

A DISCOURSE

COMMEMORATIVE OF THE

CHARACTER AND LIFE

OF THE LATE

REV. SAMUEL MILLER, D.D.

OF PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY.

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, JANUARY 27TH, 1850, IN THE
TENTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, AND REPEATED ON THE
SUNDAY EVENING FOLLOWING, IN THE SECOND
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA.

BY THE

REV. H. A. BOARDMAN, D.D.

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THE author has deferred to the judgment of individuals whose wishes he feels bound to respect, in consenting (after much hesitancy) to the publication of the following discourse. It is a very humble tribute to the memory of a great and good man; but if it should serve at all to re-impress his image upon the minds of any of his former pupils who love to dwell upon that rare assemblage of virtues which adorned his character, the writer will be more than compensated for having sent it to the press.



AND SAMUEL DIED: AND ALL THE ISRAELITES WERE GATHERED
TOGETHER, AND LAMENTED HIM.

1 SAMUEL, xiv. 1.

IN these simple words the inspired penman has recorded the end of one of the most remarkable men of the Theocracy. He was bestowed upon his parents in answer to special prayer, and dedicated to God before his birth. Sanctified, as it would seem, even from his infancy, we find him when a child "ministering to the Lord" under the venerable Eli. On the death of that aged and afflicted man, Samuel succeeded him as the Judge of Israel. In this capacity he made an annual circuit of the land from Bethel to Gilgal and Mizpeh, and "judged Israel in all those places." It was during his administration that monarchy took its rise among the Hebrews. Under the Divine direction, he selected and anointed Saul as their first king; and at a subsequent period, he was charged with the painful office of announcing to him, that inasmuch as he had rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord had rejected him from being king over Israel. Soon after this, he was sent to Bethlehem to anoint David as his successor to the throne. Having done this, he returned to Ramah where he passed the remaining sixteen or seventeen

years of his life, as the head of the school of the prophets established there. At his death, "all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him." This was a fit tribute to his memory—this universal convocation of the tribes to participate in the obsequies of their great leader. They had ample reason to "lament" one who as their judge, prophet, priest, and counsellor, had devoted himself to their service through a long life; who in every relation he filled, had set them an example of integrity, piety, and zeal for the public good; and through whose instrumentality they had received a profusion both of temporal and spiritual blessings.

Among the various functions exercised by this distinguished and excellent man, those which occupied so large a portion of his time at Ramah, though among the least conspicuous in the narrative, are not to be esteemed as the least important. To preside over a "school of the prophets," was an honour not unworthy even of Samuel: for no employment can be more dignified nor clothed with a graver responsibility, than that of training the religious teachers of a nation. Our information respecting these ancient schools is, indeed, very scanty. The Scriptures neither record their origin, nor present any detailed account of the economy which prevailed in them. It would appear that in certain of the Levitical cities, convenient edifices were erected for the abode of the prophets and their disciples who were thence termed the "sons of the prophets," and at the head of each establishment, was placed some inspired prophet as governor and teacher.

Among those who filled this important station, were Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha. "The pupils lived together in a society or community; they were instructed in the knowledge of the law, and of the principles of their religion, as well as in the sacred art of psalmody or prophesying with harps, psalteries and cymbals. At the conclusion of their lectures and religious exercises, they were accustomed to eat together with their masters."*

This sketch, imperfect and unsatisfactory as it is, will remind every intelligent hearer, of the institutions established for similar purposes in most branches of the Christian Church—I mean, Theological Seminaries. You are of course aware that the wisdom and expediency of institutions of this kind, have been combatted by different writers with great ingenuity and earnestness; but the arguments in vindication of the system are so conclusive as to have united in its support the suffrages of the greater portion of the Christian world. Our own beloved Church has at all times insisted upon a pious and learned ministry as indispensable to the fulfilment of the mission confided to her by her adorable Head and King. The subject of founding a Seminary for the better attainment of this object, had long engaged the attention of the principal minds in the Church, and was at length, in the year 1809, formally brought before the General Assembly through an overture from the Presbytery of Philadelphia. The Assembly, approving of the object, remitted to the Presbyteries three several plans for their consideration:

* Stillingfleet's *Origines Sacræ*.

1st. The establishment of one great school in some central place. 2d. The establishment of two schools, at the North and the South respectively. 3d. The establishment of a school within the bounds of each Synod. The Presbyteries selected the first of these schemes; and the Assembly of 1810 appointed a committee consisting of the Rev. Doctors Green, Woodhull, Romeyn, and Miller, and the Rev. Messrs. Archibald Alexander, James Richards, and Amzi Armstrong, to digest and prepare a Plan of a Theological Seminary. This committee made their report the ensuing year, and the same was adopted by the Assembly. The introduction presents a lucid exposition of the "true design of the founders" in establishing a Theological Seminary. "It is to form men for the gospel ministry, who shall truly believe and cordially love, and therefore endeavour to propagate and defend, in its genuineness, simplicity, and fulness, that system of religious belief and practice which is set forth in the Confession of Faith, Catechisms, and Plan of Government and Discipline of the Presbyterian Church; and thus to perpetuate and extend the influence of true evangelical piety and gospel order.

It is to provide for the Church an adequate supply and succession of able and faithful ministers of the New Testament; workmen that need not to be ashamed, being qualified rightly to divide the word of truth.

It is to unite, in those who shall sustain the ministerial office, religion and literature; that piety of the heart which is the fruit only of the renewing and sanctifying grace of God, with solid learning: believing

that religion without learning, or learning without religion, in the ministers of the gospel, must ultimately prove injurious to the Church.

