

## **REASONS FOR EXPECTING TOLERATION IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.**

A Brother, the Editor of a contemporary Journal, publishes his reasons for expecting *toleration* in the Presbyterian Church as follows:

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1. It resides in the very idea of the church that there must be growth in divine knowledge until her ultimate unity and perfection are attained. To this end there must be room for the free operation of the Spirit of God in unfolding the truth. This requires opportunity for reverent investigation and discussion. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

2. Because of confessed obscurity in the whole of the church's teaching concerning the last things. Our wisest teachers admit that the Reformed Theology left many of these problems unsolved, and that a fuller investigation of them is a duty put upon the church in these last days by the Spirit and Providence of God.

3. Because a new era of investigation at points even more essential than this is coming upon the Presbyterian Church, which it is both unwise and impossible to resist. Whatever evils may result from this spirit of free inquiry, the evils of its suppression would be far greater.

4. Because a wide diversity already exists between the views of future punishment current among us, and as presented from our pulpits, and the statements of our Standards that both before and after the resurrection, "the wicked are to be punished with most grievous and unspeakable torments, without intermission, with the devil and his angels in hell-fire forever." If fidelity to these statements is to be the test by which our right to remain in the church is to be determined, then we ask our brethren to honestly ask before God whether they are so

free from sin in this respect as to have the right to cast a first stone at us.

5. Because we honestly believe that we have taken up this line of testimony in obedience to the Spirit of God, and from motives of sincere love for the whole church, which needs this larger, better view of God's great plan of grace before it can be unified; and specially in the interest of the Presbyterian Church to whose welfare we have devoted a life-long ministry, and which greatly needs relief from the incubus of monstrous views of God's sovereign justice which obscure her own constant testimony to His fatherhood and grace.

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Full of love for blinded brethren, this brother earnestly desires to carry the entire Presbyterian Church into the light, and so desires of it toleration, that is, permission to stay in its company and to anoint all their eyes as his own have been anointed – with the truth. What this brother desires to do for those with whom he spent so long a bondage, we desire to do for all the sects into which the great adversary has seduced God's children.

But we see what he evidently has not yet seen, viz: That the light which ultimately shall be to every creature, can as yet reach and be appreciated only by a "little flock," the true church, which is the *body* of Christ.

If the Presbyterian Church were the *real, true* Church whose names are all written in heaven, this brother's expectations of opening their eyes would be justifiable. But he should be able to see that this is not the case; none of the sectarian systems, great or small, are *the* Church which is Christ's body; though members of his "body," members of the heaven-recorded Church are probably still in bondage in every sect.

It is because these sect-systems are not the true Church, and because we have reached the "harvest" time of separation, that the Lord gives present light, and meat in due season, and calls on all of his people to "come out" into the light, the truth, the liberty proper for children of God.

God not only saw our day and knew how it would be, but he had it written in his Word for our learning; and it is not written that the tares growing with the wheat may be changed into wheat, but that the two classes *may be separated*.

Our Brother evidently is in heart free already from the shackles of the Presbyterian Creed; but he should be entirely free. Why help to uphold in any degree slavery to a creed and get others under it who have not the moral strength to free themselves even in heart? Why stay in a human organization of any sort, where our company is not desired, except at the cost of stifling our convictions of right and truth? Why not, on the contrary, obey actually as well as mentally the Lord's command to separate, to "Come out" of all the Babylon bondage and confusion, and thus not only make straight paths for our own feet, but thus make foot-prints which may encourage and guide some weaker brother or sister out of the bondage of sects, into the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free to follow unhindered and untrammelled his word and example?

The brother is asking liberties and privileges granted only in the *true* Church where the spirit of the Lord is, and where the *liberty of his Word* is granted. Hence, one of two things is sure to happen – the brother will either abate his energy on the side of truth and liberty, (which we hope he will never do, but rather increase it,) or else he will get out of the sect and into closer fellowship with the true Head of the Church and with the "true Church which is his body." Like others, the Presbyterian sect never agreed to grant toleration, and never has shown any.

When a man joins that Church, it is on the same principle that people join other human organizations, partnerships, societies, etc., viz.: They agree to submit to the rules and by-laws *as they are*. And when this brother took upon him his Ordination Vows as a minister of the Presbyterian Church, though he was already a minister (servant) in the *true* Church and anointed, as *all the members* of that *body* are, with the Holy Spirit of the truth, he BOUND himself in the presence of witnesses that so long as he was a member and minister of Presbyterianism he would "*not teach or inculcate anything opposed to the doctrines*" of that organization; to which doctrines he there subscribed as representing his faith.

We are well aware that *many*, after changing their faith, still continue to hold membership and office in these organizations; and some, in violation of their vows, *do teach and inculcate doctrines opposed to the doctrines* of the sects to which they are pledged. But is this right? They generally excuse themselves by the claim that the denomination claims to uphold and believe the *truths* taught in the *Bible*, while they are sure they now have more truth and Bible support than the sect. But is this a sufficient ground of excuse for such a course? Is it doing by them as we would have them do by us if our places were changed? We think not.

