

THE PRESBYTERIAN QUARTERLY.

NO. 19.—JANUARY, 1892.

I. THE CHRISTO-CENTRIC PRINCIPLE OF THEOLOGY.¹

THE work to which special reference is here made is the product of an able and distinguished scholar, who is a theological professor in the Reformed (German) Church. He is the author of an article in the *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopædia* which clearly foreshadowed the distinctive principle of the work before us, and the moulding influence of that principle, as a constructive one, upon the whole system of theology. This assists us, in view of the fact that only the first volume of the "Institutes" has as yet been issued, in estimating the comprehensive sweep and the modifying effect of Dr. Gerhart's fundamental assumption, in relation to his theology as a whole.

It is not intended in these remarks to attempt an articulate examination of the doctrines maintained in the author's theological system, but to devote particular attention to its constructive principle. The whole system is based upon what is denominated the

¹INSTITUTES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION. *By Emanuel V. Gerhart, D. D., LL. D., Professor of Systematic and Practical Theology in the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Church, Lancaster, Pa.* With an Introduction by Philip Schaff, D. D., LL. D., Professor of Church History in Union Theological Seminary, New York. New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 51 East Tenth street, near Broadway. 1891. 8vo., pp. 754.

VII. NOTES.

THE REVISED DIRECTORY FOR WORSHIP.

In the year 1729, the old Synod of New York and Philadelphia, which antedated the establishment of the first General Assembly in the United States, and from which that General Assembly came in 1789, adopted the old Directory for Worship, and recommended it for use by the churches. It was originally drawn up by the Westminster Assembly of Divines; the same which framed the Catechisms and Confessions of Faith.

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States (afterwards "in the United States," now called, popularly, the Southern Assembly), adopted the old Directory, along with the other standards of the old church, at its organization in 1861. In 1864, the question of revising the Directory was taken up, and the committee on revising the Form of Government and Book of Discipline were directed to bring in a report as to what changes, if any, were needed. No report ever came from the committee on the subject, but in 1879, on motion of the Committee on the Book of Church Order, the Assembly appointed a committee to revise the Directory. It was the Committee on the Book of Order reorganized, and consisted of the Rev. Drs. J. B. Adger, B. M. Palmer, G. D. Armstrong, Stuart Robinson, T. E. Peck, James Woodrow, J. A. Lefevre, R. K. Smoot, and Messrs. Thomas Thomson, and W. W. Henry.

In 1880, the first draft of the revision was presented, accepted by the Assembly, and copies ordered to be sent to each pastor and session, and to the Presbyteries for their criticisms, which criticisms were to be forwarded direct to the chairman of the committee. This was done, and a new draft, made in the light of these criticisms, was reported in 1881. The Assembly again ordered the work sent down for criticism, when it came up in 1882.

In 1885 the completed work was received by the Assembly, and sent down to the Presbyteries for their further examination and criticism. The majority of the Presbyteries having approved of the work, but

recommended further revision, their answers were referred, by the Assembly of 1886, to a new committee, consisting of the Rev. Drs. M. D. Hoge, T. D. Witherspoon, J. H. Smith, G. D. Armstrong, and Ruling Elder Hon. W. W. Henry.

This committee presented their report in 1889, and the General Assembly adopted it, chapter by chapter, and sent it down to the Presbyteries, which were "directed to take action on the same, voting to *adopt* or *reject* it, and to report their action to the next General Assembly." Order was also taken continuing the Committee of Revision, and directing them to prepare and report to the next Assembly an appendix, "containing a funeral service and also a marriage service."

At the Assembly of 1890, it appeared that twenty-three Presbyteries had adopted, and forty-one rejected the Revised Directory, but a large number requested a continuance of the revision. So the committee was ordered to go on with their work, availing themselves of the suggestions of the Presbyteries; and there were added to the committee the Rev. Drs. D. O. Davies, W. S. Lacy, and Robert P. Kerr.

The committee, thus enlarged, performed the task assigned them, and presented their report at Birmingham, at the last General Assembly, 1891. The Revised Directory was then adopted, and ordered, in the words of the Assembly of 1889, to be sent down to the Presbyteries "for their adoption or rejection," they being directed "to vote *aye* or *no*" upon it. Copies were also ordered to be sent to every minister and church session.