It is to afford more advantages than have hitherto been usually possessed by the ministers of religion in our country, to cultivate both piety and literature in their preparatory course; piety, by placing it in circumstances favourable to its growth, and by cherishing and regulating its ardour; literature, by affording favourable opportunities for its attainment, and by making its possession indispensable.

It is to provide for the Church, men who shall be able to defend her faith against infidels, and her doctrines against heretics.

It is to furnish our congregations with enlightened, humble, zealous, laborious pastors, who shall truly watch for the good of souls, and consider it as their highest honour and happiness to win them to the Saviour, and to build up their several charges in holiness and peace.

It is to promote harmony and unity of sentiment among the ministers of our Church, by educating a large body of them under the same teachers, and in the same course of study.

It is to lay the foundation of early and lasting friendships, productive of confidence and mutual assistance in after life, among the ministers of religion; which experience shows to be conducive not only to personal happiness, but to the perfecting of inquiries, researches and publications advantageous to religion.

It is to preserve the unity of our Church by educat-

ing her ministers in an enlightened attachment, not only to the same doctrines but to the same plan of government.

It is to bring to the service of the Church genius and talent, when united with piety, however poor may be their possessor, by furnishing as far as possible the means of education and support, without expense to the student.

It is to found a nursery for missionaries to the heathen, and to such as are destitute of the stated preaching of the gospel; in which youth may receive that appropriate training which may lay a foundation for their ultimately becoming eminently qualified for missionary work.

It is, finally, to endeavour to raise up a succession of men at once *qualified for* and thoroughly *devoted* to the work of the gospel ministry; who, with various endowments, suiting them to different stations in the Church of Christ, may all possess a portion of the spirit of the primitive propagators of the gospel; prepared to make every sacrifice, to endure every hardship, and to render every service which the promotion of pure and undefiled religion may require."

Such were the objects proposed to be accomplished by the establishment of a Theological Seminary—objects of such manifest and urgent importance as to deserve all the care, and all the anxiety, and all the time, and labour, and expense, and prayer, which were bestowed upon them by the enlightened founders of that Institution.

The General Assembly of 1811, after having adopted

the "Plan," appointed Committees in all the Synods to collect funds for the contemplated Institution. At the meeting of the next Assembly in May, 1812, the location of the Seminary was fixed at Princeton, New Jersey, and the Rev. Archibald Alexander, D.D., a native of Virginia, for some time President of Hampden Sidney College, and at that time Pastor of the Third Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, was (June 2,) appointed Professor of Didactic and Polemic Theology. Dr. Alexander was inaugurated on the 12th day of August following, and entered on the duties of his office with a class of three students.

At the meeting of the Assembly in May, 1813, the number of students had increased to eight. By this Assembly, the Rev. Samuel Miller, D.D., a native of the State of Delaware, and, at the time of his election, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in the city of New York, was (May 28th,) elected Professor of Ecclesiastical History and Church Government, and was inaugurated by the Board of Directors on the 29th of September following.

The Rev. Charles Hodge (now the Rev. Dr. Hodge,) was elected Professor of Oriental and Biblical Literature in the Seminary, by the Assembly of 1822. The Assembly of 1835 appointed two additional Professors, viz. the Rev. John Breckinridge, D.D., to be Professor of Pastoral Theology, and Mr. (now the Rev. Dr.) Joseph Addison Alexander, to be Associate Professor of Oriental and Biblical Literature. Dr. Breckinridge was inaugurated in the September following, but after a few years resigned his Professorship. Mr. Alexan-

der, for a few years, declined accepting the chair to which he had been appointed, but performed the duties of an Instructor in that department. He, however, ultimately acceded to the wishes of the Assembly, and was duly inaugurated as a Professor. The Rev. Dr. Miller having resigned his chair, the Assembly of 1849 elected the Rev. James W. Alexander, D.D., at that time the pastor of the Duane Street Church in the city of New York, to the vacancy thus created, and by a unanimous vote continued to Dr. Miller all the rights and privileges of his Professorship under the title of "Emeritus Professor of Ecclesiastical History and Church Government."

The experience of nearly forty years has confirmed the wisdom of the Church in establishing this Institution. There are few, perhaps none, of our ministers and intelligent laity, who do not feel that in the various measures which have just been recited, for the accomplishment of this object, the successive Assemblies were directed by that Divine Spirit who is the "great Executive of the Christian dispensation." His benign agency is especially to be recognized in the selection of the original Professors. Upon them would depend mainly, under Providence, not only the character of this Seminary, but the character of future Seminaries to be established in other parts of the Church, and, indeed, the character of our entire ministry as a body. Our Church can never be sufficiently grateful to God, that he so ordered events as to place the Institution in the hands of two men who were pre-eminently qualified for this very responsible trust; nor have we less

cause for gratitude in the remarkable fact that they were spared to administer its affairs for so many years. Of the venerable Professor who survives, it would be indelicate to speak on so public an occasion. His aged colleague has lately been gathered to his fathers. Our whole Church feels the bereavement, and laments him as "all Israel lamented Samuel." His life and labours now belong to the historian, and some competent biographer will, no doubt, do justice to them. I have come here this evening neither to sketch his life nor to attempt a full portraiture of his character; but simply, in obedience to the promptings of filial veneration and gratitude, to pay a brief tribute to his memory.

There was nothing about the character of Dr. Miller more remarkable than its *completeness*. I know of no term which expresses so adequately as this, the assemblage of admirable qualities which made up the entire man, social, intellectual, and moral, together with the harmonious and appropriate working of the same in every relation and situation of life. As a Christian gentleman, a scholar, a divine; as a pastor and a teacher of theology; as a counsellor and a controversialist; as a citizen and the head of a family; in his manners, in his secular transactions, in the structure of his sermons, in the cast of all his public devotional ministrations; there were to be seen a refined taste, a symmetry, an adaptation to circumstances, a conformity to what the station or the occasion called for, which could not fail to produce the impression that his character was one of wonderful completeness—a fit model

to be kept before the eyes of the rising ministry of a Church.

