

SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW.

NUMBER III.

DECEMBER, 1848.

ARTICLE I.

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE DEVELOPEMENT OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE U. S. A.,

DURING THE TEN YEARS WHICH HAVE ELAPSED SINCE ITS DISRUPTION IN 1838: SUGGESTED BY THE PUBLISHED MINUTES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF 1848

It is now ten years since the great disruption of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. That event was attended with circumstances every way remarkable; and it had been preceded by a deep and wide convulsion of the whole denomination in America. The thing itself, the circumstances which attended the final catastrophe, and the causes which had been long working to produce it, as well as those which more immediately brought it about, were, each and all, of such a nature, that reflecting men could never have doubted that results of the most important kind, for good or evil, to all the parties, must necessarily follow. To as many of the more immediate actors in those affairs, which were consummated in the disruption of 1838, as have been spared to witness the fruits of the ten succeeding years, it must be a subject full of solemn and affecting interest to ponder the results of the work to which they put their hands. One of their number — one who bore his full share of odium, and felt, at least, his full share of interest in all that was done — may be allowed to direct public attention to the general subject, and to offer some considerations upon a few topics suggested by a perusal of the Min-

utes of the General Assembly of 1848, which seem to be indicative of the general progress of the Church, especially in its interior life, since its great deliverance ten years ago.

In regard to the New School party and the separate denomination they have constituted since 1838, it is not necessary to say much in such a connexion as this. As long as it will be the duty of the Presbyterian Church to vindicate and to uphold her grand reform, so long will it be a part of that duty to exhibit, in true and impartial colours, the character of the men, the actions, and the doctrines which brought her to the verge of ruin. The more completely she fulfils her duties, and the more perfectly she developes her inward life, the more will she be separate from such actions and such doctrines; and the more impossible will it be to implicate her again in any alliance with them, or any endorsement of them. Every step in that direction is a condemnation of all that God blessed to our deliverance, and a reproach of all whom God used to reform us. It is a blessed and a significant fact, that all the movements in that direction, whether open or insidious, have signally failed; amongst the chief of which may be signalized the attempt to seduce the General Assembly of 1846 into a sacramental retraction of some of the noblest testimonies the Church ever bore. The New School Presbyterian body is like our own body, steadily working out its own inward life in its new condition. It deeply imports us to observe the process, and the fruits that will be brought forth. We are far from having seen the end—let us calmly await it. And then God will show us plainly what further we ought to do, if any thing shall then remain for us to do.

Our duty is widely different in regard to our own Church. Its acts are the indications of its life. The more those acts are performed as matters of course, the more clearly do they indicate the nature and the degree of the vital energy, which is steadily accomplishing its end, in the outward developement of her inward being. The Church is so large and so widely dispersed, that it is chiefly, if not wholly, in such manifestations, that we can find the sure proofs of her general condition, the certain indications of the point she has reached and the direction in which she tends. In every point of view, therefore, all who love her are required

to watch these symptoms with profound attention, to rejoice in proportion as they are sound and healthful, and to bestir themselves at the very first indication of disease.

The first thing which is suggested as worthy of special remark, on opening these Minutes, is the place at which the Assembly held its sessions. Maryland, one of the earliest, if not the very earliest State, in which Presbyterianism was planted, at last, and after more than a century and a half had elapsed since she received and protected Francis McKemie, sees a Presbyterian General Assembly meet on her soil! Baltimore, the third city in the Union, and from its foundation containing in its bosom a powerful Presbyterian influence, after beholding more than fifty General Assemblies in succession, (with one single exception,) meet almost in sight of the smoke of the city, from 1789 to 1839, is at last honoured in 1848, with being the seat of the sixtieth annual sessions of the great council of the Church! Surely it was time. How many evils resulted to us from the single fact that it had, for so long a period, been the habit of the Assembly to meet annually at the same place, and at the particular place it had selected, it is impossible ever to determine. It became the settled habit, then a kind of settled law of the Church, that the General Assembly must convene, year after year, in the city of Philadelphia; until, at last, it was openly proclaimed and generally believed, that to meet any where else was to brave certain fearful but undefineable dangers, which it was folly to think of encountering; and that to meet out of Pennsylvania was to incur almost certain ruin, by the forfeiture of the charter which had been granted by the Legislature of that State. During the whole existence of the Assembly anterior to the disruption, it had never met but three times out of Philadelphia; of these three times, only once, and that at a very early period, out of Pennsylvania, (at Winchester, Va.,) and twice (in 1835 and 1836,) at Pittsburgh. Mean time, the sentiment of Philadelphia and its vicinage became, in a manner, the sentiment of the Church itself. A few Pastors and still fewer Laymen became the general depositories of all actual control in the public affairs of the Church; its various Boards were accumulated there; its funds were all managed there; its general policy was all shaped and then executed there,

