

THE
Union Seminary
Magazine.

VOLUME XVI.

1904—1905.



RICHMOND, VIRGINIA :
UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.
1905.

**PRINTED BY
WHITTET & SHEPPERSON,
RICHMOND, VA.**

Period. 2006
v. 16
1904-05

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THE
Union Seminary Magazine

VOL. XVI. OCTOBER—NOVEMBER, 1904.

No. 1.

THE CONFESSION OF FAITH AS REVISED
IN 1903.

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THAT a revision of its Confession of Faith, on which it had been engaged for some years, was completed in 1903 by the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, is, of course, a matter of universal knowledge. The exact nature of this revision does not seem, however, to be so universally understood. Attention has been vigorously directed to it again during the last few months by the part it has been made to play in the negotiations for union between the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church; but it cannot be said that the public has been much enlightened by these negotiations. Some of the representations which have been made concerning the "Revised Confession" in the course of recent discussion have been, indeed, in the highest degree astonishing, not to say gravely misleading. The public mind appears in danger of being thrown into confusion about a matter simple enough in itself; and may acquire misapprehensions which, if permitted to take root, may prove hard subsequently to eradicate. It seems eminently desirable, therefore, that precisely what was effected by this revision should be exhibited in a plain and straightforward manner, from which even he who runs may gather enough to preserve himself from at least further misunderstanding.

We have said "what was effected," not "what was undertaken." This is not because we suppose these two questions would be answered very differently, but because we wish to confine ourselves for the moment to the matter of immediate practical importance. We do not purpose at present to trace

THE BIBLE AND THE HOME.¹

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IN Deuteronomy vi. 6-9 we read: "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto the children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, . . . and thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates." According to the Scriptures, therefore, the Home, a divine institution, and the Bible, the divine revelation, are wedded, as in our theme. Into the nature of the relationship existing between the Scriptures and family life it is the purpose of this paper to inquire.

We shall make all our inquiries of the Bible itself, our aim being to learn what God has taught us on this theme. The testimony of God's Word may be conveniently arranged under two topics: (1) What does the Home possess in the Bible? (2) What does the Bible possess in the Home?

I. What does the Home possess in the Bible?

In the first place, the Home finds in the Bible the *charter of its organization*. A charter, according to the best lexicographical authority, is "any instrument, executed with form and solemnity, bestowing rights and privileges" — for example, the Great Charter of English liberties granted by King John. The text of that royal instrument which called the Home into existence makes up a considerable part of the first two pages of our Bible. This material, collected and arranged, reads as follows:

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon

¹ An address delivered at the Union Seminary Conference on the Bible and Christian Work, Richmond, May, 1904.

the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him. And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.

“And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden. And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the Lord God said, It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helpmeet for him. And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found a helpmeet for him.

“And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; *male and female created he them*. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.”

This language is entitled to be called a charter under the above definition. It was uttered with all the formality of a divine enactment and amid all the solemnity attending the

making of man in God's image. It also confers rights and privileges. The principal of the rights and privileges are the following:

1. *Marriage*. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."

2. *Parenthood*. "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it."

3. *A Home*. And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed." Man's first home was a *country* home and a paradise.

4. *Subsistence*. "And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat."

The charter conferring these rights and privileges was issued to the first family. It was confirmed by the Lord Jesus Christ (see Matt. xix. 1-14 and Mark x. 1-16). It is recognized throughout the Bible, notably in connection with the covenants, which were mostly family covenants. It is in full force to-day.

In the second place, the Home finds in the Bible a revelation of the *purpose for which it was instituted*. To say nothing of many passages from which it may be *inferred*, God's end in instituting the family is distinctly *stated* in Malachi ii. 15, "That he might seek a godly seed." It is God's plan to replenish his church and fill the earth with faithful witnesses to himself through the family and family religion. We must not lose sight of this. The hope of the church and the hope of the world is largely bound up with what Bushnell calls "Christian nurture"; and we are to look for the extension of God's kingdom, not so much through ingatherings from without, as by means of what the same writer calls "the out-populating power of the Christian stock." Pastors, Christian people, the church of God, will be exceedingly wise to fall in with God's plan of seeking a godly seed through the instrumentality of the godly family, and to lay out their best efforts, therefore, in the promotion of family religion.

