismiss members, and transact all the business of the Church. "Every Congregational Church is independent of all control from without, whether of popes, bishops, patriarchs, assemblies, synods, presbyteries, conferences, associations or councils, being answerable only to Christ its Head. And every Church is on a level of inherent genuineness, dignity and authority with every other Church on earth."

A Church has liberty to ask the advice, in a council of other Churches, when it wishes to settle or

dismiss a pastor, adopt a creed, or do any other work, but such advice is not obligatory.

One Congregational Church may withdraw its fellowship from any Church that does not hold to the Bible doctrines or christian practices.

There are only two offices in a Congregational Church ; that of Pastor, indiscriminately styled in the New Testament, pastor, teacher, presbyter or elder, bishop or overseer—and whose duty it is to preach and look after its spiritual concerns—and that of Deacon, who cares for its temporal affairs ; and both of these officers are chosen by the membership from their own number.

All councils or associations of Congregational Churches are simply advisory, and have no legislative authority. The Association of Congregational Churches held in our city the past week, had no power over any individual Church or the denomination in general. It was simply a mutual council concerning moral and religious affairs common to all the Churches of the denomination ; whereas, the Presbyterian Synod—also in session at the same time—had authority to legislate for the Churches under its jurisdiction. All Congregational Churches, like all Baptist Churches, are pure and unlimited democracies.

Now in regard to the doctrines held by Congregational Churches, at first thought it might be supposed there could or would be no creed and confession common to the Churches. Their individualism would seem to be a barrier to any unity of thought and expression in theology. But we do not find this to be the fact. "While no power can impose a creed upon the Churches, and each Church adopts its own formulas, yet the principles of fellowship, to which allusion has been made, in which a council of Churches is called for the recognition of a new Church, secures a general agreement in doctrine." Besides this, several Synods have been held for the purpose of mutually adopting a general standard, but at the same time any individual Church is at liberty to reject such standard, and the only right in the matter that other Churches have is simply to disfellowship the heretical society. In 1680 a Synod convened in Boston, declared the Westminster Confession—which is the standard of the Presbyterian Church—its standard, after having slightly modified it. A general council for the United States in 1865, declared adherence to the faith and order of the Apostolic and Primitive Churches, as held by the fathers, and substantially embodied in the confessions and platforms which the Synods of 1648 and 1680 set forth and reaffirmed.

It is thus apparent that the Congregational Churches, together with Presbyterians and Baptists, hold to the system of theology known as Calvinism ; but while standing within these lines there is considerable latitude of thought in the popular exposition of the doctrines of this system, so that many eminent Congregational divines regard original sin not as involving the guilt of men before actual transgression, but the hereditary corruption of man's nature ; that depravity is not a natural inability to comply with God's demands, but is a moral inability or unwillingness and aversion, such as render it certain that man will not obey God, without regenerating grace ; that the will always chooses the greatest apparent good, but has the power of contrary choice ; that regenerating grace is *certain to accomplish its object*, yet is not *irresistible*.

The doctrines of the decrees, predestination and election, are held in a modified sense.

An intelligent Arminian would find little mental or moral difficulty in giving assent to Calvinism, as explained and shorn of its terrors by the larger portion of Congregational theologians.

Concerning other fundamental christian doctrines, such as the trinity, the incarnation, atonement and the mode of divine existence, Congregationalists

do not differ from other evangelical Churches. They would be entirely willing to recite the Apostles' Creed, while believing that creeds are not authoritative except as they reflect the light of truth found in the Bible, the only expositor of a christian's faith.

In common with most of the great evangelical Churches, they believe that infant baptism is to be retained in the Church, because it was the common practice of the Apostolic and early christian ages. Regarding the Lord's Supper, it is held that only persons professing a change of heart, should be admitted to the communion, and members of all evangelical Churches are freely welcomed, they believing that no Church has the right to make differences of opinion in regard to baptism a bar to partaking the Lord's Supper.

It must be acknowledged by a candid student of the polity, doctrines and history of this branch of the Universal Church, there is a catholicity, simplicity and breadth in its first principles which give it some peculiar advantages in the matter of denominational relations. "Believing that the vitality of the church organism does not reside in the outward form, but in the inward substance, they are not compelled to unchurch any body of sincere believers" who may happen to differ from them in religious usages.

“ While they seek to conserve among themselves, and promote among others what they deem to be the faith once delivered to the saints, they teach and believe that God is no respecter of persons, but in every (denomi) nation, he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him.” (*Rev. Dr. Dexter, in “Congregationalism,” to which book I am indebted for facts and quotations.*)

Now if I were to mention the principles which Congregationalism claims as distinctive in its life, and which commend it to the intelligence of the people to whom it ministers, it might be said that it is the “Policy with which the Great Head of the Church has connected the most remarkable displays of his grace.” The Reformation was founded upon its fundamental doctrine, to wit: That the Bible interpreted by sanctified common sense, is the only, and sufficient, and authoritative guide in all matters of christian practice.” The Puritan Pilgrims were the first missionaries to the Indians, or at least among the first,—John Eliot giving to the red men the Bible in their own language.

Congregationalism is worthy of honor, in that all through its history it has manifested great interest in founding and endowing schools and universities. “It was ever the custom, and soon became the law

in Puritan (i. e., Congregational) New England, that none of the brethren shall suffer so much barbarism in their families as not to teach their children and apprentices so much learning as may enable them perfectly to read the English tongue." And it was soon ordered in all the colonies "that every township, after the Lord hath increased them to the number of fifty householders, shall appoint one to teach all children to write and read; and where any town shall increase to the number of one hundred families, they shall set up a grammar school, the masters thereof being able to instruct youth so far as they may be fitted for the university." Very early in the history of the colony, the general court voted a sum, equal to a year's rate of the whole colony, towards the erection of a college. And in 1638, John Harvard, who arrived from England only to fall a victim to the climate, desiring to connect himself imperishably with the happiness of his adopted country, bequeathed to the college one half of his estate and all his library."

In those laws establishing common schools and colleges lies the secret of the character of New England; but remember it was Congregationalism that made these laws, and true to its early faith, this

same denomination to-day is a most liberal supporter of our higher institutions of learning.

Again it is claimed for Congregationalism that it develops, as no other system naturally does, the sense of individual responsibility in private christians, by giving to every member of the Church an equal share in its government ; and also that it is better than any other form of government for a Church, because it "furnishes a more effective barrier than any other, against heresy and false doctrine." Other Churches use the sharp force of ecclesiastical deposition against one who preaches heresy. This denomination uses the moral appliances of truth, believing that under God "time will bring all right and more quickly correct error than does hasty ecclesiastical proscription."

But the hour does not allow that I more fully enumerate the commendable features and blessed truths zealously maintained by this honored portion of the flock of Jesus Christ. Its history is a part of our national life. Puritan Congregationalism laid the solid foundations of this republic. The principles of the New England Colonists will eventually dominate this western world. But a few days since, Chili, in South America, besought our government to make known to it the plan of our common school system, which you well know, is a legacy from the Puritans.

In the hour now passing you have looked with me upon that memorable scene, when a hundred brave christian souls found a home on this continent, their feet first pressing Plymouth rock.

In the nearly three hundred years since that time, what things hath God wrought by their faith and the faith of those who have sprung from their loins!

Well may we remember with gratitude their sacrifices and emulate with zeal their unconquerable devotion to God and his truth.

Turn we now to another scene. On Burial Hill, at the same Plymouth, in Massachusetts, in the year 1865, a national council of Congregational Churches being assembled, sent forth to the world the following declaration of principles for the guidance of its members, and their fellowship with all evangelical bodies of christians. Let every Congregationalist attentively hear, that they may this hour and here, renew their pledge of fealty to Christ and his truth. Let every christian, of whatever name, be thankful that in this land, has been raised up by the Providence of God, a people who honor him by loyal adherence to the simple truths of the Bible.

Listen! "Standing by the rock where the Pilgrims set foot upon these shores, upon the spot where they worshiped God, and among the graves

of the early generations, we, elders and messengers of the Congregational Church of the United States, in national council assembled, like them acknowledging no rule of faith but the word of God, do now declare our adherence to the faith and order of the apostolic and primitive churches held by our fathers.

We declare that the experience of the nearly two and a half centuries which have elapsed since the memorable day when our sires founded here a christian commonwealth, with all the development of new forms of error since their times, has only deepened our confidence in the faith and polity of those fathers. We bless God for the inheritance of these doctrines. We invoke the help of the Divine Redeemer, that, through the presence of the promised Comforter, he will enable us to transmit them in purity to our children.

“ In the times that are before us as a nation, times at once of duty and of danger, we rest all our hope in the Gospel of the Son of God. It was the grand peculiarity of our Puritan fathers that they held this Gospel, not merely as the ground of their personal salvation, but as declaring the worth of man by the incarnation and sacrifice of the Son of God ; and therefore, applied its principles to elevate society, to regulate education, to civilize humanity, to purify

law, to reform the Church and the State, and to assert and defend liberty ; in short, to mold and redeem, by its all-transforming energy, everything that belongs to man in his individual and social relations. It was the faith of our fathers which gave us this free land in which we dwell. It is by this faith only that we can transmit to our children a free and happy, because a Christian commonwealth.

“ We rejoice that through the influence of our free system of apostolic order, we can hold fellowship with all who acknowledge Christ, and act efficiently in the work of restoring unity to the divided Church, and of bringing back harmony and peace among all *‘who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.’*”

Thus recognizing the unity of the Church of Christ in all the world, and knowing that we are but one branch of Christ’s people, while adhering to our peculiar faith and order, we extend to all believers the right hand of Christian fellowship upon the basis of those fundamental truths in which all Christians should agree. With them we confess our faith in God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the only living and true God ; in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word, who is exalted to be our Redeemer and King ; and in the Holy Comforter, who is present in the Church to regenerate and sanctify the soul.

With the whole Church we confess the common sinfulness and ruin of our race, and acknowledge that it is only through the work accomplished by the life and expiatory death of Christ that believers in him are justified before God, receive the remission of sins and through the presence and grace of the Holy Comforter are delivered from the power of sin, and perfected in holiness.

“We believe also in the organized and visible Church, in the ministry of the Word, in the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, in the resurrection of the body, and in the final judgment, the issues of which are eternal life and everlasting punishment.

