

THE PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED REVIEW

No. 1—January, 1890.

I.

THE MEANING AND VALUE OF THE DOCTRINE OF DECREES.

THE proposal to revise the Westminster Standards has brought the doctrine of the Divine decrees into the foreground. The controversy turns upon this pivot. Other features come in incidentally, but this is capital and controlling. This is the stone of stumbling and rock of offense. If election and reprobation were not in the Confession and Catechism, probably the fifteen Presbyteries would not have overtured the Assembly. It is for this reason that we purpose to discuss the *Meaning and Value of the Doctrine of Decrees*, so plainly inculcated in the Scriptures, and from them introduced into the Westminster symbol. We are certain that the Biblical truth of the sovereignty of God in the salvation of sinners, and of His just liberty to determine how many He will save from their sin, and how many He will leave to their self-will in sin, is greatly misunderstood by many who profess the Presbyterian faith, and who sometimes describe it in much the same terms with the anti-Calvinist, and inveigh against it with something of the same bitterness. The conservative and the radical reviser meet together at this point, and while the former asserts that he has no intention to make any changes respecting the doctrine of decrees that in his opinion will essentially impair the integrity of the Calvinistic system, he nevertheless practically coöperates with the radical in bringing about a revolution in the sentiment and creed of the Presbyterian Church concerning one of the most distinctive articles of its belief. Because revision, be it conservative or radical, contends that there is more or less that is *un-Scriptural* in the tenets of election and reprobation as they are formulated in the Standards, and that

VIII.

EDITORIAL NOTES.

THE PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED REVIEW.

TEN years ago, the *Presbyterian Review* was established, in answer to a strong desire, expressed in many quarters, for a Review which should adequately represent the Presbyterian Church by a strong, hearty, steady and thorough advocacy of its principles. Its platform, as outlined in an admirable paper on *The Idea and Aims of the Presbyterian Review*, published as the opening article of its first number,* was at once broad and conservative. It attained from the first a high standard of scholarship, and, throughout the ten years of its publication, ranked among the first of theological quarterlies, in point of ability and influence. Its discontinuance at the end of its tenth volume has called out the most wide-spread expression of regret.

The conviction that a Review is needed which will adequately represent the theology and life of the American Presbyterian churches is much stronger to-day than it was ten years ago; and has been quickened by the sense of loss which has accompanied the discontinuance of the *Presbyterian Review*. The void thus left it is widely felt ought to be filled. It has, therefore, been determined to publish a journal, under the name of THE PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED REVIEW, designed to supply the place left vacant by the late *Presbyterian Review*, under the editorial sanction of the following gentlemen, namely: Professor Benjamin B. Warfield, D.D., of the Princeton Theological Seminary; Professor William G. T. Shedd, D.D., LL.D., of the Union Theological Seminary; Professor Ransom Bethune Welch, D.D., LL.D., of the Auburn Theological Seminary; Professor John De Witt, D.D., of the McCormick Theological Seminary; Professor William H. Jeffers, D.D., LL.D., of the Western Theological Seminary; Professor Edward D. Morris, D.D., LL.D., of the Lane Theological Seminary; and Professor William Alexander, D.D., of the San Francisco Theological Seminary, of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America: together with the Rev. Talbot W. Chambers, D.D., LL.D., of the Collegiate Reformed Church, New York, and Professor Samuel M. Woodbridge, D.D., LL.D., of the New Brunswick Theological Seminary, of the Reformed (Dutch) Church in America: and Principal William Caven, D.D., of Knox College, Toronto; of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

The new REVIEW adopts as its platform that of the late *Presbyterian*

* *The Presbyterian Review*, January, 1880, pp. 1-7.

Review, as expressed in the paper to which reference has already been made, the salient features of which the following paragraphs repeat.

“ We take our stand, therefore,” in the words of that paper, “ by the Standards of the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches ”—by the Bible as the Word of God, and by the exposition of its teaching given, on the one hand, in the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, the Form of Government and Book of Discipline, and, on the other, by the Belgic Confession, the Canons of the Synod of Dort, and the Heidelberg Catechism. All the historical phases of Calvinism which have combined to form these Churches will have free access to these pages ; and we hope to secure the hearty coöperation of all parts of the Churches represented, “ by gathering together in unity the historic variety for the common welfare of the whole.”