In the third place, the Home finds in the Bible the *law of its life*. The Bible code of home laws covers all the various

relationships of family life. To begin at the very foundation, marriage is commanded to be between one man and one woman, and ought always to be "in the Lord," that is, between Christians. The duties of husband to wife are clearly taught. The man, on his part, is enjoined to love his wife "even as Christ also loved the church"; and the wife, on her part, is to see that she reverences her husband. The husband is constituted the head of the wife "even as Christ is the head of the church," and the wife is to submit unto her own husband "in the Lord," to learn in silence, and in the sheltered circle of domestic life to discharge the exquisite duties of the home-maker, "a crown unto her husband," and causing him — not herself — to be "known in the gates."

The mutual duties of parents and children are covered by the Home Code. Parents are to receive their children as the gifts of God (Psalms cxxvii. 3), are to dedicate them to God, and to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, teaching them God's Word and not neglecting the exercise of parental authority or sparing wholesome correction.

Children's duties are summed up in two words — they are to *honor* their fathers and mothers and *obey* their parents in the Lord.

The family code of the Bible takes into account another relationship which we do not always think of in connection with the home — that of servants and masters. The Epistles of the New Testament no less than the laws of Moses recognize servants as a part of a household, and as entitled to certain treatment as members of the family. Masters are to give unto their servants "that which is just and equal," "remembering that they have a master in heaven"; and servants, on their part, are to render their service "heartily as unto the Lord and not unto men," "with good will doing service," "not with eyeservice as men-pleasers." One cannot help pausing here to reflect what a world of difference would be made in our domestic life to-day if the servant problem were brought under the operation of the Bible principles which regulate the mutual relations which master and servant sustain. It is pleasant to recall that in the Old South — at least in parts of it — during the existence of domestic slavery, Christian masters did recognize their responsibility for the religious well-being of their slaves. On

the parish register of old Williamsburg Church (Episcopal), in Virginia, are the names of hundreds of slaves baptized on the faith of their masters. To-day, too, there are Christian families who make a point of looking carefully after the religious condition of their servants. The writer knows of a case where the mistress of the home has been in the habit for twelve years past of giving one hour of her Sunday afternoons to the religious instruction of her old servant who lived on the place until recently. Families who observe family worship frequently see that the servants are present to take part in "prayers." This is good and right, and ought to be universal, for Bible family law assuredly requires it.

In the fourth place, the Home finds in the Bible its *crown of glory*. Nowhere is such honor put on the family as in the Scriptures. The Bible's disclosure of the home's high purpose invests it with peculiar sacredness. The history of what God has done with the home in history is enough to cast a halo over its name. And what a lively sympathy the Bible ever manifests with home life may be seen, for instance, in the 127th and 128th Psalms. In the New Testament honor is put on the home by the way in which our Lord frequented it, lending his gracious presence and dispensing some of his most precious teaching in the family circle and at the family board. He wrought his first miracle in aid of a wedding feast where a new home was being founded, and it was from the loved home at Bethany that he went forth to the last tragic scenes of his passion.

Finally, the home relationships are forever glorified by being associated with the most sacred of all ties. The relation between husband and wife is the type of that between Christ and his church. Jesus has taught us to call God our Father, and has told us that we are God's children. The bond between brother and brother is the illustration of the relationship between Christ and the souls of his people and of the tie between his people themselves.

Surely in the Scriptures the Home has a crown of glory placed upon its brow.

II. *What does the Bible possess in the Home?*

In the first place, the Bible has in the home *its legitimate throne*. Language could not be stronger than the following commandment which enthrones the Word of God in family life:

“And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.”

Let it be said with all authority that that regal place is the Bible's in *every home*, by divine right, and if that throne is occupied by ought else it is occupied by a usurper.

In the second place, the Bible has in the home *its safest sanctuary*. The home is the last citadel from which God's book will ever be driven, we believe. It may be driven from the school, from the church even—as organized apart from the family. But so long as there are pious homes like that of Zacharias and Elizabeth, and that of Simeon and that of Anna, and that of which Robert Burns sings in the “Cotter's Saturday Night,” the Bible will be cherished and believed among men.

In the third place, the Bible possesses in the home *its most powerful propaganda*. After all, there is no teacher like a mother, and the truths we learn in infancy and at a mother's knee are perhaps the most life-shaping truths we learn at all. We are all familiar with the Jesuits' saying, “Give me the first five years of a child's life and you may have the rest.” Well, with most of men the first five years are spent in the *home*. And if the truths of Scripture are inculcated by parents at the family altar, within the sacred precincts of the home, and associated with the tender memories of the fireside, who can resist their power! Surely the homes of the land are the Bible's most powerful propaganda.

In view of all that the Scriptures teach us on the subject, it is very probable that no greater service could be rendered our present day than to reënthrone the Bible in the homes of the people and to make the households of the nation Bible-modelled homes.