

## **ANOTHER INFALLIBLE CHURCH.**

The Church of Rome is not the only one which acts upon the assumption that its annunciations of several centuries ago are infallible and unalterable. The Presbyterian Church takes the same stand, though she does not speak so loudly as her "Mother Church" – nor can she claim that her *infallible decisions* regarding what is truth and what is error, are as venerable with age.

Our readers will recall an article in our issue of Oct. '87, entitled "*Reasons for Expecting Toleration in the Presbyterian Church.*" We therein referred to the case of Brother Baker, who after being for years a minister in the Presbyterian Church, became convinced by his common sense as well as his Bible study of the error of his sect, in holding that everlasting torment is the future lot of all except the elect little flock of the present age. Brother Baker soon discovered that a majority of the members as well as of the ministers of the Presbyterian Church *disbelieve* this point of their Confession of Faith. He saw, too, that he and all such were *acting a lie* in professing publicly, to believe a doctrine which they denied privately, and concerning which they made *mental* and *private* reservations.

As an honest man Bro. Baker could not follow others in the footsteps of Ananias, misrepresenting and keeping back part of the truth, – he could not afford to misrepresent himself, and could not conscientiously continue to misrepresent God's character and Word. Consequently he decided to let his light shine, confident at first that he would be joined by others in the same sect, solicitous for the truth rather than careful to preserve inviolate a Confession of Faith, with some of whose tenets they disagreed decidedly.

To bring the matter to an issue, Bro. Baker introduced to the Presbytery of West Jersey of which he was a member, a resolution providing for a revision of the Standards of doctrine as set forth in the

Presbyterian Confession of Faith on the subject of the everlasting torture of all except the elect little flock, – the Gospel Church.

Brother Baker argued well his points, and tried hard to carry Presbyterianism into an acknowledgment of the Bible as the **ONLY STANDARD** of faith; and to show that the well intentioned men who in A.D. 1646 framed the "Westminster Confession of Faith" were *not infallible*, but merely did as well as they could on coming out of the extreme darkness of the "dark ages" preceding them.

In the article above referred to, we pointed out to Bro. Baker that his well-meant scheme would fail; that the majority love their sect and its infallibility (?) and its honors and rewards more than they love the truth, and the honor which cometh from God only. We rejoice that Bro. Baker has manifested his love for the truth by boldly advocating it in the face of opposition. In this he is demonstrating himself to be an "*overcomer*." Our prayer for him is, that he may continue to be *faithful* in all his stewardship of the mysteries of God; that thus he may make his calling and election sure and receive the reward of an "overcomer." (See Rev. 3:21.) Brother Baker's example in withdrawing, should be followed by every honest person, who, reading over his own public Confession of Faith, finds that it does not present his *real faith*. And this should be done by each, no matter which denomination has bound him or which Confession of Faith now misrepresents his views to fellow Christians and to the world. It is useless to try as Bro. Baker has done, to bring about a reform. Sect-worshippers would rather act a lie and thus stultify themselves before God and each other, than to honestly and *publicly* confess that *their* sect is not infallible, – that they have erred in some things.

A careful examination we believe will convince any one that only the ignorant members and ministers of any of the leading Christian denominations believe this dogma which all so publicly confess, – that all except the *elect and holy Church* will suffer everlasting torment.

That our predictions relative to the action of the Presbytery have been verified to the letter, is witnessed by the following *clipping*:

**MEETING OF THE PRESBYTERY OF WEST JERSEY, AT ATLANTIC CITY. SEVENTY-FIVE CLERGYMEN AND ELDERS PRESENT. REV. L. C. BAKER'S CASE.**

The committee to whom the questions were referred brought in a report advising withdrawal. This part of the report came up for action.

Mr. Baker presented the case from his point of view. He had, he said, deemed it his duty to call the attention of the Church to its false position in holding on tenaciously to certain doctrinal statements in its standards, which had ceased to be a fair and honest expression of its views. It was as a necessary consequence of this position, that he should introduce into the Presbytery an overture requesting the General Assembly to inquire into the matter, and that he should claim the right to discuss the points involved and to show [R1035 : page 7] from Scripture just where the standards erred. Some of the brethren had thought that in opposing the teaching of the Church at an important point he was violating his ordination vows. He had interpreted those vows as binding him to seek the purity of the Church and to be loyal above all else to the Word of God. At the sacrifice of his own personal feelings he would, he said, have been willing to submit to a long church trial, if any of the brethren chose to bring it to that issue, provided the questions of Scripture interpretation he had raised could be decided in the court of Scripture. But heretofore the Church had insisted that the standards alone must be the tests.

He had therefore determined to go on in the course adopted a year ago, and to now put the case in the hands of the Presbytery. If, with any degree of unanimity, they advised him that his action was inconsistent with his remaining as an accredited minister of this Church, he should at once place his resignation in their hands.