It were small praise to say of Dr. Miller that he was a pious man. He was a man of eminent piety. His own testimony respecting that patriarchal servant of God, the late Dr. Green, might be applied to himself. "In his conversation; in his correspondence; in his mode of counselling those who were addressing themselves to the study of theology; nay, in the most casual and unreserved intercourses of society, he appeared the deeply spiritual, devoted man of God." If this became more and more the case as he advanced in years, it was but the gradual change which usually occurs with trees long "planted in the house of the Lord," that bring forth their mellowest fruit in old age. His whole life was devoted to the service of God, and presented an example of Christian consistency, purity, activity, and benevolence, which it was refreshing to look upon. No one could know him without perceiving that his own peace and happiness were bound up with the prosperity of Zion; that he was tenderly alive to all that concerned her welfare, and ever ready to employ his powers in her enlargement or defence. Those who were brought into habits of close intimacy with him, have often referred to the unfeigned humility and meekness which served in a striking manner to set off his extensive and varied attainments. Nor let it seem derogatory if mention is made of his inflexible integrity. For although piety necessarily supposes the presence of integrity, there are grades even among honest men; and Dr. Miller belonged to the highest of

these grades. Abhorring equivocation and deceit, he could act neither the parasite nor the partisan. Too polite to give needless offence, he abstained from the use of harsh epithets; but his opinions were uttered on all occasions with great explicitness, and those with whom he had do, always knew where to find him. The law of truth was not only on his tongue, but in his heart. The controlling principle of his character was an earnest desire and habitual endeavour to DO RIGHT—to do the will of God. He strove to bring all his powers and all his passions into subjection to this principle. He carried it into every department of his official labours, into his controversial writings, into his intercourse with general society and with his most intimate friends. It kept guard upon his lips and upon his feelings; and gave so decided a cast to the whole tenor of his being, that the nearer the view one obtained of his character, the more certainly was the impression made upon his mind that the venerable divine was a singularly conscientious man—a man who was governed in all, even the most trivial matters, not by impulse or caprice, not by interest or convenience, not by a thirst for popularity or fame, but by elevated and inflexible Christian principle.

His prompt and cheerful benevolence may be adverted to as supplying a single illustration as well of this attribute of his character, as of his great kindness of heart. No man could be more exempt from selfishness than Dr. Miller was. Benevolence was with him both a principle of piety and a sanctified affection. His venerable colleague has said of him since his decease,

that "he gave more to the cause of Foreign Missions in proportion to his income, than any person he ever knew." He did this not merely as a steward alive to his responsibility, but because he loved to do it. He had adopted the Apostle's maxim—"As we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, especially to them who are of the household of faith." And he was far from restricting the application of this maxim to pecuniary matters. If he was a "cheerful giver," he was no less a true friend and a kind counsellor, ever ready to advise the perplexed, to reclaim the erring, to raise the fallen, to console the afflicted. No one who was in trouble or in danger could go to him without finding sympathy and such assistance as it might be in his power to bestow.

Some allusion has been made to the character of Dr. Miller in its social aspect. One of the first ideas suggested by the mention of his name in any company where he was personally known, is that of a Christian gentleman. Accustomed from his childhood to the best society, his manners were marked with a dignity and polish which no artificial tutelage could have imparted. Equally free from the foppery which makes a man contemptible, and the stateliness which makes a man ridiculous, "there was a uniformity, an urbanity, and a vigilance in his dignity, which plainly showed that it was not the result of temporary effort, but the spontaneous product of a polished, benevolent, and elevated mind."* He saw no reason why piety should be divorced from politeness, nor why an am-

* Miller's Life of Dr. Rodgers.

bassador for Christ should not be a gentleman. So far from it, he was persuaded that ministers of the gospel were imperatively bound to pay due attention to matters of etiquette and personal address, since the neglect of this must unavoidably abridge their usefulness. He had not overlooked that concise precept, which too many of all classes deem unworthy of their notice, "Be courteous." Recognizing its apostolical authority, he exemplified it with a felicity which few men of any profession have attained in an equal degree.

It was this in part which made him so delightful a companion. Rarely indeed does an individual carry with him into the social circle and the more private intercourses of friendship, such ample and varied resources. Manners of the utmost dignity and blandness were, in his case, associated with an exuberant fund of information always at command, an affluent vocabulary, a refined taste, a genial humour, an unflinching cheerfulness, and a goodness of heart which revealed itself in a thousand nameless and undefinable ways in the whole texture of his conversation. Without the least tinge of pedantry, he instructed while he pleased his visitors; and augmented their store of valuable knowledge, without any ostentatious parade of his own. If his presence imposed a restraint upon vulgarity and vice, it did not check the flow of innocent mirth. His vivacity, however, never degenerated into levity, nor his wit into coarseness. Nor did he ever allow himself to forget his high character as a minister of Jesus Christ. He possessed the happy art of making reli-

gion appear lovely even to those who had never learned to love it. The fragrance of a true piety was about him in every scene of social enjoyment; and many a family have felt on his leaving them, as the Shunemite did about Elisha, that they would like to build a "little chamber" for him on the wall, and secure him for a frequent guest.

But the time forbids me to expatiate on the personal characteristics of this eminent man. I must proceed to notice in a very cursory way his public life and labours.