We receive these truths on the testimony of God, given through prophets and apostles, and in the life, the miracles, the death, the resurrection of his Son, our Divine Redeemer, a testimony preserved for the Church in the Scriptures of the Old and the New Testaments, which were composed by holy men as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

“Affirming now our belief that those who thus hold ‘one faith, one Lord, one baptism,’ together constitute the one Catholic Church, the several households of which, though called by different names, are the one body of Christ, and that these members of his

body are sacredly bound to keep 'the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace,' we declare that we will co-operate with all who hold these truths. With them we will carry the gospel into every part of this land, and with them we will go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature."

"May he to whom all power is given in heaven and earth, fulfill the promise which is all our hope: 'Lo I am with you alway even to the end of the world. *Amen.*'"

VI.
LUTHERAN.

SERMON VI.

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH.

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life : no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. St. John, xiv. 6.

The just shall live by faith. Romans, i. 17.

Were I a painter with the skill of a Raphael, and the task were given me to produce a painting the like of which should hang upon the walls of every Lutheran and every Protestant home, I know right well what scene would stir my soul, and add to the cunning of a skillful hand. The picture should be a simple one. Look at its outlines as I reveal it to your mental vision, and transfer it to the canvas of your memory.

A magnificent church in the city of Wittemberg, Saxony! Pilgrims thronging the church to see the sacred relics, and obtain a rich indulgence! A monk clad in the garb of his order, with a long roll of parchment in his hand! Standing by the door of the church he nails the parchment to a column, so that it may be read by all who enter the sacred place!

The blows of that hammer shake the world to-day! The nails fastened by that master of assemblies are as the words of wisdom which come from every Protestant pulpit where is preached that glorious truth—"The just shall live by faith."

Who was that monk? What were the ninety-five sentences nailed to that church door?

In answering these questions many volumes have been written, and still the christian world hardly realizes how much it owes to the brave monk, and how full of blessings for millions of souls that have lived and other millions who shall yet live, is the precious doctrine of Salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In order to appreciate the character of that monk, and the meaning of his parchment, let us briefly study "the times" in which he lived.

Of every eminent character in history, it might be truly said; he was the product of his age. We are accustomed to look more upon what is deemed the results which some illustrious statesman, warrior, poet, or reformer produces for his generation, rather than to discern what is equally true; namely, that the demands of any age for such a hero do much to arouse and intensify capacities of mental and moral power, which otherwise would have remained dor-

mant and unknown to the world. When God needs a great man some peculiar combination of providential circumstances thrusts him forth.

Such an era had come. The light of gospel truth had suffered an eclipse whose path of shadow had passed over all Christendom. Literature, the arts and religion, had been at low ebb. The Church of which a princely line of Popes had claimed to be the guide and head, was chained down to a ritual service that was more pagan than Christian.

There were numerous evils in the Church which had almost extinguished the light that Christ and his apostles had kindled in the world. The illiteracy of the masses of the people, their ignorance of the word of God, their blind belief in the efficacy of priestly pardons and indulgences, the scandalous lives of a large portion of the priests, the avarice of higher dignitaries, and the vices and crimes of the Popes themselves, testify how terribly the Church had fallen from its first estate. It is matter of indisputable history, that, "Pope Julius II. marched at the head of armies; Alexander VI. secured his election by bribery, and reigned by extortion. He poisoned his own cardinals, and bestowed upon his natural son Cæsar Borgia, not unjustly called, an incarnated demon, the highest dignities and re-

wards." It is related that he and his father, the Pope, having united in the attempt to poison nine newly created cardinals whose possessions they coveted, the wine was by mistake brought to them, and drinking of it the Pope died, but the other monster escaped for the time. The cup we mix for others, of it we ourselves must sometime drink.

"The evils which the Church encouraged were even more dangerous than the vices of the people, the priests and the Popes."

The simple doctrines of Christianity had become terribly perverted. Belief in papal infallibility had subverted faith in the Holy Scriptures. Tradition had crowded out the surer word of prophecy. The papal power not only tyrannized the consciences of the people in their religious affairs, but it invaded the domain of government, and secular princes, kings and emperors did its bidding. The Pope was supreme, and he was an unscrupulous tyrant. During the fifteenth century the most elegant court in Europe was that of the Popes. They recruited large armies; "they enriched their relatives at the sacrifice of the best interests of the Church; they built gorgeous palaces;" and all this while professing to be the humble representatives of Jesus Christ and successors to St. Peter. It was during the fifteenth

century that the Church of St. Peter was built ; that Church of which it has been said " it is the only work of art on the globe that possesses the same species of majesty which characterizes those of creation."—(De Stael.)

But how was St. Peter's built? Largely of money obtained by the sale of indulgences. And what were indulgences? I will try to make the meaning plain to you. It was then and is now the doctrine of the Romish Church—that sins committed bring guilt upon the sinner, render him liable to eternal death, and obliged to suffer what is called temporal punishment, or in other words, those results of sin which are not included in guilt and eternal punishment. For instance the crime of theft would involve penalty at the hands of the law. Now in a country where the Church controlled the State, an indulgence might include the remittal of that penalty. Again, should a person die with a single sin upon him, though it might be only a murmur at the sharpness of the pains of dissolution, his soul could not go direct to heaven, but must endure for a time the sufferings of purgatorial fire, to be cleansed and made meet for heaven. An indulgence purchased by a sinner beforehand, could save him from purgatory.

One can readily see that among a people educated in superstition and taught to believe without question all that the Church should teach—such a doctrine would be a “Bonanza” indeed to a Pope ambitious to perpetuate his name—as the builder of a church more grand and beautiful than any the world had ever known. A “plenary indulgence,” which was the remission of all temporal punishment in this life and the next, was promised to every person who should make a pilgrimage to Rome. The city was thronged, and of course the coffers of the Pope received vast sums of money. Lord, the historian, says: “It is computed that in one month two hundred thousand deluded persons visited the papal city.” “The vast sums of money thus brought to Rome, and the still greater amounts obtained by the sale of indulgences, were all squandered in ornamenting the city, and in supporting a luxurious court, profligate cardinals and superfluous ministers of a corrupted religion.”

Was there no voice to be raised in protest against such iniquities? Were truth and righteousness utterly departed from the earth? Were there no witnesses for the faith that had once been delivered to the saints? Had all God’s people bowed the knee to Baal?

Let us see. The darkness of these superstitions and crimes committed in the name of religion was far reaching in its extent. Germany, Italy, Spain, Portugal, France, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Poland, Hungary, England and Scotland, all acknowledged the spiritual supremacy and temporal power of the Church. In respect to the extent of dominion and completeness of its sway, this was the golden age of the Papal power ; but the dark age, in respect of the morals of the people, and of all that constitutes true and undefiled religion.

Yet amid this overshadowing and well-nigh universal darkness there had been during each generation some rays of light. Above the babel of discord had risen the clear tones of some intrepid soul whose pious zeal had dared to rebuke the vices of the priests and the people. John Huss, Jerome of Prague, Wickliffe in England, Savonarola, the Waldenses, the Albigenses, had given witness for the truth and sealed their faith with their blood ; for the fagot and the rack had silenced their brave voices in death.

“ The spirit of religious persecution, which inflamed the Roman Church to punish all deserters from the doctrine and abuses she promulgated can never be questioned.”

There had always been even in the darkest times

witnesses to the truth ; “ but of the great truth, that underlies Protestantism, they had not a sufficiently clear knowledge, and hence were not able to set it forth with adequate distinctness.” (Daubigné.) Yet they were John Baptists preparing the way for “ him that should come.”

Meanwhile there were other influences than those of religion which were beginning to awaken the people, and tend to a revival of personal liberty in opinion and in action concerning the affairs of the soul. At the beginning of the sixteenth century the nations seemed to be “ suddenly aroused from a state of torpor and rest, and to put forth new energies in every department of life.” This was due, suggests Dr. Lord, somewhat to the fact that numerous great discoveries and important inventions had just been made. Let me mention some of these that you may see their vast importance. The use of movable types in printing was just becoming general. The result was a large increase of books, especially the Greek and Latin classics and the Holy Scriptures.

The use of gunpowder in war had completely changed that art, and contributed to undermine the feudal system.

The mariner’s compass had led in the close of the fifteenth century to the discovery of America.

Commerce was thus wonderfully stimulated. "The world opened toward the east and west." "The horizon of knowledge extended."

The present system of notation in music was adopted, and music became more elaborate.

The arts of sculpture and painting reached a perfection, which has never since been equalled.

There was a revival also of intellectual knowledge.

The human mind began to "crave light and knowledge in all the departments of science and philosophy."

All these things helped to prepare the way for the emancipation of the consciences of men from the long slavery to the Papal power.

It has always been, and will remain ever true that freedom of the intellect is essential to freedom of the religious nature.

It might have been supposed that the Romish Church would hasten with the revival of the intellect and conscience of society to rid itself of the "vices which had been overlooked in ages of ignorance and superstition."

But the leopard could not change its spots, nor the leviathan his skin. "The reform was not destined to come from dignitaries in the Church. It

was reserved for an obscure monk 'to commence the first successful rebellion against the despotism of Rome, and to give the greatest impulse to freedom and thought, and a general spirit of reform, which ten centuries had seen.' "

On the 10th of November, 1483, at Eisleben, in Saxony, a child was born whose history and the results of whose life are the legacy of the entire Protestant world. And truly the Romanist Church itself has reason for gratitude that this child when grown to manhood dealt it such strong and resistless blows. His early days were passed in extreme poverty, his father being a miner. While yet a boy, he earned his bread by singing hymns before the houses of the village where his parents lived. At the age of fifteen he entered a high school, and at eighteen the university at Erfurt.

A short time after his graduation his attention was turned to the salvation of his soul, and as the serious minded in those days sought monastic retreats he took the vows of monasticism, and in the retreat whither he had fled for peace of soul, sought it in the most painful austerities, self-lacerations and fasting, but all in vain. His soul found no rest. The Vicar General of the order advised him to read the Scriptures and the writings of St. Augustine, and

the struggling monk at last found light and joy in the doctrine of justification by faith. "His spiritual gladness now equaled his former depression and anxiety."

He soon became a priest. At the age of twenty-five he was called to a professorship in the new university at Wittemberg. He began earnestly the study of Greek and Hebrew, that he might read the Bible in the languages in which it was written. His zeal, his learning, and his eloquence as a preacher attracted great attention, and he became the preacher for the city by invitation of the municipal authorities.