Mr. Baker then reviewed the case in some of its wider bearings upon the Church. It involved, first, the correctness of that interpretation of Scripture put into the Standards, which represents God as having no other end in view in raising to another life the immense mass of the human race, consigned to death and hell for their sins, except to judge and sentence them again to a deeper death and hell, to suffer "most grievous and unspeakable torments, without intermission, with the devil and his angels in hell fire forever." The point he had raised against this teaching is that it strips resurrection, confessedly due to the redeeming work of Christ, of every redemptive and beneficial feature, and converts this provision of another life into an unutterable curse to all but the elect.

The question also, he said, was no less important in its bearings upon the constitution of the Church and the right of private judgment. Upon this point he said: "So far as I am aware, this is the first time in the history of our Church that one of its ministers has openly called in question its authoritative statements upon an important point of doctrine, and connected therewith an effort to induce the Church to revise them. Other instances of difference have occurred in which the dissentient has assumed that the rule of the system is inexorable – that no change in it is possible – and so has withdrawn from it. In other cases the effort has been to prove that the standards are flexible enough to admit the variation. In this case there is no such attempt. There is the open affirmation that the framers of our standards at this point erred, and that it is our duty to correct them. And this duty is the more strongly urged, because the Church tacitly admits that they erred, in as much as these statements are seldom avowed in her pulpits, nor is the impression made upon her hearers that she earnestly believes them. The question, therefore, which you are now asked to decide is unique in our history. You, brethren, have the rare opportunity and the solemn responsibility to decide whether this Presbyterian Church must go on forever in its present lines, or whether it shall hold itself open in an honest way to the larger illuminations of truth which God is giving in our day, and so grow up to its place in that larger unity of the future for

which our Lord prayed. If it shall do this, there must be room made for the discussion and amendment of its standards. There must be no slavish suppression of honest differences, no rod of terror held over the head of honest dissentients, and no such dishonor of the Holy Spirit in the Church as is involved in the unwillingness to trust Him to correct the disorders and contradict the errors which may arise in the exercise of His own principle of liberty. Better a hundredfold that some heresies should be propounded, than that the healthy life of the Church should be repressed by the denial of that liberty of conscience and of utterance wherewith Christ hath made us free."

The discussion was continued at the afternoon and evening sessions on the report of the committee, which recommended that Mr. Baker withdraw from the Presbytery. A vote was taken on the recommendation, which resulted in 55 yeas and 5 nays, and the report of the committee was then adopted as a whole. Mr. Baker then tendered to the Presbytery his resignation, which was accepted.

In view of such an open confession of unwillingness to re-examine or in any way change or modify their creed, even though tacitly admitting it to be erroneous; and in view of such refusal to test and prove this and other points of doctrine by the Bible; what can be expected of the ministers of this Presbytery? Does it not seem evident that love of the honor of men, love of sect, a desire to be considered *staunch*, "dyed-in-the-wool" Presbyterians, and above all the desire to maintain their dignity, and bread and butter, and titles, and white cravats, rather than the love of the truth, holds and governs these professed *leaders* and *teachers*? Possibly all the "*wheat*" has already been, like Bro. Baker, selected and separated from this Presbytery. As we are now in the "harvest" time, we must expect such separation to be thorough. We should expect too, that it be first completed among the ministers who, by reason of time for study and advantages of education, should be most ready for the greater light of the dawn of the Millennial Day, and who should if Israelites indeed be first and quickest, to receive and to walk and to rejoice in the greater light now shining upon

God's Word. We should expect of all others than the guileless, just what we see, – that they would "hate the light, neither come to the light, lest their deeds should be made manifest" [lest they should thus be obliged to confess that for years they had been teaching errors which His Word does not authorize, in the name of the Lord]. For this reason it is, that they cling to the creeds of the "dark ages," yea, and love darkness rather than light. "But he that doeth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." – John 3:19-21.

Note this likeness of many of the Priests and Pharisees of to-day to those at the time of the first advent, of whom our Lord declared that they received not the truth themselves, but really, though professing to be teachers, hindered the people from receiving the truth (Matt. 23:13 and 21:23-31). Let us as our Lord and the Apostles did, spend less time and effort, upon self-serving, dignity-puffed, and sectarian-blinded ministers, and the more upon the weary and heavy laden "common people," among whom are still some Israelites indeed, who without guile really desire *the truth*.

May our dear Bro. Baker and all such as he, *stand fast* in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not again entangled with any yoke of bondage, or entrapped in any of the many snares which are being spread in this evil day, by our adversary Satan, who as soon as we escape one, fain would entrap us in another error. We may not lay our armor down or think the victory won until we have received our crown, and entered *fully* into the joys of our Lord. Since each must either advance or retreat, let us go on unto perfection, growing in grace and knowledge and love.

-----