It has already been stated that at the period of his election to the chair at Princeton (1813) he was the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in the city of New York. That relation he had sustained for twenty years, having been installed as collegiate pastor with Doctors Rodgers and McKnight on the 5th day of June 1793. Of the fidelity with which he discharged his pastoral duties, and the high reputation he had established as a scholar, a theologian, a preacher, and a man of decided and active piety, we have sufficient evidence in the fact of his appointment to a post so elevated and important as that of "Professor of Ecclesiastical History and Church Government" in the Seminary. Of his distinguished literary attainments he had given ample proof in the publication, ten years before, of a work entitled, "A Brief Retrospect of the Eighteenth Century;" and in his "Letters on the Constitution and order of the Christian Ministry," the first volume of which appeared in 1807 and the second in 1809, he had displayed a ripe scholarship, a minute acquaint-

ance with the annals of the early Church, and a capacity to vindicate the primitive form of ecclesiastical government, which clearly indicated him as a suitable Professor for the new Institution. He did not disappoint the hopes of the Church. The office to which he was called was one of weighty responsibility. The difficulty of meeting its requisitions would be great under the most advantageous circumstances; but in his case it was materially enhanced by the novelty of his position. No one had preceded him. He was not only to traverse the forest, but to break the path. Even an incompetent precursor would have lightened his task; but the entire burden of collecting, digesting, and arranging authorities, and framing a *curriculum* for his department, as well as filling it up, was devolved upon himself. He was without the assistance to be derived from suitable text-books—indeed to this day there is no adequate text-book in Ecclesiastical History. Entering upon the discharge of his duties under these and other serious embarrassments, it is impossible to withhold a tribute of admiration for the ability, wisdom, and energy he displayed in the prosecution of his work. And now that his labours have been brought to a close, no one can candidly review them for the whole period of his incumbency, without feeling that the Church he loved and served so well, has reason to be more than satisfied with the manner in which he acquitted himself of his arduous functions. In those labours and their manifold fruits, he has left behind him an imperishable memorial of his erudition, his piety, his love for divine truth, his ardent attachment to the

cause of Christ, and his deep solicitude for the salvation of men.

It would be quite out of the question in a service like the present, to attempt any detailed account of his mode of instruction, or of the great moral lessons he constantly inculcated upon his pupils. Let it suffice to say that, in common with his respected colleagues, he always proposed to the students a very high standard of ministerial character and attainment; warned them against the dreadful evils of a godless ministry; pointed out with paternal wisdom and kindness, the temptations and perils with which the office and the path to it are beset; enforced by the most cogent and affectionate arguments the culture of eminent personal piety; and on all occasions directed them to the Lord Jesus Christ as no less their appropriate and authoritative pattern, than the only adequate foundation of their hopes for eternity. These and other kindred lessons he instilled into their minds not less by example than by precept. He was before them, from year to year, a model of the graces and the duties he inculcated. In his daily walk, in his social relations, in the class-room, the conference, the sanctuary, they might see the beautiful harmony between his teachings and his life, and learn how solicitous he was to make them not only able but holy and useful ministers of the New Testament. He was happily exempt from all eccentricities, real or assumed, whether of manner, sentiment, or style. He had no hobbies—no *isms*—in ethics, in divinity, or in social economics. He had no sympathy with that poor ambition, poor especially in a theological teacher,

which loves to startle the world by bold speculations and novel theories. His views on all the subjects which engaged his attention, were comprehensive, discriminating, sober, and of salutary tendency. And to this mould he laboured to fashion the characters of the candidates under his care.

His Sabbath ministrations were in keeping with the rest of his labours, and equally adapted to the exigencies of a "school of the prophets." All who have seen him in the pulpit, know with what dignity, reverence, and solemnity, he conducted the services of the sanctuary. In the devotional parts of public worship, a congregation could not refrain from feeling that they were led by one who had received in an eminent degree the gift as well as the grace of prayer. His sermons, constructed with that lucid systematic arrangement which is of such invaluable aid to the hearer in remembering and digesting a discourse, were rich in clear, evangelical statement, replete with sound instruction, and equally adapted to inform the understandings, arouse and guide the consciences, and elevate the affections of his hearers. His delivery was dignified, graceful, and affectionate. He often spoke with a degree of animation quite unusual in an aged preacher; not a mere forensic animation assumed for the occasion, but the warmth of strong and generous feeling, the earnestness of a man who felt the solemnity of his errand as an ambassador for Christ, and who was deeply solicitous that the sacred themes he was handling should produce their legitimate impression upon his hearers.

He might have sat for that fine portrait sketched by the inimitable author of the Task :

“I would express him simple, grave, sincere ;
 In doctrine uncorrupt; in language plain,
 And plain in manner; decent, solemn, chaste,
 And natural in gesture; much impressed
 Himself, as conscious of his awful charge,
 And anxious mainly that the flock he fed
 Might feel it too; affectionate in look,
 And tender in address, as well becomes
 A messenger of grace to guilty men.”

It will be expected that some notice should be taken of Dr. Miller in this discourse, as an author. He had a strong conviction of the value of the press as a means of usefulness, and began to avail himself of it at a comparatively early period in his ministry. Many of his works have had a wide circulation in both hemispheres: indeed, few American divines have achieved a more honourable European reputation. His writings are too voluminous to be described here: the principal of them are the following :

A Retrospect of the Eighteenth Century.

Letters on the Constitution and Order of the Christian Ministry.*

Life of Dr. Rodgers.*

Life of Dr. Nisbet.

Letters on Clerical Manners.

Letters on Unitarianism.

Letters on the Eternal Sonship of Christ.

* Presbyterian Board of Publication.

Letters to his Sons.

Letters to Presbyterians, on the Present Crisis (1833) in the Presbyterian Church.

The Utility and Importance of Creeds and Confessions.*

The Warrant, Nature, and Duties of the Office of the Ruling Elder in the Presbyterian Church.*

A second work on the same subject, (1844.)*

Presbyterianism.*

Treatise on Baptism.*

Thoughts on Public Prayer.*

Besides these, he published numerous occasional Sermons, Lectures, Reviews, and other productions.