The very spirit and intent of the ordination vow was to bind, to compel a man by his solemn pledge, not to use his office or influence inside the organization, against it *as it stands* – to compel any who might come to differ on any point, to first get out of the ministry of their sect, cease from professing the faith he no longer holds, before he could attack it.

To us it seems that a contract is not less binding on a saint, than on a worldling; and such a contract as Presbyterians, Methodists, Lutherans, Roman Catholics and others impose upon their ministers, should certainly be considered as binding as a note, or a bond, in the business world; and business honor would insist on a full compliance

with both the *letter* and *spirit* of the contract – that when the faith changes, the minister or member should step down and out, before uttering a word of contrary teaching.

In the case of Baptists, Disciples, and a few other denominations, the case differs a little, since some of these *claim* to have no creed or standard but the Bible. In such a case a minister or member is at liberty to teach all he finds in the Bible, and if interfered with, may, if he choose, insist on a trial of his case by the Bible. But with these, other means than a trial are generally resorted to, such as social ostracism, money pressure, etc., until a saint is glad to escape from so many "tares" to get a better chance for worship and study, "*one* [saint] with *another*," or where this is impossible, in private Scripture study alone.

But in the case of Presbyterians, Methodists, etc., they guard themselves, and do not even claim to accept the Bible as the *only* rule of faith and practice. They candidly and openly state, in so many words, just what they want all members and ministers to subscribe to as their faith; and when any are tried for *heresy* by these, the Bible is not brought forward at all, but (properly according to their organization or contract) "the standards" of their organization. The Bible is the standard, not in name merely, but *indeed*, to the *true* Church; but with the sects, each has its own "Standards," "Creed," dogmas, etc., to which, on joining, members *subscribe*; and surely their trial should be according to their contract, which *they agreed to be bound* by, and to which they are therefore responsible.

Any contract made with fellow-men is binding; and to violate it, even in the interest of truth, would be wrong. We must not do evil that good may result, but *do right*, and leave all results to God, who promises in due time to cause the righteousness of his saints to shine forth as the noon-day. If, therefore, a Christian finds himself bound to a creed and sect, he should at once look up the *Faith* he professed in joining them – the faith he agreed neither to add to, nor to diminish, *so*

*long as he remained one of them*; he should see whether it fully and clearly expresses his present faith. If it does not, he should *at once* withdraw; for by any other course he violates his contract with his fellow-men. To refrain from teaching the truth fully and clearly, after God has brought us to a knowledge of it, would prove us unworthy of a place in the "body of Christ," would prove that we are not overcomers, and not worthy of a place among the Royal Priesthood, the true sanctuary, the Ambassadors for God before the world.

We would like to impress upon every reader that to teach or to believe *anything* different from a Confession of Faith to which by membership you profess to hold, is a wrong to God, to the sect whose name is borne, to yourself, and to the true members of the body of Christ. Whatever the difference between your faith and the *Creed* of the sect to which you are attached, to that extent exactly your course is wrong, dishonest, unsaintly, and hence ungodly; because, to that extent you are misrepresenting God's Word and plan, and hence displeasing him; to that extent you are misrepresenting the sect, and hence offending and wronging them, even if they would tolerate you; to that extent you are dishonoring yourself as a child of God, one of the children of [R982 : page 5] the light – the truth, – not only by the shackles of your denominational slavery, which are galling to all whom the Son makes free indeed, but by reason also of the deception and misrepresentation practiced daily, in outwardly, to saints and sinners, professing by the Creed you uphold, doctrines which you detest and which sometimes and under some circumstances you would deny as unscriptural and as misrepresentations of God's character and plans, and also misrepresentations of your *honest* belief. To the same extent also you injure the true body of Christ, especially the "babes in Christ," for you not only do not give the moral weight of your presence, and influence, and talent, and means, to further the cause of true liberty among the saints, and true union on true principles, but you give to the opposition the weight of your influence, means, talents and presence, and constitute one of the numbers whose support and names are bids to the world for its respect and alliance. Not only do you serve

Babylon's purpose as a decoy for others, but possibly the weight of your influence keeps many of the "babes" and weaker brethren in bondage, not only hindering their development, but keeping their influence, and talents, and means *away* from the free fellow-members in the same [R983 : page 5] true body and adding these advantages to the false systems, the *nominal* church, to help perpetuate and draw others into the errors and bondage which galls you, and which misrepresents you even more than you misrepresent it.

Thus you become a false beacon-light to the poor world seeking the peace and joy of Christ, luring them into doctrines which, if honestly accepted and firmly held by them, will blind them and ensnare them, and prevent the peace, and light, and joy, and love of the real gospel. It was looking thus at the influence of sects in the time of the first advent, that our Lord said to the zealous Pharisees, "Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, he is two-fold more the child of hell [destruction] than he was before." So now, it is far better to let the world alone, than to get them into sects which will only blind them to the *truth* and misrepresent to them God's character and plan. Far better; because when the light of the now dawning Sun of Righteousness reaches them, it will have far more influence upon them where they are, in and of the world, than if *converted* by the spirit of error into tares, in imitation of real wheat.