In a broad and catholic spirit, we further desire and earnestly seek the coöperation in the REVIEW of all those who unite with us, either more nearly, in a common love for the Reformed theology or the Presbyterian form of government, or, more remotely, in a common advocacy of the Evangelical faith and principles of life and conduct. We are heartily devoted to the doctrine and principles of the branches of the Church which we more particularly represent, and must give our chief attention to their theology and life, and labor for their progress with love and enthusiasm. We cannot hesitate to maintain and enforce Presbyterian polity as against Episcopacy and Congregationalism—Calvinistic doctrine as against Lutheranism and Arminianism. But we also heartily rejoice in every good word and work on the part of other evangelical denominations, whom we respect all the more for firm adherence to their own principles ; and we unite with them in presenting a united and aggressive front to Romanism, Socinianism, Rationalism and Communism. We invite them to unite with us in seeking to further the great Christian movements of the age for the conversion of the nations, the overthrow of infidelity and the extermination of vice and crime, and, above all, in seeking to honor Christ and the religion He has founded.

This REVIEW will be a theological Review, but in no narrow sense. It will be comprehensive of the various departments of theological encyclopædia, while chief attention will necessarily be given to those departments which seem, from time to time, to be in need of exposition, defense or advocacy. Such departments we conceive to be, at present, Biblical Criticism and Exposition, Historical Investigation, Apologetics, Symbolics, Dogmatics, Ethics and the practical work of the Church. The Sciences, Philosophy, General History and Belles-Lettres will not be neglected, so far as they are related to the various departments of theology. As in the late *Presbyterian Review*, a leading feature will be the careful review and criticism of the most important theological literature of different lands, by the hands of a large number of special scholars.

In fine, in adopting the basis of the late *Presbyterian Review*, as ex-

pressed in its opening prospectus, we adopt also its closing words, as follows:

“Being fully persuaded of the infallible truth and Divine authority of our whole Bible, we propose not merely to defend it against the assaults of Rationalism, but rather to attack Rationalism itself with the weapons of the most searching Biblical criticism and exact historical investigation, and overcome it by the truth which is Divine and consistent wherever found, not fearing lest the foundations should be destroyed if, perchance, we may find a few weak points in our extended lines that need strengthening and reinforcement.

“Regarding theology as the queen of all the sciences, we do not propose to enter into warfare with any one of them, but rather to employ all the results of true science, whatever they may be, for the advantage of theological science. We have no fear of the truth, or for the truth, but rejoice in it, and are assured that it is mighty and will prevail.

“Sincerely receiving and adopting” the Standards of our Churches, as offered for our acceptance in our ordination formulæ, “we confidently appeal to our ministers and people, and all friends of theological learning, to aid us in the advocacy of those principles which have been inherited by us as the most precious legacy of the great struggles for liberty and righteousness” in Europe, “and which in our own land have had so much to do with moulding its civil institutions, as well as with building up one of the strongest institutions for good, in our compact and well-organized Churches.”

THE SYMBOLISM OF BAPTISM.

THERE is a number of interesting questions connected with the initial rite of the Christian Church. One is as to the mode in which the ordinance is to be administered, whether by submersion in water, or by pouring or sprinkling the element upon the person baptized. Another respects the subjects to whom the rite is to be administered, whether it is to be to believers only, on making confession of their faith, or whether their children also are included by virtue of their birth. A third point has regard to the efficacy of the ordinance, whether it *ipso facto* communicates grace, or is merely a sign and seal of grace which may or may not be imparted according to the faith of the parties concerned. A fourth inquiry touches the requisites for the due administration of the rite, whether the administrator must be an ordained minister, whether he may use any other element in place of water, and whether the full formula given by our Lord in Matt. xxviii, 19, must in all cases be used. All these are matters of more or less importance and have been abundantly discussed at various times and places. But the point indicated in the heading of this paper is specifically different from them, although its due determination must have a certain degree of influence upon all of them. By the symbolism of baptism is meant its signification as that is expressed