The first work in the catalogue just recited, grew out of a sermon he preached on the first day of January, 1801, in which he took a cursory review of the most prominent events and features of the preceding century. In preparing this discourse for the press, the subject grew under his hands until the first part, (the other parts, it is believed, were never completed,) filled two octavo volumes of five hundred pages each. This part was designed to present "A Sketch of the Revolutions and Improvements in Science, Arts, and Literature," during the eighteenth century. Few men would have had the courage to undertake a task of this kind, and still fewer would have succeeded in it so well. A bare enumeration of the topics treated in the several chapters will give some intimation of the extensive and varied information requisite even to the

* Presbyterian Board of Publication.

tolerable execution of such a work. They run as follows:—Vol. I. Mechanical Philosophy; Chemical Philosophy; Natural History; Medicine; Geography; Mathematics; Navigation; Agriculture; Mechanic Arts; Fine Arts; Physiognomy.—Vol. II. Philosophy of the Human Mind; Classic Literature; Oriental Literature; Modern Languages; Philosophy of Language; History; Biography; Romances and Novels; Poetry; Literary Journals; Political Journals; Literary and Scientific Associations; Encyclopædias; Education; Nations lately become Literary.—The respected author is far from claiming a minute acquaintance with all these subjects. As to some of them, he modestly takes the place of a compiler merely. But the work reflects great honour upon his scholarship, his research, his industry, and his taste. It bears throughout the impress of a discriminating and highly cultivated mind, ardently devoted to literature and science, and transfused with a genial spirit of piety which would make all its acquisitions tributary to the support and diffusion of pure and undefiled religion.

In his two biographies, Dr. Miller has perpetuated the names and virtues of two venerable men, to both of whom our Church is under great obligations, to wit: the Rev. Dr. Rodgers, with whom he was associated for eighteen years as a collegiate pastor, and the celebrated Dr. Nisbet, President of Dickinson College, Carlisle, with whom, after graduating at the University of Pennsylvania, (1789,) and studying for some time

under his father, he finished his preparatory theological training.*

The works, however, by which he is most generally known, and on which his reputation as an author must chiefly rest, are those devoted to the exposition and vindication of Presbyterianism. Circumstances had driven him into the arena of controversy during his pastorate in New York; and after he went to Princeton, the Church naturally looked to her "Professor of Ecclesiastical History and Church Government," to instruct her own members in the peculiarities of her apostolic order, and to repel those assaults upon it which have to this day, unfortunately, been lacking neither in frequency nor in asperity. It is due to the memory of this distinguished man that this statement should be thus publicly made. The discussion in which his great work on the Christian Ministry originated, was *forced* upon him; and he could not have declined it without betraying the trust confided to him as an under-shepherd and bishop of souls. His own account of the matter is as follows.

"More than thirty-five years ago,† a distinguished clergyman of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, published and maintained, in a great variety of forms, the following opinions:—'Where the

* There is in a foot-note on page 24, Vol. I. (American edition) of his "Retrospect," a reference to Dr. Nisbet, in which he thus speaks of him— "A gentleman whose profound erudition, embracing the literature and science of almost all cultivated languages, is well known to the public; and with whose friendship I consider it one of the most happy circumstances of my life to be honoured."

† This was written in 1840.

gospel is proclaimed, communion with the Church by the participation of its ordinances at the hands of the duly authorized priesthood, is the *indispensable condition of salvation*. Separation from the prescribed government and regular priesthood of the Church, when it proceeds from involuntary and unavoidable ignorance or error, we have reason to trust will not intercept from the humble, the penitent, and obedient, the blessings of God's favour. But great is the guilt and imminent the danger, of those who, possessing the means of arriving at the knowledge of the truth, negligently or wilfully continue in a state of separation from the authorized ministry of the Church, and participate of ordinances administered by an irregular and invalid authority. They are guilty of *rebellion* against their Almighty Lawgiver and Judge; they expose themselves to the awful displeasure of that Almighty Jehovah who will not permit his institutions to be condemned or his authority violated with impunity.*

Here it will be perceived by the most cursory reader, Presbyterians and all professing Christians not connected with the Episcopal Church, are represented as *rebels, schismatics*, altogether *out of the Church of Christ*, and, unless they can avail themselves of the plea of *involuntary* ignorance and error, in the utmost danger of eternal perdition!

Such denunciations had, indeed, often been heard from Papists, and the devotees of their corrupt priesthood; and had been sometimes found in the controversial writings of high-church Episcopalians on both

* Bishop Hobart's Companion for the Altar, pp. 202, 204.

sides of the Atlantic. But since the civil establishment of any religious denomination in our country had been for ever terminated and prohibited by our national independence and our free constitutions, no such language, as far as is recollected, had been employed by any American Christians until then: especially such language had, up to that time, been confined to controversial pamphlets, and had never, until then, been incorporated with books of devotion, and put into the mouth of every communicant in his nearest approaches to the throne of love and mercy.

The writer of this volume was, at the date of the publication alluded to, one of the Pastors of the United Presbyterian Churches in the city of New York. Some of the people of his charge were amazed; others indignant; and a third class perplexed at the claim so confidently urged. In these circumstances, when he and his Church were virtually denounced and excommunicated; when the name of a Christian Church was denied us; when Presbyterians were warned to abandon the ministry of their pastors, under the penalty of being regarded as 'rebels' and 'schismatics' both by God and man, he thought himself called upon to say something in defence of those principles which he believed, and had long taught, as founded in the word of God. It was no bitterness against his Episcopal neighbours; no love of controversy; no restless ambition; no desire to intrude into another denomination for the purpose of making proselytes, that dictated an attempt to defend his beloved Church. The attempt, as every one who was acquainted with the circumstan-

ces could bear witness, was purely defensive, and was demanded by every consideration of duty to the souls of men, and of fidelity to his Master in heaven.