and the local influence was gradually swallowing up the general control. Ruinous and derogatory as such a state of things, must always and necessarily be, there was nothing whatever to mitigate the inherent evils of this condition, in the special circumstances of this particular locality. Its Pastors were no more than a fair average sample of the Pastors of the Church, and some of them, in the end, proved to be amongst the greatest troublers and corrupters of the Church. Its population in general, even its Presbyterian population, took so little interest in the meetings of the Assembly, that all its numerous congregations could hardly furnish a single gathering of Christian people on a week-night, to hear the most admired preachers in the body; and a very large proportion of the members were, for years in succession, distributed in boarding houses instead of being received as honoured guests into private families. There were not wanting men who saw and deplored, and set vigorously about amending, a state of things so unhappy. Their efforts took the Assembly to Pittsburg in 1835 and 1836, and have since, after taking it to Cincinnati, Louisville, Richmond and Baltimore, succeeded in finally dissipating the spell, and making it, as we trust, the settled policy of the Church, that its General Assembly shall never again be a fixture attached to any particular place, gentlemen or congregations. The same new influence located the Board of Foreign Missions in the city of New York — an act whose wisdom, we presume, no mortal now questions: a plain corollary from which is, that of the four corporations belonging to the Church, still located in Philadelphia — two or three should be removed elsewhere. The essence of these statements and reflections is extremely simple. The Church ought to rule itself; no local influence ought to be allowed to become permanent or excessive in the councils of the Church; the Assembly ought to embody and to utter the true and settled judgments and sentiments of the whole Church, and not those of any dominant interest in it; and it ought, as far as possible, to know by personal inspection, all the grand sections of the Church and the Republic, and stimulate, by its occasional presence, all the great centres of power and influence. Here is a great change effected in the outward action of the Church; the manifestation of a great change in the inward senti-

ment of the Church; the indication of a great change in the point of direction to which the development of the Church is tending: A freer, a larger, a more national action; a more perfect deliverance from local, personal, and class influences; a broader area, and a freer movement; no more metropolitan cities, no more metropolitan pastors, no more metropolitan corporations, parties or influences; loftier instincts, higher aspirations, a wider horizon, a nobler destiny. Such, unless we deceive ourselves, are the sober reflections which a calm survey of the past, and especially of the last ten years, suggests in connection with one, and perhaps some may say, one of the smallest matters involved in the convulsions preceding 1838, and terminating in the disruption of that memorable year.

Passing on to the actual constitution of the body—its roll of organic and corresponding members—the actual relations it sustains to other branches of the visible Church—and the questions which have sprung up out of these relations—we find, in each of these topics, abundant grounds for serious meditation. That the attendance of members at the Assembly should have been very full, during the stormy years, from 1831 to 1838, is not to be wondered at. That this full attendance should be perpetuated since the latter year, increasing in proportion, rather than diminishing, from year to year, as a settled habitude of the Church, is a striking and characteristic fact. Of all the churches in the world, there is not one, in regard to which these frequent and general meetings can be more important, than to ours. Covering an area already so vast, and still extending—enjoying so few opportunities of personal intercourse and personal knowledge of each other, as our Ministers and Elders, thus situated, must do—surrounded by so many and such powerful influences, tending to disturb the perfect homogeneity of the Church, and to distract its great aims—these annual meetings of the General Assembly are amongst the most precious and powerful safeguards of our Church; and a full and general attendance on them is one of the clearest proofs that the Church feels that she is *one church*; that she has one common mission set before her; and that her united power for good is but the sum of the combined efficiency of all the parts. By a sort of faithful instinct, the Church seems more and more set against all the schemes