But though a professor he did not cease to be a monk; and he spent his time, when not employed, in instructing or preaching, and lived only on bread and herring. In his retirement he studied the Bible with diligence. "One day while studying in the Epistle to the Romans he reached the seventeenth verse of the first chapter, the quotation from the prophet Habbakuk, "the just shall live by faith." "This promise which he received into his heart, unveiled to him more perfectly the mystery of the christian life,"—and he ever after heard those words as it were ringing in his ears, "The just shall live by faith." Not long after he was sent to Rome on an embassy, and while there his eyes were opened

to see the great wickedness of the Church. Though already grounded in the first principles of the gospel, he had not seen the folly and sin of many of the customs and rites of his Church. "One day," it is related, "wishing to obtain an indulgence promised by the Pope to all who should ascend on their knees what is called 'Pilate's Staircase,' the poor Saxon monk was humbly creeping up those steps, which he was told had been miraculously transported from Jerusalem to Rome." But while climbing up "he thought he heard a voice of thunder crying from the bottom of his heart, "*The just shall live by faith.*" He arose in amazement, shuddered at himself, and ashamed of seeing to what a depth superstition had plunged him, fled far from the place." He returned to his work and cell at Wittemberg, but with his faith in the infallibility of the Church rudely shaken.

Shortly after Leo X. became Pope, and the sale of indulgencies was carried on by his command all over Germany, in order to obtain money to complete St. Peter's church. To hasten the collection of funds the privilege of selling these indulgences was sold or farmed out to the highest bidders for various portions of the Empire. A Dominican monk named Tetzels appeared at Wittemberg hawking his wares, and in

his harangues, declaring that "Indulgencies are the most precious and the most noble of God's gifts. There is no sin so great that an indulgence cannot remit. Indulgences avail not only for the living, but for the dead. At the very instant that the money rattles at the bottom of the chest, the soul escapes from purgatory, and flies liberated to heaven."

The professor monk was horrified. He denounced the indulgences given by Tetzels and boldly preached that "except they repented, they should all likewise perish," though they might have purchased indulgence. The sermon was printed. Controversy ensued. The words of the monk produced but little effect save to arouse the enmity of the Dominican order and he was accused of heresy. (That is always the first weapon which contemptible souls use against an adversary. It requires but little wit to use it.)

The festival of All Saints was approaching. As we have already seen, the city was full of pilgrims. "On the 31st day of October, 1517, at noon on the day preceding the festival, the monk walks boldly towards the church and posts upon the door ninety-five theses or propositions against the doctrine of indulgences and declares he will defend them.

That monk, need I tell you his name, was Martin Luther.

Let us read some of the theses on that parchment. "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ says *repent*, he means that the whole life of believers on earth should be a constant and perpetual repentance."

"To hope to be saved by indulgences, is a lying and an empty hope."

"Those who fancy themselves sure of salvation by indulgences will go into perdition along with those who teach them so."

Here was the commencement of the Reformation. Says the eloquent Daubigné, "The feeble sounds of the hammer were followed throughout all Germany by a mighty blow that reached even the foundation of haughty Rome, threatening with certain ruin the walls, the gates, and pillars of popery, stunning and terrifying her champions, and at the same time awakening thousands from the sleep of error."

A storm was gathering around Luther, but there was no storm in his soul. He was summoned to Rome to answer for his heresies. By the intercession of his prince the order was modified, and he was urged to renounce his heresy.

He would not retract what he believed to be the truth. He was excommunicated, sentenced to the wrath of God, and the penalty of eternal fire. He despised the papal edict. Assembling the students

and professors of the University he cast the papal bull upon a bonfire and thus defied the Pope. He was summoned before a great Diet of the Empire at Worms, and commanded to recant. "Unless," said he, "my errors can be demonstrated by texts from scripture, I will not and cannot recant, for it is not safe for a man to go against his conscience. Here I am, I can do no otherwise. God help me! Amen!"

Compelled by the danger that threatened, he endured a voluntary imprisonment in the castle of Wartburg, and while there he translated the Bible into German, and thus did more to fix the language in a pure and simple dialect than have all other German authors.

Thus the great principles of the Reformation were declared. They are few and simple: justification by faith; the scriptures the only grounds of authority in matters of religion, and that every man has the right to interpret them for himself; these were the animating principles of Luther's religion. His convictions especially were fixed on this point:—" *The just shall live by faith.*" This is the great truth by which the Reformation was effected.

Luther found himself in a life-long contest with the Papacy, and into the conflict he threw his mighty energies. At first there were but few to defend him

But his weapon was truth, and he knew the truth would prevail. He could sing his glorious hymn, of which Dr. Hedge has given such an admirable translation :

“A mighty fortress is our God,
A bulwark never failing ;
Our Helper he, amid the flood
Of mortal ills prevailing.

“And though the world, with devils filled,
Should threaten to undo us ;
We will not fear, for God hath willed
His truth to triumph through us.

Besides, the common people esteemed him their friend, believing he had been raised up to deliver them from the burdens which the papacy had put upon them.

Soon nearly one half of Germany embraced the Reformed faith. At the Diet of Augsburg in 1530, the Confession of Faith of the *Protestants* against the Romish errors was read, and though rejected on account of the Catholics being in the majority, nevertheless it has since then formed the basis of agreement in which the Churches now called Lutheran have accord. The name “Protestant” was assumed in 1529.

The term “Lutheran” was first given to the Protestants, in derision, by their enemies, just as the

word Christian was an attempted reproach, and likewise, Quaker, Methodist, and many other appellations, which now convey honor upon one who worthily bears them. The followers of Luther to-day are known as "Protestants"—"Evangelical Lutherans"—and "Adherents of the Augsburg Confession." Generically, the Lutheran Church is the ecclesiastical communion which adheres to the rule and articles of faith restored in the Reformation of which Luther was the chief instrument. The Augsburg Confession and the two Catechisms by Luther, together with the Ecumenical Creeds, form the standards of faith in the Lutheran Churches.

I can give you but a glimpse of these chief articles. A full statement is unnecessary, as they contain much that is common to all Protestant creeds.

"We are justified by God, not through any merits of our own, but by his tender mercy, through faith in his Son. The depravity of man is total in its extent, and his will has no positive ability in the work of salvation, but only a negative ability to cease its resistance. Jesus Christ offered a propitiatory sacrifice. The Holy Spirit works through the word and sacraments, which only are means of grace."

"The theology of the Lutheran Church is not Calvinistic. The Augustinian doctrine of election threw

Luther into perplexities." He was not the first man, nor the last, that has been troubled over those dogmas.

"The Lutheran Church does not believe in a physical or material presence of the body and blood of the Savior, in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Its faith to-day, whatever might have been the belief of Luther, is like that of the Protestants. In common with nearly all christians it fervently holds to the practice of the baptism of children, appealing for authority to Christ, the Apostles, and the Church of the first century.

The form of government in the Lutheran Church is intermediate between that of the Episcopal and the Presbyterian systems, and it is not, therefore Congregational, although individual churches perhaps have more liberty than in either the Episcopal or Presbyterian systems. In public worship Lutherans are accustomed to use a Liturgy, although this is not obligatory, each church having more or less discretion in the matter.

The Liturgy in common use in this country is one of great beauty and simplicity. Very much of it is similar to the Prayer Book of the Church of England and the Episcopal Church; and it is not known whether the Lutherans borrowed more from the

Episcopalians, or the Episcopalians from the Lutherans. It is a matter of indifference. It is known, however, that there was a most cordial sympathy between the Reformers of England and those of the continent, and several conferences were held, while the Book of Common Prayer was being fixed in its present form.

It is worth our thought just here to revert a moment to the question, how much influence did the Reformation in Germany have upon the English people in arousing them to throw off the Papal yoke and restore the ancient faith? Had there been no Reformation in Germany, would there have been a Reformation in England? We do not know. Perhaps the safest judgment is, that in the simultaneous awakening of the human intellect on the Continent and in the British Isles, which resulted in some of the inventions and discoveries to which reference has been made, there was an indication that the time to favor Zion had come.

God himself was moving the nations. Christ was yet "among the golden candlesticks." Faith had not taken her flight from the earth.

If the Lutheran Church had no greater honor than that of bearing the name of the "greatest hero of Christendom since the Apostles, the restorer of

that form of christianity which now sustains civilization and which is regenerating the human race, the founder of the modern German language and literature, the first speaker and debater of his country, and the best writer of prose and verse of his age," had it no other honor, this would be enough. But its greater glory is the grand work it has done for the salvation of men. Its influence on the Continent of Europe to-day is very wide. It has produced the most profound theologians the Christian Church has ever known. It has brought under its sway the best elements of political and social life. Numbered among its adherents are more princes, kings, and emperors than are found in any other communion. Nor is this its greatest glory. It is doing a grand work in this country, its membership being more than half a million of souls.

"The general integrity in business, the quiet, kindly home life, the thriftiness and reliableness of the Lutheran population are widely known, yet none but those who are within it can appreciate fully the sterling unobtrusive qualities of the heart and life which mark it, and which have been nurtured by the great communion of which they are members."

Lutheranism has been a blessing to the whole Christian world. Though it did not entirely reform

the Roman Catholic Church, yet every Romanist of America ought to thank God that Luther was raised up to lift his voice against the papal oppressions. That the Roman Catholicism of to-day is infinitely purer than that of three centuries ago, is due more to Lutheranism than to all other influences. And that the Protestantism of the Episcopal, the Presbyterian, the Baptist, the Methodist Churches of this generation is progressive and promising soon to be dominant over the earth is due under God more to the influences that Martin Luther and his contemporaries set in operation than to all other forces that have conspired to give these Churches success.

That monk nailed the ninety-five theses to the door of the Wittemberg church.

The blows of his hammer awoke the religious conscience of the world.

VI.

UNIVERSALIST.

SERMON VII.

THE UNIVERSALIST CHURCH.

And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. St. Mark, xii. 29-31.

For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. I. Timothy, ii. 3, 4.

I find myself at the commencement of this discourse beset by a bristling array of sharp questions. Among them are these: Do you presume to class Universalists among Christian people? Should the Universalist Church be put in an enumeration that includes such denominations as the Protestant Episcopal, the Roman Catholic, the Presbyterian, the Congregational, the Baptist, the Lutheran, and the

Methodist? Is it possible for an Universalist to be a Christian? Now these are not imaginary questions, but actual ones, just such as some of you are mentally asking, and I do not mistake in saying that there is a vigorous protest in the judgments of some of my hearers against any statement even of the doctrines of the Universalist Church. The best answer I think that can be given to these questions, is that Universalists claim to be a Christian people. Whether they are truly so or not, it does not behoove you and me to say. Who art thou that judgeth another? "To his own Master he standeth or falleth." "Every one of us shall give account of himself unto God." I have a very poor opinion of that piety which is so extremely anxious to be informed whether a man's theology is of the same pattern as his own, before he is willing to acknowledge him as a Christian. It would be better if religious people of every name could remember that one can be a Christian, and do very valuable work for the Lord Jesus Christ, though "he follow not us." "All very true," says the objector, "but are there not such vital differences between the faith of Universalists and the orthodox Churches as to form an 'impassable gulf,' over which Christian charity ought not to attempt to cross?" May I say to an Uni-

versalist, "Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart? . . . If it be, give me thine hand." These questions will not be answered by your speaker, but be left to every man's judgment and conscience. But remember this, it were better to err upon the side of an abounding charity than to shut ourselves up in the narrow cell of sectarian and orthodox exclusiveness.