Such was the origin of the 'Letters on the Constitution and Order of the Christian Ministry,' originally published in 1807, and addressed by the author to the members of the 'United Churches' of which he was then the collegiate pastor. Never was there a work more purely defensive. The author would never have thought of writing or publishing a line on the Episcopal controversy, had not he and his people been assailed in a manner adapted to rouse every feeling in support of the principles which he had taught, and which, as long as he continued to hold them. it was his duty as a Christian and as a minister to defend. It never would have occurred to him to complain that our Episcopal neighbours preferred Episcopacy, and thought proper on that principle to organize their Church. But when they undertook to denounce *us* as guilty in the sight of God, and in danger of eternal perdition, for not adopting and acting upon the same principle; when their manuals containing this denunciation were formally sent to our houses; and when we were publicly called upon, in a great variety of forms, to say something, if we had aught to offer, in our own defence, it was, surely, time to give a reason for our principles and our practice." *

This calm and candid narrative will show how

* From the Preface to the last edition of the work as abridged by its author and published by the Board of Publication, with this title: "The Primitive and Apostolical order of the Church of Christ Vindicated."

utterly unfounded is the allegation so often made against Dr. Miller, that he was guilty of an unprovoked "attack" upon a sister Church. The attack was from the opposite side; and it was of a nature to leave him no alternative as to whether he should attempt to repel it. And this has been the course of the controversy from the date of the first publication of his Letters until now. Presbyterians have never made it a ground of complaint against Prelatists that they have adopted a different ecclesiastical regimen from their own. They of course believe their own to be more in conformity with the word of God; but they are far from denying that there may be a church-organization without it. They recognize the Episcopal Church as a branch of the Church of Christ; and if this sentiment were cordially reciprocated and acted upon by all in that communion, the only strife between the two Churches would be as to which should be most active and most useful in saving the souls of men and building up the kingdom of Christ. But so long as a large and influential portion of the Episcopal bishops and clergy denounce the non-prelatical Churches, embracing the great mass of Protestant Christians throughout the world,* as schismatical organizations, deny the validity

* "It is a well known historical fact, that *all* the Reformed Churches discarded the *jure divino* doctrine of Prelacy at the period of the Reformation. The Church of England forms no exception; for although she retained Prelacy, she did it on very different ground from that of its being of divine right, [to wit, because the *throne* forced it upon her, against the wishes of her best and ablest divines.] The Swedish and Danish Churches also retained the Episcopal form of government. All the other Reformed Churches, notwithstanding the predilection the learned and able men who

of their ordinations and ordinances, and presume to hand over their laity to the "uncovenanted mercies of God"—so long as these monstrous pretensions are put forth, there *must* be controversy. And those who provoke it, need not be surprised if the parties so rudely assailed, take occasion, in return, to expose their hierarchical usurpations to merited derision. Let intelligent and reflecting Episcopalians decide whether there is any thing in this to which they can reasonably object. Let them make the case their own. Suppose the other Churches should denounce your denomination as no Church, reproach your clergy as schismatics and usurpers, and proclaim in the ears of your laity, that by partaking of the ordinances at their hands, they were jeoparding their salvation, how would you treat the matter? Would you quietly submit to these imputations, or would you resist them to the uttermost? Would you acquiesce in the truth of the charges by remaining silent, or would you repel them as these identical charges have been and always will be repelled by the non-prelatical Churches?

The work which has led to these observations, is held in high esteem among the various branches of the Presbyterian family in this country; and it ranks as a standard authority in Scotland and Ireland. The controversy may from time to time demand fresh works

directed their affairs might naturally have for the polity to which they had been accustomed, repudiated Prelacy. Diocesan Episcopacy, then, probably does not embrace among its supporters more than a *twentieth part* of the population of Protestant Christendom."—*See the Author's work on the Apostolical Succession, Chap. XI.*

adjusted to its shifting phases; but so large a portion of this volume, as finally matured by its author, is fundamental to the great question at issue, that it is not likely to be superseded.

To say that in this and his kindred works, Dr. Miller has shown himself an accomplished champion of the system of faith and order imbodyed in our Standards, would be only to give utterance to the verdict which has long since been passed upon his writings by the general voice of all who receive the Westminster Confession and the Presbyterian Form of Government. His works are a repository to which, next to the Bible, the intelligent youth in our Bible-classes, our heads of families, our Ruling Elders, our candidates for the ministry, and very many of our ministers, naturally repair when they would inform themselves as to the distinctive peculiarities of our system, and the authority on which it reposes. The library of no Presbyterian family can be regarded as complete without them. His tract,* entitled, "Presbyterianism the truly Primitive and Apostolical Constitution of the Church of Christ," should be read and re-read by every individual who worships with a Presbyterian congregation; and parents should see that it is placed betimes in the hands of their children. There is nothing extant which exhibits in a concise form, so accurate and satisfactory a view of Presbyterianism in its history, doctrines, government, and worship. Nor is there any publication of the same compass, so well adapted to gratify the curiosity of persons of other communions,

* Board of Publication.

who would know what our system is; or to rebuke and correct the calumnies of those who misrepresent it.