The action of the Assembly was deliberately taken, after nearly a whole day spent in considering the Directory, sentence by sentence, every word of it being read carefully aloud by the secretary of the committee, except the long passages (nearly whole chapters) from the Scriptures in the funeral service. These passages were from Psalm xxxix., and Psalm xc., and 1 Cor. xv. The secretary began reading these, but was in each case stopped by the Assembly, because they were such familiar passages it was not considered necessary. The whole Revision, handsomely and accurately printed, had been put into the hands of every member of the Assembly the day before, and so the matter was really before the body nearly two days, including the evening and night, during which no doubt it was read by all, and carefully studied. After it had been considered and adopted, paragraph by paragraph, the Revision was adopted as a whole, with but one slight modification in the marriage service. The vote was unanimous and cordial, and was followed by a resolution of thanks to the

committee, and a special prayer of gratitude to God for the happy result attained. The secretary of the committee begged the Assembly when he presented the report, to take full time to consider it, and to feel free to make as many changes as it wished.

The resolution sending the Revised Directory down to the Presbyteries for their vote, *aye* or *no*, was in the same terms as those used by the Assembly of 1889. There is no discourtesy to the Presbyteries in this. The Assembly merely deeming the time had come for a vote, put the matter to the house of the whole church, precisely as is always done in every deliberative body, whenever a matter is acted upon. This does not, of course, cut off criticism and suggestion; for it is the same action as was taken by the Assembly of 1889, which was followed by a rejection of the Directory, with criticisms, and requests that the work of revision go on. This is how it comes to be before the church now; and in this way, if the Presbyteries will it so, it may be kept before the church for many years more.

It is, however, we beg leave to suggest, not necessary to continue the work of revision further. The writer of this article may be allowed to say that, in his judgment, the matter is by this time the expression of the mind of the church, perhaps as nearly as it can well be secured. The Revised Directory is not the work of one man, nor of a set of men, but, through the agency of the various committees that have labored on it, incorporating not only their own ideas, but the suggestions of the Presbyteries for so long a time, it is now largely the work of the whole church. It has been more of a growth than a creation.

Of course, if the Directory be adopted in its present form, it is not an absolute finality, but it will doubtless be amended, and improved as time goes on, just as the Book of Order has been since it became a part of the constitution of the church. If we waited until no one found any fault we should never adopt anything new.

The old Directory, like the Form of Government, needed revision, because the church had advanced in some things beyond the methods of the ancient times. The truth is, the old Directory had almost become obsolete, and was very little used. We would not say it was behind the present usages of the church merely because some of its expressions now seem a little grotesque. We could allow some expressions, because of their noble origin, while we would not now write such a paragraph as that at the top of page 424: "In time of public worship, etc., . . . abstaining from all whisperings, from salutations

of persons present, or coming in; and from *gazing about, sleeping, smiling,* and all other indecent behavior."

But we do deem the old Directory seriously defective in several particulars. There is no provision whatever for holding Sunday-schools for children and adults, to study the Scriptures and the Standards of the church. This was no fault of the Directory when it was made, for Sunday-schools are a modern institution. But Sunday-schools are now established in the heart of the whole church of God, and are one of the greatest arms of the church for accomplishing the object of her existence. It is right that the Sunday-school should be recognized in our Directory, and rules laid down for its proper conduct.

No prayer-meetings are mentioned in the old Directory, and for the same reason that the Sunday-school was omitted. Prayer-meetings, as they are now universally observed, were unknown in the church of the seventeenth century. There is no question as to the immense value of these two instrumentalities for the development and expression of spiritual life: nor can there be any doubt as to the propriety of their being recognized in the rules for the worship of God.

No provision is made in the old Book for a public profession of faith on the part of persons who are being admitted to full membership, except in case of those who have not been baptized in infancy. In recent times it has become the rule, with few exceptions, for all persons who are making their profession of faith with a view to being admitted to the communion, to do it in the presence of the congregation on Sabbath morning, and it is a most useful act, because of its influence upon the persons themselves as well as upon the people, Christians, and non-professors who witness it. The new book provides for this, and furnishes a suitable form of questions to be used in this solemn proceeding.