What is Universalism? "The term indicates the belief of those who hold the doctrine of the final holiness and happiness of all intelligent beings."

It is claimed that this is a legitimate and necessary deduction from the acknowledged attributes of God, and the declared principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Universalists believe in the infinite and immutable love of the heavenly Father, who will not permit the sinner to elude his all conquering grace, but will follow the last lost soul to the deepest hell it may make for itself, and will find it and bring it back to his presence and to the joy of the celestial state.

"They are fully persuaded that the divine Savior will accomplish the object of his mission by finally redeeming all from the dominion of sin and introducing them into the blessings of his kingdom."

It will not be expected that I can in the limits of

a sermon, make a full statement of the arguments by which Universalists establish, to their own satisfaction at least, the certainty of their doctrines and their agreement with the Holy Scriptures. The aim will be only to state the general principles upon which the creed rests, and to advance which this Church has entered the field of the world, and invites men and women to be numbered among its adherents.

At a General Convention of Universalists, held in Winchester, N. H., 1803, a formal creed was adopted, assent to which is obligatory upon all the churches, and upon persons who desire membership in the Churches. Being a brief Confession of Faith, the shortest of any Church having a common confession, it will be given to you entire :

ARTICLE I.—We believe that the holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments contain a revelation of the character of God, and of the duty, interest, and final destination of mankind.

ARTICLE II.—We believe that there is one God, whose nature is Love, revealed in one Lord Jesus Christ, by one Holy Spirit of Grace, who will finally restore the whole family of mankind to holiness and happiness.

ARTICLE III.—We believe that holiness and true happiness are inseparably connected, and that

believers ought to be careful to maintain order, and practice good works ; for these things are good and profitable unto men.

Certainly, no person, not even the strongest stickler for the verbal inspiration of the Bible, can disagree in the least with the article concerning the sacred writings. The most that could possibly be said against it is that it does not state, how fully Universalists considered the Bible to be inspired ; and the defense of a good Universalist would be the charge—that there are differences of opinion as to this among equally learned and zealous men, in all the denominations. The real unity of opinion amongst all Christian people, concerning the authority of the Holy Scriptures, is, their unmistakable uniqueness—in the truths presented and the manner of their presentation.

It must be admitted that Universalists profess to believe in the Bible. Their faith in it is not unlike that of other Christians. And they hold, as should all people, that the “ Bible should be interpreted by reason and common sense, and understood according to the established rules of interpretation.”

The Bible has more authority than all traditions and the dogmas of ecclesiastical councils, and of theologians, that have ever been promulgated. To

the law and to the testimony ! So insist our Universalist friends. And it must be acknowledged the principle is one that especially commends itself to every Protestant, and we shall not assert that this is a peculiar feature of the Universalist faith. It is much more pleasant to find the truths in which we agree with them, than to search for those upon which we differ.

But as we are looking for "characteristics," we must mention the peculiarities of the denomination. Few as these seem to be, still, by most evangelical Christians, they are deemed very heterodox, and many are the good pious souls who think that to acknowledge Universalists as Christians, would be denying the Lord that bought them. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."

Perhaps it is possible for good people to differ fundamentally upon subjects of great importance, and each have a measure of the truth, while no one has it all. Take, for instance, the great truth of the unity of God, the granite corner stone of all religions which are living and growing. Jew and Gentile, Mohammedan and Christian, Papist and Protestant, Calvinist, Arminian and Universalist, all say, "*I believe in one God.*"

Now it has happened that theologians, in their

eagerness to formally state and explain this truth, and having in mind the different appellations by which God is known in the Scriptures, have declared that God exists in Unity and in Trinity. He is *one and he is three at the same time*. How, no man can know. It is a truth the mind cannot comprehend. Instead of leaving the subject where the Bible leaves it, theologians insist that one must assent to their metaphysical reasoning upon the mode of the Divine existence. Very naturally some minds will protest and deny the doctrine of the Trinity. Most Universalists so do. Nevertheless, candid reasoning will detect, after all, little difference in fact between the Universalist doctrine on this subject and the faith of the orthodox, or all of it than can be comprehended by the finite mind.

Recall for a moment, the article,—“We believe there is one God, whose nature is Love, revealed in one Lord Jesus Christ, by one Holy Spirit of Grace.”

Now, inasmuch, my friends, as we are unable to comprehend the Almighty, it is hardly worth our time to be disputing concerning his existence whether in Unity alone, or in Unity and in Trinity. It would be better to study other truths which he has revealed to us through Jesus Christ—truths that will save the soul.

But you say just here, Universalists do not look upon the nature of Christ and His work, as do other Church people. They deny that He was equal with God ; that He was very God, while contending for faith in His divinity. They make as you see a difference between the Deity and the divinity of a Being. Now, believing as I do in the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, I could wish that our brethren were more in accord with what is the general faith of Christendom in the Redeemer. Still I rejoice that Universalists testify that they believe that " He is the brightness of the Father's glory," and the " express image of His person ; " that He is " Heir of all things " and " Lord of all," and that He is the *only Savior of the world*.

Another point of difference in their creed and ours, is concerning the *Atonement*. We believe that " Christ died *for* our sins, according to the Scriptures." And that " God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died *for* us."

They believe that " Christ died *for* our sins according to the Scriptures ; " and, also, that " Christ died *for* us." But where is the difference? One says *for* means *instead of*. He died for us means, He died instead of us. The other that *for* means *in*

behalf of ; and He died for us means, He died in our behalf. There is, it is true, theologically much difference between these two meanings of the word, but practically not so much. The great truth, which they and we believe, and in which we all rejoice, is that Christ died for us, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. We orthodox have possibly too exclusively insisted upon the vicarious side of the truth, and they have too strenuously maintained only, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, and hath committed to us the ministry of reconciliation. The safe way is to cling to every possible meaning that can be put into the words : *He died for me !*

Universalists most emphatically teach the certainty and the impartiality with which God will punish the sinner. It is, no doubt, true that many persons are indulging sin as a sweet morsel, delaying repentance, resisting the Holy Spirit and letting conscience sleep in the false faith that, by and by, ere punishment overtakes them, they will arise and repent—be pardoned, and so escape the penalty of the broken law.

A falser and more fatal hope never lulled a soul to sleep. God hath said, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." "Sowing to the flesh thou shalt reap corruption." "Though hand join in hand,

the wicked shall not be unpunished." "The soul that sinneth it shall die." Thou canst not escape.

Under God's government, pardon is not the removal of the necessary penalty or results which follow the violated law, but it is the restoration of the sinner to the favor of God and the bestowal of grace, by which only can one successfully resist temptation. Pardon buys freedom for him who was a slave; it does not give back precious years wasted in the prison house. Pardon enables one indeed to love again that God whom he once hated; it cannot remove the sad memories of an ungrateful life.

There is need that this truth be emphasized by every pulpit, Evangelical or Universalist. Sound the alarm in the ears of men! Awaken the guilty consciences! Tell all who sin that they shall forever be the losers for their sin. By just so much as one debilitates body or soul, shall he be forever weaker. It is a terrible doctrine; but it ought to be preached to the end that men may turn from their evil ways.

I am thankful that Universalists do insist upon the truth that sin will be certainly and impartially punished. There is no escape from that. They have largely aided in emphasizing this truth. Canon Farrar, in his sermons on "Eternal Hope," gives evidence that the doctrine is being more

faithfully declared in pulpits outside of the Universalist Church. Says he: "The penalty is a genuine child of the transgression. We receive the things that we have done ; there is a dreadful coercion in our own iniquities ; an inevitable congruity between the deed and its consequences ; an awful germ of identity in the seed and in the fruit. We recognize the sown wind in the harvest whirlwind. We feel that it is we who have winged the very arrows that eat into our heart like fire. It needs no gathered lightning, no divine intervention, no miraculous message, to avenge in us God's violated laws. They avenge themselves."

It is my candid opinion that from no pulpits in the world is the punishment of sin, in its certainty and its impartiality, more faithfully set forth, than from the lips of ministers of the Universalist denomination, who are true to their professed creed. The contribution thus rendered the cause of truth and righteousness cannot be overestimated, and the aid afforded in helping to stay the tide of sin in society is large indeed. Yes, it must be confessed that Universalists do believe that sin will and must be punished, and in such faith they are in accord with the ripest and best judgment of philosophy, of common sense, and the word of God.

And now I approach a point where two ways meet, or one way parts into two paths, along either of which paths go those who differ as to the design and end of punishment. It is well known that the orthodox theories hold that punishment under the moral government of God is of two kinds, or, rather, has, or may have, two purposes. First, it is disciplinary, corrective, to restrain from further sin, to warn of the approach of greater danger, as the pain of a slight burn warns not to hold the hand in the fire; and, secondly, that punishment is vindicatory, retributive, necessary to magnify the majesty of law, and to present an everlasting example of the hard lot of violators of a just and holy law. "The law," says this theory, "*knows no mercy.*" It is inflexible. Its punishments are *pitiless*. It is the attribute of justice that punishes—not the attribute of love—or not, rather, love itself.

Now Universalists reject totally this view of penalty. They believe that God had a purpose in the establishment of a moral government over men. That purpose is to benefit men. "Obedience profits him; disobedience injures him." God is seeking the happiness of his children. The law is made because God knows that if men keep it, they will be happy. The law seeks his eternal good, and there-

fore they say, the penalty which is a part of the law, cannot be other than of such nature as to ultimately be a blessing to the offender, by leading him to repentance and the forsaking of sin. "To reclaim the sinner into the ways of peace, Divine love resorts to a discipline so stern, severe and formidable, as the inveteracy of the moral disorder may require." All punishment is therefore *remedial*.

Now I do not undertake to combat the theory here and now. To do so in this congregation to-night would betray a want of decorum of which I will not be guilty, believing it to be a sin to be impolite in even religious affairs. I will say this, I do not believe the theory is necessarily heretical. Neither in my judgment does it mitigate in the least the terrors of the law, or promise any immunity to the sinner.