It is a great recommendation of the writings of this eminent divine, that even those which are of a polemical character, are pervaded with an excellent spirit. They may be searched in vain for any taint of vulgarity or malignity, any coarse personalities, any want of fairness towards an opponent, any indication of a reckless determination to achieve a triumph irrespective of means or consequences. They will, on the contrary, be found characterized by the author's proverbial dignity and decorum of expression; by plenary candour in the statement of the doctrines he impugns; by a manifest love of the truth, and a desire to vindicate it only with such weapons as the truth itself would sanction. Doctor Miller was no ecclesiastical gladiator. He was no narrow-minded sectarian. What he aimed at was neither an olive-crown for himself, nor the glory of a sect. He loved the cause and kingdom of the Redeemer. He was willing to spend and be spent in winning souls to Christ. If he contended for the outworks of Christianity, it was not because he magnified them above the citadel, but because he feared if they were surrendered, the citadel might follow. It was their connection with the interests of vital godliness and the salvation of men, which in his view invested the questions respecting government and worship with their chief importance. *These* were the chief ends to which the manifold labours of his life were directed, and in comparison with which, he regarded all other objects as insignificant. But he

will be the best expositor of his own views on these points:

“I am aware that my character among those who know me, is that of a firm, and even zealous Presbyterian. This character I am willing to own. I have no doubt that the substance of Presbyterianism is to be found in the Bible: that it continued to prevail in the primitive Church two full centuries after the days of the Apostles; and that it is unspeakably better adapted than any form of Church government, to bind the body of Christ together in truth, love, holy living, and universal edification. Yet, I am free to say, that much as I love this form of ecclesiastical order, I consider it as a *trifle* when brought into competition with the great interests of vital piety and the salvation of the souls of men. I have no more doubt that a Church may exist and flourish under a different form, than I have that a man may be pious without being a Calvinist in his doctrinal belief. When I meet with an Episcopal brother, who, though he decisively prefers prelacy, and thinks he can find it in primitive antiquity, yet forbears to put his bishop in the place of the Saviour, and preaches the truth in love, I regard him with cordial affection, and can unfeignedly wish well not only to his person, but also to his ministry. Nay, I consider the success of *any* religious party, the triumph of *any* external denomination, as unworthy of regard, when compared with the great object of “turning men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to the kingdom of God’s dear Son.” If I am not utterly deceived, I love a pious

warm-hearted, exemplary Episcopalian, more, far more, than a cold, formal, worldly Presbyterian. Nor have I the smallest desire that Episcopalians should surrender their decided preference for prelacy, or their firm belief in its apostolic origin, for the sake of pleasing other denominations. This would be an unreasonable demand. All I lament, is, that they lay a degree of stress on an outward form which the Bible knows nothing of; and that they adopt a principle, without the slightest warrant, which necessarily leads to a system of proscription, denunciation, and war toward all other Protestant Churches.”*

This long extract is given, (and other passages of like import might be cited) in order to place the character of this great and good man fairly before you. It is to vindicate him from the charge of being a bigoted polemic; and to show you with what cordiality he embraced all, of whatever creed or sect, who love the Lord Jesus Christ. If there is a corresponding passage in the aggregate writings of those who have at different times controverted his views and assailed him with harsh epithets—nay, if there is in the accumulated literature of that entire hierarchical party against which he wrote, for the last forty-five years, *a single passage* which breathes the genuine catholicity of the paragraph just quoted, it is yet to be produced. Let this fact be noted by those who are so ready to brand a respectful protest against their unscriptural assumptions of ecclesiastical power, as intolerance; and who seem to be surprised that their attempts to

* Letters on the Christian Ministry. 2d ed. oct. p. xlviiii.

extrude us from the Church of Christ, where we and our fathers have been from the days of the Apostles until now, should be firmly resisted.

You cannot feel more sensibly than does the preacher, how crude and incomplete this sketch is; but it were discourteous to trespass longer upon your patience. There is one reflection which has doubtless forced itself upon the mind of every thoughtful listener in this assembly, viz: *that it must be quite impossible for any individual to frame an adequate estimate of the results of such a life as Dr. Miller's.*

A life of four-score years must under any circumstances be fruitful of important results. But when we consider his character and abilities, the stations he filled, the variety and magnitude of his labours, and the numerous powerful agencies he set in motion, we cannot but look upon it as a thing impracticable to take an accurate gauge and measurement of the influence he exerted and will yet exert upon the world. To consider him only in his professional character, who can compute the issues involved in the ministry of a learned, evangelical, faithful, and diligent preacher, continued through fifty-seven years? But this is only a single element to be taken into the account. For thirty-seven years of this period he was occupied in training ministers. Not less than fourteen or fifteen hundred candidates for the sacred office, were brought for a longer or shorter time under the joint instruction of himself and his colleagues, and a large proportion of these young men entered the ministry.

To estimate the results of his life, one must be able to gather up the results of theirs. It would be necessary to follow them to their pastoral charges—to the schools and colleges over which they presided—to the presses they conducted—to their missionary stations among the heathen. It would be necessary to trace out the influence of this army of labourers in Christ's vineyard, one by one—their influence in all the forms in which influence radiates from a sound and zealous ministry—and especially their influence in saving the souls of men, and in instrumentally raising up others to do the same, and thus perpetuating to other times and other generations an ever augmenting stream of priceless spiritual blessings. No finite mind is competent to a work like this. Some hint of the results which would be reached if the computation were possible, may be drawn from a survey of our beloved Church with its nineteen hundred ministers and twenty-five hundred churches. It would ill become a Presbyterian pastor to speak his whole mind on this subject; but it may be pardonable to say, that there is no Christian denomination more happily united than our own; and that our ministers as a body are well educated men, orthodox in faith, evangelical in spirit, laborious in their calling, exemplary in conduct, eminently conservative in their social and civil influence, and the efficient friends of popular education, wholesome laws, and all judicious schemes for promoting the true progress of the race in knowledge, piety, and substantial happiness. If this language is too strong, let it be abated. But whatever our ministry and our Church

may be, no earthly agency has had so much to do in fashioning them, as the PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY. And next to the Giver of all good, the source of all grace and holiness, our obligations as a Church are due, for the manifold blessings we enjoy, to the able and excellent Professors of that Institution, one of whom has now gone to his reward.