In the old Directory the matter of inflicting church censures is included. This properly belongs to the Book of Discipline, where our church has placed it, in the volume entitled "The Book of Church Order." Surely it need not be retained in both the Book of Discipline and the Directory of Worship. We now have it in both. It is left out of the Revised Directory, and there is every reason for its omission.

We will say, further, that the general arrangement of the subjects in the new book and the style are greatly in advance of the old. One of the greatest advantages of the new Directory over the old is in the fact that it contains in its appendix a set of beautiful forms for funerals

and marriages. They are optional of course, and are never to be made obligatory. They will be very useful for ministers, and would, in cases where no minister is present and a funeral must be held, be of the utmost benefit to a layman who might be called to officiate.

In this case, as in others, the church has grown up to a new institution. In an old Directory of one of the Reformed (Presbyterian) Churches of the continent of Europe, every kind of religious service at funerals was forbidden, "in order to avoid all superstitious observances."

Funeral sermons have about had their day, and now the majority of Presbyterian pastors have some form of funeral service. Many excellent ones have been prepared and are in use. The funeral service, composed of Scripture reading, prayer, and praise, has come to stay, and is fast becoming established in the mind of the church. There is no good reason why the church should not prepare and recommend to its ministers a funeral service suitable and proper for use in their churches. The same remark applies with equal force in the case of marriage. None of these services are compulsory, but are for guides, or to be used with or without modification, as the taste of the minister may dictate. The Dutch and all other Reformed Churches have such forms, and have had from ancient times, and there is no tendency discernible among them towards formalism and ritualism. Presbyterian doctrine does not lead to ritualism. John Knox presented a translation of Calvin's forms at the first General Assembly in Edinburgh, and they were adopted and were used, for nearly a hundred years, under the name of "The Book of Common Order." The Church of England tried to force Episcopal church government upon the Scotch, and the visible representative thereof was the English Prayer Book, and so it was natural that the Scotch should come to detest every kind of form for worship. After they had been hammered over their heads for one hundred years with a Prayer Book, they gave up even optional forms and adopted the Directory of Worship. But those times are now far away, and the drift in Scotland is back towards the use of a few optional forms, such as are now provided in our new Directory. There is no danger to us in this matter of running into ritualism, because all the Reformed churches throughout the world, except those distinctively termed Presbyterian, have the same optional, simple forms, with very slight changes, which they have had hundreds of years, and there is not a trace of ritualism among them. It is Arminian, or semi-Arminian doctrine that expresses itself in ritualism,

but not Calvinism. Pure Pelagianism is all form, all ritual; and teaches that salvation depends upon the form. Calvinism teaches that form is useful, must be simple, scriptural, and optional, but we are obliged to have some forms. We already have a number—the benediction, the doxology, the baptismal formula, etc., and almost every minister has his own form of service for marriages and funerals. It is only proposed to provide good ones for funerals and marriages, that all pastors may have at hand, that the services on these occasions may be conducted with solemn dignity and propriety, to the good of souls, and to the glory of God. There is a form for marriage in the old Directory, but it is not distinctly given nor fully elaborated. There is no direction given for any funeral service except that “the minister *if present*, may exhort them to consider the frailty of life and the importance of being prepared for death and eternity.”

If the Revised Directory be adopted by the Presbyteries it will be an immense gain for our church. A distinguished minister of the Northern Church said last summer to the writer, that the Book of Church Order and the Revised Directory, both of which he had read, put our church far ahead, in its administration of government and worship, of its sister north of the Potomac, and we believe he was right.

ROBERT P. KERR.

Richmond, Va.

THE GENERAL PRESBYTERIAN COUNCIL.

The Fifth Council of the Alliance of the Reformed Churches holding the Presbyterian system will be held at Toronto, Canada, in September next. The supreme courts of the various churches which constitute the Alliance have either already appointed their allotted number of delegates or will make these appointments at their approaching meetings. The Western Section of the Executive Commission, of which the Rev. Talbot W. Chambers, D. D.,* is chairman, has recently been in session at Toronto, to arrange for the Council, and it is given out that present indications point to a large and representative attendance, to a cordial reception on the part of the Toronto Presbyterians, and to substantial benefits to follow greatly in advance of those hitherto realized.

In view of this, it has been thought not out of place that some ac-

*It was erroneously stated at the last Assembly that Dr. Philip Schaff held this position.