Following as a necessary corollary of this proposition is the doctrine which is most specially characteristic of the denomination, that of the final restoration of all souls to obedience and happiness. If punishment is always corrective in its design, therefore it will ultimately lead to the reformation of the sinner. There can be no such thing as eternal punishment. It is maintained that a holy God whose nature is love, would not have instituted an order of government

under which a soul could sell itself into everlasting bondage. He would not allow the souls he had made and loves, to encounter such awful danger as that. I think I state the theory as it is held by the best authorities in that Church. If it be truth, it will not harm you ; if it be error, your own creed, and diligent study of the Word will prove a safeguard against it.

Now, as in these discourses I am seeking for whatsoever things are lovely and of good repute in the various Church creeds, allow me to confess that this theory in the judgment of some orthodox theologians is not altogether wrong. Or at least, it is better than the once generally declared dogma, that every sin, however small, deserves eternal punishment ; and that sin by a finite being against an infinite being requires an infinite penalty. And I may also be pardoned for saying, that it is infinitely better and safer than the idea once prevailing among Universalists (but not now) that every soul at death enters heaven.

To my mind, there is a possible *via media*, on which all will finally stand, Orthodox and Universalist, viz. this : "That sin must be punished ; that punishment will continue as long as sin continues. If men sin forever, they shall forever be punished."

Whether they will thus sin, is the point in contro-

versy between Universalism and other portions of the Christian Church. The question is not necessarily vital to Christian character. Let us rejoice in the things wherein we agree !

Now, beside these most important and fundamental issues, there are multitudinous questions that might be discussed in this discourse, were not the time too far spent. Of depravity, of the freedom of the will, regeneration, or the new birth, the resurrection, the sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper, church polity, evangelization of the world, the judgment, heaven and hell, we might speak at length.

We give a passing glance. Universalists repudiate the dogma of total depravity, denying that "babies are born little devils." They hold that men are as free by nature to do good as to do evil. The natural inborn tendencies to evil habits are not sin to those who are unfortunate enough to be thus fettered, but misfortunes simply. "In Adam's fall we sinned all," is nonsense to a Universalist and not to *them* alone. They believe in conversion, which is "effected in the soul by belief of the truth and the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit."

The resurrection is the calling of the soul out of this body into its new and heavenly body, and also the moral and spiritual change wrought in the soul through grace.

Concerning their belief in the power of the will, I have somewhat to say that will perhaps astonish you. You know there are two theories as to the freedom of the will in Christian Churches. That which is characteristic of Calvinism, viz., the will is not absolutely *free* to act. If Calvinism means anything at all, it means that God will see to it that the elect shall choose salvation. He so orders the events of their lives that they are willingly constrained to accept saving grace. Hence the elect will be saved. If Arminianism means anything, it is that men will be saved if they choose or will to obey God. They can so will or refuse. The will is absolute monarch of the soul. God does not interfere with its prerogative. Now, philosophically, Universalism is more in accord with Calvinism than with Arminianism. Says Dr. Hodge: "Of his own good pleasure God was free to elect, that none, or a few, or many, or all should be saved;" he chose to save some. They will be saved. Universalism says, "God of his good pleasure—that means love—chose to save all. All will be saved."

As an Arminian I must heartily confess I would choose the latter theory, infinitely sooner than to accept the former, for it honors God more to believe that having power to save *all, many, few or none*, he would choose to save *all*.

I said, philosophically, Universalism is more nearly allied to Calvinism than to Arminianism, but practically it is not so. For Universalists most heartily rejoice that in so many Churches a free salvation is preached, and whosoever will may come.

I am not a Universalist, else I would not preach in a Methodist pulpit, and declare that men are in danger of eternal punishment. I love the souls of men, and would seek to turn them from sin, because to sin is to be guilty of great folly, and is self-destruction.

It has been intimated that belief in the doctrines of Universalism is not derogatory to Christian character. I shall not say my brother here is less a Christian than I. I hope he is a better one.

I could wish that the doctrine of the final restoration to holiness and happiness of all men may prove true, for the sake of those millions of souls in all time, who have gone into eternity terribly laden with the sins of a lifetime. However it may be, this is sure, God is doing now all he can to save us from sin. Let us turn from them and live.

It is due that mention be made of the faithfulness of this denomination, through its press and pulpit, and by the votes of its adherents, to all the social reforms and benevolencies of this generation. In the days

of slavery agitation it was true to liberty. Its zeal in the noble work of temperance might be profitably copied by some denominations that boast a larger measure of orthodox truth, in their creeds ; and in charities for which, in these times, there are such loud calls, they do not lag behind their more wealthy and prosperous sister Churches.

My dear Universalist brother, will you suffer me a word of exhortation ? You know a Methodist sermon would not be complete unless it closed with a direct appeal to the conscience of the audience. There has been a fair statement, I trust, of the fundamental principles of your faith. You glory in their simplicity, their harmony with what you conceive of the character of the Infinite Heavenly Father, and the glorious ultimate destiny of all human souls. And if the doctrine be true, it is, indeed, one that should bid the devout soul loudly to rejoice in the abounding grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. But what I call upon you to remember and heed is that the simple intellectual belief of any truth or doctrines, accomplishes but little for him who thus believes and still less for those whom we ought to be rescuing from sin and shame.

Indeed, to believe a truth and not live consistently with such faith, brings great condemnation

upon the soul. "That servant which knew his Lord's will and *did* it not, shall be beaten with many stripes." Take heed, lest the fearful judgment come upon you. And how shall you escape it? Only by being true to your profession. Who would deny that a Universalist ought to lead a life of prayer? Is God the Heavenly father? Is He a Father who loves all His children? Is He the Author, by His Spirit of every holy purpose and pure desire that struggles in the soul? Surely then we ought to pour forth before Him our praise for mercies given and beseech the continuance of his loving favor. One who professes this faith, and does not daily worship God, is guilty of the basest ingratitude.

Yet, such is the inconsistency of men, that there might be found in this city, perhaps there are in this audience, many who, professing to rejoice in the truth of the loving Fatherhood of God, live totally thankless lives. In their homes is no altar of prayer; in their dwellings no closet into which having entered and shut the door they pray to the Father in secret, and He rewards them openly. Many there be, I fear, who are hoping for ultimate salvation, because of faith in this doctrine, who have not learned to love the assembling of the saints. The prayer and conference meeting has no charm for them. The

pleasures of the world and of sense, engross their thought ; the insane desire for riches has destroyed the hunger of the soul for the better wealth of righteousness and heaven. Their faith is *vain*. I beseech you, my friends, who rejoice in this creed, let your light shine before men. Let not the light that is in thee be darkness for great will be that darkness.

Dost thou believe that every sin shall surely be punished ; that nowhere, and at no time shall the guilty escape ? Flee, then, thy sins. Turn from them by hearty repentance, and forsake every evil way. That only is the way of peace, here or yonder. Dost thou believe “holiness and true happiness are inseparable ?” Then divorce them not in thy life. “Practice good works.” Doubtless, that system of doctrines is best and truest which naturally leads its adherents to do most to promote the glory of God by doing the most for the welfare of men.

“Show thy faith by thy works.” “Let your light so shine before men that others seeing your *good works* may glorify your Father which is in heaven.” No one can condemn an Universalism which shall produce prayerful holy lives, and expend its greatest energies in saving men from sin—and fitting them for heaven. May God send such a spirit upon all the Churches.

And do we not, my friends, each of us, this hour need to pray most earnestly that a new fervor of love, and a new life of zeal, may be born in our hearts? How unlike our faith have been our lives. Orthodox or Universalist as you may be, has there not been more of profession than of work? Waiteth not the Master, calling and saying, "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" See, the sun yonder is nigh the western horizon! It may set suddenly. Is thy life work even with the years already lived?

The Master comes soon to judge us. "How stands the dark account?" Shall we hear him say, "Thou hast been faithful?" Sad will it be from the mounts of vision in the eternal world, to look back upon a life almost wasted, whether there come with it the thought that probation has ended with time, or that a new opportunity will be given to do works meet for repentance. For sin, whether its punishment and consequences be eternal, or at last shall end, is the most terrible enemy of the soul.

"Coming after us with leaden footsteps, it sometime will smite with the iron hand of its own revenge."—(Farrar.) "Be sure thy sin will find thee out." On the walls of thy soul's chamber shall the fingers of a man's hand write, "*Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin.*"

But hear these sweeter words: "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Amen.

VIII.
METHODIST.

SERMON VIII.

THE METHODIST CHURCH.

And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. Revelation, xxii. 17.

And the poor have the gospel preached to them. St. Matthew, xi. 5.

Methodism in its infancy, was a revival in the Church of England, beginning in the first half of the eighteenth century. There was need of a reformation in that Church.

The reform from papal errors had been incomplete. The primitive idea of Christianity, as the kingdom of God within the soul, had not been fully restored. Says Bishop Burnet: "I cannot look on without the deepest concern, when I see the imminent ruin hanging over the Church, and over the whole reformation." Archbishop Secker says: "Such are the dissoluteness and contempt of principle in the higher part of the world, and the profligacy, intemperance, and fearlessness of committing crimes, in the lower, as must, if this torrent of impiety stop not, become absolutely fatal."

Bishop Butler writes : “ It has come to be taken for granted that Christianity is no longer a subject of inquiry ; but that it is now at length discovered to be fictitious.” Were other evidence needed I might read what Isaac Taylor, himself a Churchman says, to wit : that the Anglican Church had become an “ ecclesiastical system under which the people of England had lapsed into heathenism, or a state hardly to be distinguished from it.”

And the condition of religion in the dissenting Churches, among the Independents, Presbyterians and others, was but very little, if at all, better. Let me give testimony :—Methodism “ preserved from extinction and reanimated the languishing non-conformity of the last century, which just at the time of the Methodistic revival, was rapidly in course to be found nowhere but in books.”—(Isaac Taylor.)

Watts declares that there was a general decay of vital religion in the hearts and lives of men ; that this declension was common among Dissenters and Churchmen, and he called upon “ every one to use all possible efforts for the recovery of dying religion in the world.”

The Lutheran Reformation upon the continent, the germ of which was the doctrine of “ justification by faith,” had proved to be “ more an attempt

to overthrow the organic system of popery, than an evangelical revival of spiritual life in the Church." Undoubtedly it had done grand work in unshackling the minds of men from papal bondage, but it had already lost its moral power.

