

EDITORIAL

"UNITY IN PURITY"

UNDER the above title *The Presbyterian*, in its issue of January 30th, editorializes concerning the present situation in the Church. The editorial is important because it represents the view of many sincere, but, we believe, mistaken persons. We earnestly hope that they will see their error before it is too late. We are writing in an attempt to persuade and win them, not to judge them. That ability and right is God's alone.

The Editor of *The Presbyterian* reasons as follows: The purity of the Church must be preserved. The masses of the people are usually loyal to Christ, and should stand together. "It is not right for some men, in their zeal for right doctrine, to withdraw themselves and leave their brethren, weakened by their withdrawal, to carry on the work. . . . Why should they desert their places because error has asserted itself or persecution has arisen? Why should they be driven from their places of duty and privilege?" In the past sincere men have seceded, but they would have done better had they remained in the Church. "We believe it is a serious mistake for anyone to go out from our Presbyterian Church in order to promote sound doctrine. . . . No Church on earth is more loyal to Christ than our Presbyterian Church. Let us keep it without spot or blemish! We plead for absolute unity! Let us have absolute oneness in Christ."

With much of this editorial we find ourselves in hearty agreement. We believe that purity must be preserved. (We wish, however, that our contemporary had recognized the divided doctrinal state of the Church. Can the unity for which it pleads mean a union of Christianity and anti-Christian Modernism? If so, such unity would be an offense against God. If not, then conflict is inevitable.) We agree that men should not permit themselves to be driven from their places of pledged responsibility *unless* all hope of reform has failed, or *unless* the Church officially takes an heretical position. Therein lies the present difference between *The Presbyterian* and THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN. The Presbyterian Constitutional Covenant Union and its great constituency is not primarily devoted to bringing about a split, but to the preservation and preaching of the Reformed Faith. In all earnestness it is working toward the purification of the existing Church, and it invites all those really concerned about souls to join in that effort. But if this fails, if the tyrannical policy of the present "machine" triumphs, what then? The witness to the Reformed Faith must be preserved, whatever the price. If the

General Assembly upholds the miscalled "mandate" against the Independent Board it, and not the Covenant Union, will have "split the Church." For the Protestant character of the Church will have been abandoned and the basic doctrinal foundation (on which all particular doctrines depend) will have been removed. A Reformation Church will have rejected the pivotal doctrine of the Reformation. The Lord Jesus Christ will no longer be the only King and Head of the Church. His Word will have to share authority with that of the casual majority of any General Assembly. And if the word of the Assembly conflicts with the Bible men may not plead that conflict before the courts of the Church, but must obey man or be ejected.

This would be stark, unmixed tragedy. With all our souls we hope that the Church will be saved from corporate disloyalty to its Lord. But if not? Then, great as the tragedy would be, there might be a greater: namely, if, the great corporate reformed testimony of the Presbyterian Church having been quenched, no effort were made to carry it on to future generations.

We would be the last to leave a pure Church because there were some errorists in it, and the last to ask others to leave because some individuals had been unjustly treated. We will only be compelled to leave the present organization if the effort to reform has clearly failed, or if the Church, by the act of its highest court sitting in its judicial capacity, affirms that which dethrones the Lord Jesus Christ in the Church. And if that takes place, those who depart will carry the true succession of the Church with them. Our forbears left the jurisdiction of Rome, not to destroy the Church, but to preserve and continue it. If the outward organization of our Church becomes apostate, we must imitate the Reformers. What would Calvin, Knox, Luther or Melville do here and now? Can anyone who knows Reformation history have any serious doubt? The Reformers left Rome because it placed the word of man above the Word of God. We will separate ourselves from the present outward organization if it, in turn, places man's authority above God's. Rome denied that it did this, but our forbears believed that it did and acted accordingly. The present ecclesiastical organization, if it upholds the so-called "mandate," will of course imitate Rome in denying that it places man's word above God's. We, in turn, believe that the "mandate" *does*, and will act accordingly. If we are compelled to go, we will go in deep sorrow, and yet in profound gratitude that God has given us a Word and a Gospel which are worth the sacrifice of everything a man has, even life itself.