The death of this revered man presented a spectacle scarcely less attractive and impressive than his long and honourable life. The Master he had loved so well, dealt very gently with his venerable servant. In a good old age—after four-score years of usefulness—his work all done and well done—in the bosom of his family—his mind serene—his faith unwavering—his hope of heaven bright and full of glory—without a pang—without a fear—he fell asleep in Jesus!

“ So fades a summer cloud away ;
 So sinks the gale when storms are o'er ;
 So gently shuts the eye of day ;
 So dies a wave along the shore !”

“ The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.” Throughout our wide communion, in this land, and in the churches to be gathered by our ministers in Asia, in Africa, and in the Isles of the Sea, the name of SAMUEL MILLER can never, to the latest posterity, be pronounced but with reverence and gratitude.

APPENDIX.

BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE OF DR. MILLER.

FROM THE PRESBYTERIAN OF JANUARY 19, 1850.

THE reverend and venerable Dr. Samuel Miller, Professor of Ecclesiastical History and Church Government in the Theological Seminary at Princeton, New Jersey, honoured and beloved in the Church which he so long and so usefully served, was permitted to rest from his labours and sleep in Jesus on Monday evening, 7th of January, 1850, at eleven o'clock. For some days previous to his death, it was evident that he was approaching the end of life, and his peace in view of it was deeply affecting and comforting to those around him. "We hardly think of him as *dying*," writes a friend, "he seems to be merely undergoing a quiet translation to the skies." He said to the Rev. Mr. Schenck, the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, "I am only waiting the Master's call, and feel wholly willing to leave the matter of my going in his hands. Surely I ought to trust Him, who has at all times shown himself so kind and considerate and gracious a Master." In a letter received from his venerable colleague, the Rev. Dr. Archibald Alexander, the day before his decease, he says of him, "His prospect is bright, without a shadow or a doubt to obscure it."

Dr. Miller completed his eightieth year on the 31st of October, 1849. He was born October 31, 1769, a short distance from the town of Dover, the capital of the State of Delaware, seventy-five miles south of Philadelphia. His father was the Rev. John Miller, a native of Boston, who, travelling south, was called and settled in the

United Presbyterian churches of Dover and Smyrna, in Delaware, of which he continued to be the pastor from 1749 till 1791, a little more than forty-two years. His mother was Margaret Millington, daughter of Captain Allumby Millington, of Talbot county, Eastern Shore of Maryland.

His literary training and graduation were in the University of Pennsylvania, where he received the degree of A. B. July 31, 1789.

He studied theology under his father's direction. But after his father's decease, which occurred in August, 1791, and after being licensed by the Presbytery of Lewes, he went to close his preparatory theological studies under the Rev. Dr. Nisbet, Principal of Dickinson College, at Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

For the first time in his life, he visited New York city in 1792. In the autumn of that year, he received a unanimous call from the United Presbyterian churches in that city, to be a colleague of Drs. Rodgers and McKnight. This was his first and only pastoral charge. He was here ordained and installed June 5, 1793, and continued to labour with distinguished ability and success for *twenty* years.

The period in which he was a pastor in New York was eventful, and in all the changes of that score of years, Dr. Miller maintained a high and commanding position in the pulpit and in society. His talents and manners eminently fitted him for the post he occupied, and he would have stood as long as life and health were spared to him, as a burning and shining light in the metropolitan pulpit, had not God prepared for him another sphere.

In 1806, he was Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church.

He was appointed by the General Assembly which met in May, 1813, to the Professorship of Ecclesiastical History and Church Government in the then newly organized Theological Seminary at Princeton, New Jersey. This trust he discharged to the high satisfaction of the Church for more than thirty-six years.

His declining health under the weight of years, had led him some time ago to desire a release from the responsibilities of his Professorship, but he was not permitted to carry this desire into effect until May 1849, when his resignation was accepted by the General

Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, and the following resolutions of respect and gratitude were adopted.

“In relation to the tender of resignation of his Professorship, by the Rev. Dr. Miller, the following resolutions were adopted by the General Assembly, viz.

“1. *Resolved*, That the Assembly unite with the Board of Directors [of the Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey,] in expressions of thankfulness to God, that he has spared the life and health of the venerable Professor of Ecclesiastical History and Church Government for so many years, and that our beloved Church has enjoyed the benefit of his valued instructions and labours from the infancy of the Seminary to this time.

“2. *Resolved*, That the Assembly unite with the Board in recording their grateful sense of the manifold, faithful, and most important services which the venerable Professor has rendered to our Church, and to the cause of truth and righteousness; and they beg to assure him of their cordial sympathy in the bodily infirmities which have led him to seek a release from the duties of his office.

“3. *Resolved*, That the Rev. Samuel Miller, D.D. be, and hereby is, entirely released from all obligation to give instruction in each and all of the departments of his professorship.

“4. *Resolved*, That Dr. Miller be requested to give such instructions and perform such services as on consultation with his fellow professors may be convenient and agreeable to himself.

“5. *Resolved*, That the Rev. Samuel Miller, D.D. shall continue to enjoy intact the salary and all the other rights of his professorship during his natural life, under the title of Emeritus Professor of Ecclesiastical History and Church Government.”—[*Minutes of 1849*, p. 249.]

The Rev. James W. Alexander, D.D. was elected Professor in the place of Dr. Miller, but the successor has scarcely been inducted into office before his venerable predecessor has been called home to his reward.