It did not at this time have enough spiritual energy to redeem it from the charge of being a heartless formalism.

It was also an era of wide-spread skepticism.—“The three greatest giants in the cause of skeptical errors, which modern times have produced,” viz : Bolingbroke, Hume, and Gibbon, were extensively influential in their published works.

Hannah More writes of this time : “It was a period when religion was held in more than usual contempt from its having been recently abused to the worst purposes, and when the higher walks of life exhibited that dissoluteness which the profligate reign of the second Charles made so deplorably fashionable.” About this time Voltaire was predicting that in the next generation Christianity would be overthrown throughout the civilized world.—(*v. Stevens, Vol. I., p. 76.*)

Mr. Lecky, an historian not at all partial to Methodism, declares that the doctrines which in the “eyes of modern evangelical Christians constitute at once

the most vital and influential portions of Christianity, such as the depravity of human nature, the lost condition of every man who is born into the world, the vicarious atonement of Christ, the necessity to salvation of a new birth, faith, the constant and sustaining action of the Divine Spirit upon the believer's soul,—these doctrines were during the greater part of the eighteenth century seldom heard from a Church of England pulpit."

"The moral essays which were the prevailing fashion, were utterly incapable of transforming the character and arresting and reclaiming the thoroughly depraved."

One of the Bishops of the English Church bears witness that there were thousands of his countrymen, though nominally Christians, "yet as ignorant of true Christianity as infidels or heathens."

I might multiply quotations from all classes of historians, and bring witnesses who lived at the time, and these all would agree that it was an age of skepticism, of great public immorality, of a low state of piety in the Churches; and what is most lamentable, there did not appear to human sight any promise of a coming reformation.

Surely it needed some stern prophet of God to arise, and "show the people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins."

It is one of the lessons of history, that when God's cause, or the liberties of men, need some great leader to recruit an army and conduct it to victory, a man is found. The call of God goes forth to some brave soul. He hears, and obeys.

Let us find the hero for that age. Let us get a view of the work which under God he was enabled to perform.

In the town of Epworth, the county of Lincolnshire, England, early in the eighteenth century, there lived one of the faithful men of God, the rector of that parish. His home was a humble, thatched cottage, with rooms above and below. There with his wife and eight children, the youngest but a babe, he dwelt fearing God, and hated by the ungodly because of his faithfulness in rebuking their sins. More than once the malice of his enemies had put the torch to his dwelling, but a merciful providence had averted the loss of the home, and danger to the lives of the inmates. But one night that most thrilling of all midnight cries, "*Fire! Fire!! Fire!!!*" rung out upon the stillness, and aroused the good rector to find his home in flames. The fire was in the upper part of the house, and there was the nursery in which five of the children were sleeping. Four of them are rescued; and the family gathered

near their burning home suddenly see that one of the children is missing, and almost at that moment they hear the cry of their six-year old boy up in the nursery. The father ran into the house and to the stairs, but they were so nearly consumed they would not bear his weight, and in an agony of unutterable woe he fell upon his knees in mighty prayer unto God.

But the boy has now climbed upon a chest standing near the window and can be seen by those without, his little face terrible with fear. Men climb to the window, and the boy is rescued, but not a minute too soon, for now see the roof has fallen in, and that nursery is a furnace of fire.

The child is carried to the parents and do you wonder that the father said : “ *Come, neighbors, let us kneel down ; let us give thanks to God ! He has given me all my eight children ; let the house go, I am rich enough !* ”

None but parents can have any just idea of the gratitude of heart which the good man must have felt at that hour.

A few years passed. The boy so wonderfully, nay so providentially rescued from a dreadful death, was of unusually bright intellect, quick to learn, diligent in all the duties imposed upon him. At the age of seventeen he became a member of Oxford University,

where he obtained a high reputation as a student. On account of his scholarship he secured a fellowship which was the privilege of having his expenses paid while engaged in further study, and soon thereafter he was elected to a professorship.

Already his purpose had been formed to enter the work of the ministry, but he scarcely felt himself worthy to take holy orders, and he so wrote to his aged father and mother. Let me read you a few lines his faithful mother sent him :

“ In good earnest resolve to make religion the business of your life, for, after all, that is the one thing that, strictly speaking, is necessary ; all things beside are comparatively little to the purposes of life. I heartily wish you would enter upon a strict examination of yourself, that you may know whether you have a reasonable hope of salvation by Jesus Christ. If you have the satisfaction of knowing it, it will abundantly reward your pains ; if you have not, you will find a more reasonable occasion for tears than can be met with in any tragedy.”

His devotional feelings increasing, he became anxious to begin his ministerial career. His father wrote him :

“ God fit you for your great work ; fast, watch and pray ; believe, love and endure and be happy, toward which you shall never want the most ardent prayers of your affectionate father.”

Visiting a man many years older than himself, and for whom he had great respect he received a few words of advice which had no little influence upon his life. Said the good man :

“ Sir, you wish to serve God and go to heaven. Remember, you cannot serve Him alone ; you must therefore *find* companions or *make* them ; the Bible knows nothing of solitary religion.”

He found companions, his brother and two other students. Three or four evenings of each week they studied the Greek Testament and the classics together. They were scrupulously systematic in all their work. The jails were regularly visited and they instructed the prisoners, and as opportunity allowed searched out the sick and the destitute whose wants they relieved.

They were opprobriously called “ Bible-bigots,” “ Bible-moths,” the “ Holy ” or the “ Godly Club ;” and one fellow, “ who builded better than he knew,” in reference to their methodical manner of life, called them “ METHODISTS.”

The little band increased in numbers, despite the scorn and petty persecution which was heaped upon its members. If you would infuse vigor into any enterprise, oppose it by injudicious means. About this time there came to the two brothers an urgent

request to go as missionaries to the colony of Georgia, in America, to labor with the Indians. John hesitated not wanting to leave his now widowed mother in her old age, but when she knew of the call of her sons to that work, she said :

“If I had twenty sons, I should rejoice that they were all so employed, though I should never see them again.”

On board the ship which was bearing them to America was a company of Moravians. Their freedom from fear in the midst of a terrible storm, that threatened death to the whole ship's company, astonished their fellow passengers, and none more so than the elder of the two brothers.

As yet his religion had not cast out the fear of death. He found himself a child in spiritual things. Arrived in the colony his success as a missionary to the Indians and minister to the colonists was small indeed. We can easily understand why. “He was an extreme ritualist and sought to force his peculiar notions upon the rude colonists. He would baptize their children only by immersion, he would not read the burial service over a “Dissenter ;” his sermons were bitterly personal, and he' was in numerous difficulties with his parishioners. Very wisely he resolved to return to England, where he arrived in

bad health and low spirits. "He redoubled his austerities and his zeal, but was tortured with doubts about the reality of his faith."

One evening at a meeting of a few friends in London, where "one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans, about a quarter before nine,"—to use his own words—"while he was describing that change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed; I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away *my* sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

Says a secular historian (Lecky, Vol. II, p. 607) : "It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that the scene which took place at that humble meeting in Aldersgate Street forms an epoch in English history. The conviction which then flashed upon one of the most powerful and most active intellects in England is the true source of (English) Methodism."

This zealous and unwearied man had tried good works, asceticism and ritualism in vain, and found through simple faith in Jesus Christ, the peace and joy for which his soul had yearned. He now became in labors more abundant. There was need of faithful preaching and pure living. For see this picture of

the state of English society, by one who then lived :
“The Lord’s day is now the devil’s market day. More lewdness, more drunkenness, more quarrels and murders, more sin is contrived and committed on this day than on all the other days of the week together. Strong liquors are become the epidemic distemper of this great city (London.) Sin in general is so hardened and rampant, as that immoralities are defended, yea justified on principle.”—(Bishop of Litchfield.) “In the higher classes of society, the taint left by Charles II. and his court still festered.”—(Tyerman.) The established Church was full of ignorant and most bitter bigotry, and the zeal of the dissenting clergy and people was at low tide. Sin and iniquity did much abound, but soon grace was much more to abound. A fire had been kindled in the soul of a man, the warmth and light of which shall shine in all lands. His burning zeal thrusts him forth wherever opportunity offers to preach the doctrine of a free and complete salvation through Jesus Christ.

And he is not alone in the great work. Helpers are at hand. George Whitefield, one of the most eloquent extemporaneous preachers the Christian world has known, with flaming zeal begins to arouse the souls of thousands to whom he preaches, in the

fields, on the commons, everywhere that men will assemble to hear the new and strange story, as they had not before heard it. Like fire in stubble so spreads the increasing flame. The pulpits are closed against them. If these men preach they must preach, as did the Master, out under the dome of the heavens. Churchmen and Dissenters agree in this : that the new doctrines and irregularities (as they deem them) of these zealots, must be religiously opposed. To denounce them, to warn the people against them, is to do God service. Everywhere the new "sect" is spoken against. And yet it is no new "sect" at this time. Societies of believers have been formed, "bands" organized, but their members are constantly instructed to lessen not one whit their service to the established Church. On the contrary, the Wesleys, Whitefield, and all the early preachers of the new movement, agree that they are only seeking to promote a revival of true religion in the Church. They do not aim to establish another Church. They are only seeking to bring men to Christ. All unprejudiced historians agree that these men had evidently no ambitious designs to conserve. They were truly lovers of the souls of men. Of course it could but follow that when the pulpits were closed against them, they would preach in any place.

where people could be assembled. Hence the vast outdoor congregations. It was a great departure from the custom of the times. Says Mr. Wesley: "I could scarcely reconcile myself at first to this strange way of preaching in the fields, having been all my life, till very lately, so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin if it had not been done in a Church."