But when you come to examine the Creed to which you subscribed, Pastors generally say, "Oh, never mind! It matters little anyhow." And if you insist on seeing and pondering its professions, promises, and covenants, they will often unblushingly assure you that neither they, the pastors, nor a majority of the membership, believe *all* to which you and they subscribed; and that they *never did believe* or teach such and such portions. And they will try in every way to hold you in their sects (especially if you have money or influence – which few of the little flock have, – Jas. 2:5,) because naturally a professed field of wheat would not like to lose all its wheat and have only tares left.

Such Pastors may even resort to the specious misleading argument that *you joined* merely the local company of which he is the pastor; and claim that *his faith* is the measure by which the members of this local organization are to be judged, and not the written confession of faith, and the written Covenant to which you assented and subscribed. But both of these arguments are wrong; all local organizations (*except* such as have what is known as Congregational government) are parts of systems, so that in joining the Episcopal Methodists, for instance, your *covenant* is not merely with the local organization, but with the M.E. Church as a system; and the Pastor's faith, or his violation of his covenant with the organization, is no more an excuse for you, than the fact that other men violate business covenants would be an excuse for your doing so. Custom and numbers can never make wrong right. The fact is, a large majority of the membership of all denominations are really covenant breakers, whether they have given the matter sufficient thought to realize it or not. They either do not know or do not care what is the Creed to which they have subscribed, or else, knowing it, they believe it only in part, if at all; and yet by subscribing to it all, they act out an untruth before the world, before one another and before their families. The demoralizing influence of this double dealing is unmistakable in toughening and searing the conscience, tending to make such both unworthy of the truth and unable to readily accept it, as they get into the habit of thinking of others as being as insincere as themselves in their teachings and professions.

Duty seems plain from this standpoint: However others may violate covenants, and misrepresent themselves, the truth and the systems to which they are joined, the consecrated have no choice, as to their course of action. *Not any* of their influence, time, or money, must go to sustain error. All of it must be enlisted on the side of the truth, which is ever opposing error, even as light opposes darkness. As children of the light, we can have *no fellowship* with any of the unfruitful works of darkness, but must rather reprove them.



Should all do so, should all honestly withdraw from sects and creeds which do not truly and fully represent their faith, the result would be the immediate disruption of all these great sectarian systems, which now ensnare the consciences of many of God's children, and dress up and fondle "the children of this world" in imitation of the children of God. Many of the "tares" would come out honestly and say that they believe little or nothing, and would get back to their place in the world from which they were never really converted by the *truth*.

The saints would be entirely free and unhindered to grow up to the fullest measure of grace, knowledge and love. Others in various stages of childhood, and even the "babes in Christ," would be blessed too. At first they would make hundreds of new combinations of thought, only to be broken continually as they would grow up into Christ in all things, until finally they would reach the position of the early Church, and stand where we now do, recognizing no bondage, attempting to bind none, and refusing to be bound by any other than that faith which no man can ignore and yet be in Christ at all, viz., that the Bible is God's revelation of his plan, and the only guide for faith, and that as a race we were sinners, but were redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. Planted on this foundation, all God's children may grow from babes which feed at first only on the "milk" up to strong men who feed upon the "meat in due season" from the same storehouse.

This union of heart and mind upon the rock, without other limitations, gives room for the exercise of every grace and gift of the spirit in the Church, each member of which is a minister, in proportion to his ability to minister to the needs of "the body." And it leaves room, too, for the Head to exalt or debase, to honor or to chasten, according to faithfulness, each member in "the body" – each minister, or servant.

But all will not thus act out conscientiously; all cannot do so; all have not the strength: and so long as they are fed on the present diet of worldliness, pride, sectarian rivalry, deceit (as in professing doctrines not believed), etc., with a very little *skimmed* "milk of the Word," they

cannot get the strength to come out boldly and oppose the majority, the strong, proud children of this world, who grow strong on the diet refused by the "meek."

Hence our Lord pictures over and over again, especially in the Revelation, the complete fall of these systems in order to the liberating of the "great company" of the true wheat class. But we who see, and who have strength, and who by valiant energy for the truth could help others, shall we for fear, or any other motive, draw back and lend our influence in any degree to these systems, which in the name of God and of truth, are misrepresenting God and truth, and blinding and enslaving God's children? Can we expect our Master's approval and the overcomer's crown, unless we do overcome? I tell you, nay. And unless such come out of Babylon, they will be reckoned as partakers of her sins, and receive of her plagues, shortly to be poured out. As our Lord expressed it (Matt. 24:51.) they will have "their portion *with* the hypocrites" in the time of perplexity, disintegration, and confusion just at hand, though they are not hypocrites, but *disobedient* servants.