Wonderful throngs of people gathered in the fields to hear the word of life. It is thought that often as many as twenty thousand would listen eagerly for an hour to the thrilling words of these zealous heralds of the cross. Great success attended the word. Thousands were converted and gathered into societies. But these faithful men of God were everywhere spoken against. Ridicule, caricature, slander, violence, every weapon that bigotry could invent was used upon them. They were in perils, in danger of being stoned, nay more than once they were cruelly wounded by brutal malice, and the authorities of the Church were in great measure responsible for it; inasmuch as from the pulpits, and in the press, they were bitterly denounced as fanatics and promoters of all manner of heresies. Nevertheless it is certain that the "Wesleys and Whitefield were at this time

doing more than any other contemporary clergymen to kindle a living piety among the people." (Lecky II. p. 610). The movement spread over the surface of the empire ; it more or less permeated every section of society. In Wales the adherents of the societies were numerous. In Ireland large success was secured. God was evidently in the work. I am sure it would interest you if I should trace briefly the growth and organic development of Methodism to the time when it became finally separated from the Church of England, and began its mission in the world as a distinct portion of the Universal Church, but the limits of a sermon will not allow. That is the work of the historian. Still I cannot forbear giving you what one historian says of John Wesley, the chief agent in the work. "Beyond all other men it was John Wesley to whom this work was due. Few things in ecclesiastical history are more striking than the energy and success with which he propagated his opinions. He was gifted with a frame of iron and with spirits that never flagged. He lived eighty-seven years and continued his efforts to the very close. He preached usually at five o'clock in the morning. When he was eighty-five he once delivered eighty sermons in eight weeks. In the very last year of his life he went on a missionary

journey to Scotland, and on one occasion traveled seventy miles in a single day. During the greater part of his career he was accustomed to preach about eight hundred sermons a year, and it was computed that in the fifty years of his itinerant life he traveled a quarter of a million miles, and preached more than forty thousand sermons.”—(Lecky, II. p. 682-3)

Surely my hearers, whatever be your opinion of Methodism itself, you can but acknowledge that its founder was one of the most remarkable men who have ever lived to bless the world. Remarks the same author : “ He had a wider constructive influence in the sphere of practical religion than any other man who has appeared since the sixteenth century. (p. 687.)

“ A greater poet may arise than Homer or Milton, a greater theologian than Calvin, a greater philosopher than Bacon, a greater dramatist than any of ancient or modern fame ; but a more distinguished revivalist of the Churches than John Wesley, never.”—(Dr. Dobbin.) “ He was a man ” says Lord Macaulay, “ whose eloquence and logical acuteness might have rendered him eminent in literature, whose genius for government was not inferior to that of Richelieu, and who devoted all his powers, in defiance of obloquy and derision, to what he sincerely considered the highest good of mankind.”

If you ask why so much time has been given to this outline history of the man whose honor and glory it is to have founded Methodism, the answer is, if we would rightly understand how great are the privileges, and how blessed the influences which are given forth from the broad and deep stream of religious life, known as Methodism, we must first have stood amid the rocky and desert wastes of the eighteenth century skepticism and immorality, and have seen the man of God, whose hand smote the rock whence came the waters forth, a river of life, to thousands of his own day, and to millions then unborn. Is it not true, my hearers, that but few are present to-night in this audience who have not in some measure been blessed by the direct or indirect influence of the Methodist Church. Through its ministry you were converted ; in the use of its ordinances you have been kept in the way of life, and in its fellowship you hope to die. It is not needful that you be reminded of its doctrine, polity or history, in order that your love for the Church may be increased.

Still for you and any of the congregation to-night who are not adherents of its faith, there may be profit in hearing somewhat of the doctrines and work of this branch of the Universal Church.

Toward the close of John Wesley's life he wrote in

his journal: "Near fifty years ago, a great and good man, Dr. Potter, then Archbishop of Canterbury, gave me an advice for which I have ever since had occasion to bless God. 'If you desire,' said the Archbishop, 'to be extensively useful, do not spend your time and strength in contending for or against such things as are of a disputable nature, but in testifying against open notorious vice and in promoting real essential holiness.'"

And adds Mr. Wesley, as though speaking to every Methodist, through all time: "Let us keep to this, leaving a thousand disputable points to those that have no better business than to toss the ball of controversy to and fro. Let us keep close to our point. Let us bear a faithful testimony in our several stations against all ungodliness and all unrighteousness, and with all our might recommend that inward and outward holiness without which no man shall see the Lord."

Now I hesitate not to affirm that Methodism, true to this admonition of its founder, has been faithful in its testimony against sin, and in warning men to "flee from the wrath to come."

It has not wasted its energies, by contending in its pulpits for the unimportant "sibboleths" and "shibboleths" of human dogma, but rather has sought to keep

the faith of men right by making their hearts pure. It has had no time to dispute as to the mode of baptism, the number of the elect, the apostolic succession, the real presence, or the proper form of church government. It has deemed the "faith once delivered to the saints" to be simply the grand gospel truth, that Jesus Christ came "*to seek and to save that which was lost.*" And so, from the time of Wesley till now, the only terms of admission into the society as a probationer, has been "a desire" on the part of the applicant "to flee from the wrath to come," and for a long time the only requisites for full admission were what are known as the "General Rules," which refer more to conduct than to doctrines. The abridgment of the thirty-nine articles of the Established Church of England, which Wesley prepared, for the Methodist Episcopal Church in America were not "obligatory symbols, to be subscribed to, but were merely quoted as an indicative standard of the best theological opinion. And members of the Church were not to be amenable for their individual opinions, but only for making strife and trouble in the denomination by them."—(Dr. Stevens.)

Says this great historian of Methodism: "It cannot be questioned that John Wesley was not only immeasurably in advance of his own age, but also far in advance of ours in 'evangelical liberality.'"

Yet notwithstanding this apparent neglect of dogmatic faith, the frame work of the christian system, the Methodist Church has never been troubled by heresies in its midst. The secret of this freedom is the great truth, that if the heart be kept pure and the life active in religious labor, there is no danger that a Church or an individual will go astray from the few and simple fundamental principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ. These are so consonant with the purest intuitions and instincts of humanity, that a man cannot be false to them unless he has first been untrue to his conscience, and has thus perverted his moral judgments.

And of all the many thousands who have gone out from the Methodist Church to find a religious home in other christian organizations, very few indeed, have departed from us because of a change in their belief. Other motives have led to the result.

In no other Church on earth is there such general agreement as to the principles of faith which in fact make up the creed of the Church. We are at one with ourselves, and in unison with all other Christians concerning the granite truths of Christianity. And this harmony has been secured more by the practice of "good works" and emphasizing the simple truths

of the gospel, than by the preaching of dogmatic theology. I repeat, and desire you to remember, that Methodism was not a new theological system, but a revival of spiritual life and godliness; a "concern as to those doctrines only which are essential to personal religion." A brief epitome of its creed would be,—All men are sinners, and in danger of eternal death, but Jesus Christ died for all, and every man may be saved if he will repent and be converted. And every man can repent.—This is its *Arminianism*. Its theology is founded not on the Absolute Sovereignty of God, but on His Eternal Fatherhood; and in the first fifty years of its ministry here in America, it constantly proclaimed the glorious news of free salvation, to men over whom the influence of the preaching of the divine decrees, so called, had proven anything but salutary; and it awoke them to repentance and a new life. Hence its remarkable success in the early days of our Republic. Men would receive a gospel which so emphasized the love of the Heavenly Father, and the universal redemption of the human race, in the Atonement of Jesus Christ. *They could believe that God is an Absolute Sovereign, infinite in wisdom, omnipotent in power, but using his wisdom and exercising his power under the control of perfect love.*

Now while this sermon is one of the series "What Christians Believe," and therefore you might rightly judge that it ought to say more about what we believe, than what we claim to have done in the world, allow me to suggest as explanatory, that in this case of my own Church, I am heeding the injunction of the Apostle and *showing you our faith by our works*.

Methodism has been most aptly characterized as "*Christianity in earnest*." If you doubt that look at its fruits. Says Coleridge a bitter opponent of the system: "That it ever made or tends to make a Christian I doubt, though it has been the occasion, and even cause, of turning thousands from their evil deeds, and that it has made, and tends to make, bad and mischievous men peaceable and profitable neighbors and citizens, I delight in avowing." Surely one might suspect that such a reformation as that was quite a step toward the high standard of a christian life.

An eminent modern English Historian, Mr. Lecky declares that it effected a great moral revolution in England, exercising its deepest influence over the lower and middle classes, and "planted a fervid and enduring religious sentiment in the midst of the most brutal and most neglected portions of the population."

Similar work has been accomplished in this land through the agency of this denomination. Indeed so successful has been the Methodist Church, in gathering within its pale the masses of the common people, that it has come to be almost a stereotyped and patronizing remark which some snobbish Christians make—“Ah yes, the Methodist Church will do well enough for the poor.” But meanwhile Methodism rejoicingly goes on its way, remembering that one of the great evidences which Jesus sent by John’s disciples to their master, who had sought from Christ the signs that his gospel was from above,—one of the greatest, if not the greatest, was “Unto the poor the gospel is preached.” God only knows what influences would have saved the uncared-for millions of this land, had not Methodism carried the gospel unto the poor.

The taunt is unchristian and un-American, and what may seem to a proud soul the humility of the Church is its highest possible glory.

Methodism obtained quite a foothold in America before the Revolution, and in common with other denominations it suffered much loss of its power, during the long strife, owing to the unsettled condition of society. But when the war had closed and prosperity returned, a new era was before it. Was

there not something providential in the fact of its itinerant ministry?

Hear! Previously to 1790, the center of population in America was east of the longitude of Washington. In 1820, it was seventy-two miles west. In 1830, one hundred and eight miles, and so on to the present time, westward has rolled the wave of population. The great West was to be entered and to become the seat of empire. Do you not see that the settled ministries of the other Churches were ill prepared to meet the wants of a moving population. The new world needed a ministry that could itinerate with the people, keeping full abreast the tide of emigration.

Says one who was long a Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church: "I bear my testimony that in one of the great States of the West, where I labored, I never could get ahead of the Methodist preacher. I never entered into the wild fastnesses of Kentucky, but I found a Methodist preacher had gone there before me with his saddle-bags; and I never found myself down upon one of the villages of the Ohio or Mississippi, but my eyes were greeted by the sight of the small, humble Methodist meeting-house.

Methodism has been an evangel to the poor, and it may take up to-day the language of her Lord

without irreverence, and say: 'The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.' "

And so, whatever may be your opinion as to the wisdom and efficiency of the itinerant system of ministry now, in a more settled and permanent population, you can but acknowledge that no other scheme could have been so wondrously successful in keeping the religious tide even with the wave of population that moved and is moving westward still.

We take another glance at the condition of society just following the Revolution, and we are more fully than before convinced that God was in this movement called Methodism. It is well known that skepticism is always at flood tide in any country, just after a great war. "The practical suspension of the Decalogue," which war has been well described as being, brings a torrent of vices upon a people, and vice in the heart and life, is the prolific source of infidelity. There was much of it immediately following the Revolution. How should the tide be stayed? Never has it been, or will it successfully be resisted, except by the faithful preaching of the simple doctrines of the gospel, not in a dogmatic or polemic manner, but straight home to the guilty heart. So preaching went forth the early Methodist itinerants. So preach-

ing they won men from unbelief, and they were saved by the blood of the atonement. And now as then, the great specific for an apparent and threatening unbelief is the faithfulness of the pulpit to the vital doctrines of experimental godliness. A gospel that saves men from vice will commend itself even to the prejudiced intellect of educated unbelief.

May we not, in view of its past history, justly claim that the greatest characteristic of Methodism is its missionary spirit? And what it is *now* doing in this respect, also declares how well it understands and exemplifies the motto of its illustrious founder, "The world is my parish." For see, it has belted the globe with its circuits and stations, mapped out in every quarter of the earth, and all the great islands of the sea, and the circuit rider does his work under a never-setting sun. How well it has obeyed the command, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," may be inferred from the fact that its missions "enrol a larger number of converts from heathenism than all other Protestant missions combined."—(Dr. Stevens in *History of Methodism*, I. 34.)

Nor has it neglected the heathen at home, or forgotten those of every language who have come to our land to find a home under religious institutions. For

already the great Chinese problem is being solved by the unpretentious but persecuted labors of our mission to the Chinese in San Francisco, through which efforts they are made good citizens ; and also by our domestic missions, to others among us, who are destitute of the gospel, and notably so, among the Freedmen of the South.

Thus feeding others it is itself fed, for "*The liberal soul shall be made fat.*"

Attending the life of every man there is what may be called an *unconscious influence*, which works for good or ill upon all with whom he associates. It is the mighty force, which emanates from *character*, and its power is resistless. So every Church has its individuality, its character, and unconsciously to its own members it largely modifies the belief and religious life of all other Churches.

Now providentially or otherwise, the Methodist Church has exercised an immeasurable influence over other denominations. It will not by an intelligent hearer be considered boastful, nor a discourtesy to any other creed, for me to remind you of what I believe to be the truth, that while the preaching of the free gospel of our Arminian faith, has not blotted out the creed of Calvinism from any of the sister Churches, nor perhaps destroyed the faith of their pulpits in the

divine decrees, it has at least silenced those pulpits so far as the preaching of genuine Calvinism is concerned, and a census of all the Churches to-day, Protestant, Catholic and Reformed, would reveal that Arminianism is the belief of the vast majority of Christians. So triumphs the truth as it is in Jesus Christ. You may look again and discover how in modes of church work, the zealous evangelistic system, of which early and modern Methodism is a good illustration has been patterned by Churches of other names. Nor must it be forgotten that the Sunday School idea originated with the Methodists of England ; Rowland Hill organizing the first Sunday School ever held in London, and Bishop Asbury, in the year 1786, beginning them in the United States. It would be honor enough for one Church in America to have instituted a form of church labor which has proven so great an agency in bringing the youth into the Church. But rejoicing let us always remember, "It is God that worketh in us, to will and to do of his good pleasure."

But I hasten to declare what is patent to all that know our history, that Methodism has been a vast recruiting camp for other Churches. I do not mean that other Christian denominations have tried to induce Methodist people to leave their own humble

home and dwell in their goodly palaces. Not this ; nevertheless it is true that thousands have gone out from among us. Not indeed as was said of some in other days, because they were not of us. Nay, nay, they have gone out from us, and are found in the sister denominations, but they are of us yet ; one with us in doctrine, (I am a Methodist still they proudly say,) having the same spirit of the Master as of yore.

They have gone out from among us, some because of dislike of our system of frequent pastoral changes, some for this reason, some for that, and we bid them all God-speed ; but pitying most of all those who went forth hoping in the change to improve their social standing, for have they not already learned to their sorrow that social culture and power depends very little upon one's church relationship ?

The converts at Methodist altars, whose names are now on the church lists of sister denominations, are they not numbered almost by the hundreds even in our own city ? Not in sadness do we say it, but rejoicing rather that to Methodism has been granted the glorious privilege of not only helping itself, but of ministering unto others.

The hour has passed. I can only pause to answer one ever recurring complaint that is made

against our Church, to-wit: That it has not been as zealous for education as have other Churches. I meet the objection by begging you to remember that its origin was at Oxford University; its first ministers were men of culture and literary skill, but when converts multiplied it became necessary to send forth uneducated men to preach; yet they were men who knew God's word and could mightily wield the sword of the Spirit. Methodism has never despised education. Dr. Stevens is authority for the statement that Princeton College, the fortress of Presbyterianism in America, received a Methodist baptism at its birth. Whitfield inspirited its founders, and Methodists in England gave it funds.

Dartmouth College arose from the same impulse. It received its chief early funds from the British Methodists, and bears the name of one of their chief Calvinistic associates. Methodism is not, nor ever has been, a foe to education. Though its ministry has been more unlettered in the past than that of some other Churches, it was only because necessity was upon it; the harvest was so great, and so ripe, that her young men were compelled to learn to use the gospel sickle in the field itself. But to-day more graduates of colleges are knocking at the Conference doors than can be received; and to-day there are

more colleges and seminaries in the United States under the control of Methodism than those of any other Church; and more young men and young women are graduated every year from Methodist institutions of learning than from those of any other Protestant denomination.

Remembering these facts, and that our religious periodical press vastly exceeds in the extent of its circulation that of other creeds, we may safely believe that Methodism aims to develop the intellects as well as the emotions of its adherents, and is the patron of the highest learning. But, my brethren, Methodism, however glorious, has been its success, however well adapted to the wants of the world have been its methods, is not the whole of the household of faith. We have simply done *our work in our way*. Other Churches have done *their work in their way*. To God be all the glory. Every Church will go on in its own way, winning souls for the Master. Let us as Methodists thus do.

We have no time for controversy. If others challenge the validity of our ministry, we answer them not, but joyfully say to the two millions of souls throughout the globe brought to Christ through our ministry, as St. Paul said to the Corinthians: "If I am not an apostle unto others, doubtless I am an apostle unto

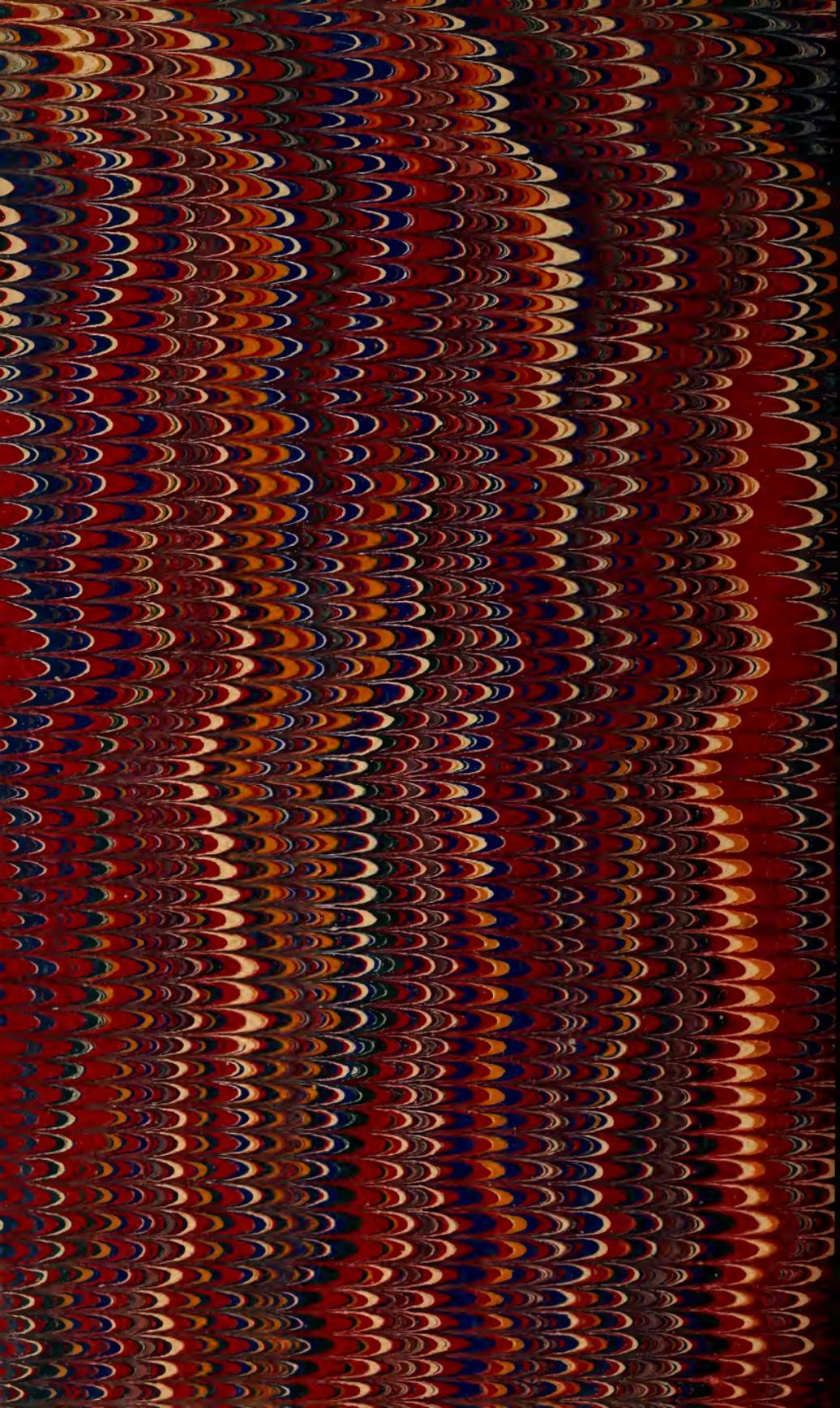
you, for the seal of my apostleship are ye in the Lord."

If they say our system of itinerancy is a grievous burden upon the minister with its frequent changes ; it requires too great a sacrifice ; it necessitates too short pastorates for the highest efficiency of the office of an under-shepherd, and it is not adapted to the present wants of the Church and society, we answer : The ministry was instituted that men might be *servants* of the Church ; no sacrifice is too great that by it souls may be won ; while by our itinerancy the congregations are so served that none are ever without a pastor, nor is ever a pastor without a church ; and finally, the system of Methodism is elastic enough so that if experience shall demonstrate that a longer term would be better, the change will be made in time to meet the needs of the age.

My brother, rejoice most of all not that you are a *Methodist*, but that you are a *Christian*. Let your loyalty and devotion to God, the Father, Son, and Spirit, be supreme over any affection for the Church in which you have a home ; and thank God most of all, that in order to attain to the highest excellency, whether as a Roman Catholic, Protestant Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Baptist, Congregationalist, Lutheran, Universalist or Methodist, you

must "Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength ; and thy neighbor as thyself."

"Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen."





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