that can be devised to weaken the power, curtail the influence, or remove from immediate contact with the body of the Church itself, this great annual court. The history of the Church itself, exhibiting the mode in which it has grown to be what it is, and the process by which the original Church in America has expanded and been divided and divided again, and the theory of its simple and divine organization, both alike attest that this vast Church of our day, which assembles from year to year, by its chosen Ministers and Elders, is not only as really one Church as the Church which M'Kemie first planted was one Church, but that, in fact, it is the very same Church. How much error, folly, and disorder, have sprung from a contrary theory and belief? It is God, by His holy Word, and God in His adorable Providence, vesting His Church with power, and fitting her for her mission amongst men; or it is, on the other hand, carnal wisdom, guided by circumstances, and delegating and distributing ecclesiastical power at its own choice, that determines the true character of our Church in this aspect of the subject. Though some painful and strange decisions of the General Assembly, within the last ten years, seem to go very far in the wrong direction, touching its own nature, powers, and rights—tending, indeed, to strip it, if they were adhered to, of most that makes it a real power in and over our Church, and to rob it of much that should make it an object of such deep and settled interest to that Church; yet, the general tendency is in the other direction, and the ample list of Ministers and Elders, the full representation from so large a portion of our Presbyteries, and the whole aspect set forth, (so far as a printed record can do it,) of the power, and life, and movement, of the body, attest the sense in which these members are sent, and in which they take their places, in the great and divinely ordained council of the Church. It is not a handful of men, met on an errand of human contrivance, and bonded by ties of human formation, and devoted to objects of human selection, and acting with powers carrying only a human obligation; but it is a great multitude of God's servants, chosen to rule in His Church, assembled by His authority, resolute to do His bidding, and uttering their acts in His name. The disruption of 1838 stands precisely between these two extreme conditions. Before that event, we were

rapidly approaching the former condition ; since that event, the general indications are, that we are marching towards the latter. The Church is safe only so long as this progress is maintained. The true life, which alone can sustain that progress, is still exposed to falsehood in high places, which would poison it, and to errors which would stint its developement; so that every indication of its vigorous action is to be hailed with joy. What, for example, would our condition become, if it were settled that Ruling Elders need not be present in our Church Courts, or, that though they need be present, by positive law, they are merely a human addition to God's ordered Church? What would be our estate, if it were received truth that Papal Priests are as really and regularly Christian Pastors as ourselves, and might, without any further ordination, sit down with us, as such, in the tribunals of God's Church; or that, on the other hand, ordination, and that only, is all in all, and, therefore, the whole Assembly might consist of men, not one of whom performed a spiritual function? Thanks be to God, none of these delusions have had power to arrest the healthful developement of the Church; and it is worthy to be noted, that this very Assembly of 1848, as the one for 1846 had more signally done, rebuked the silly vanity of calling our Ministers Bishops. What has the Presbyterian Church to gain by all this rabble of the middle ages — this inundation of gowns, and gloves, and lawn, and read essays, and gothic walls, and stained glass, and organs? A church of men, a church of power, a church full of God's presence, is a church worth loving — worth striving for. A church of music, and architecture, and titles, and dress, and forms, is beneath the consideration, we will not say of a Christian, but even of a Philosopher. This general topic must not be passed over without calling attention to the rapid and remarkable growth of our Church within the period specially contemplated in these remarks. In all that constitutes the efficiency of a church, even in a worldly point of view, the Presbyterian Church in America is this day a more powerful and effective organization than she was before the disruption in 1838. Her growth in members, ministers, and churches, has been steady and immense. Her institutions are consolidated, and more effective by far; her power is put forth in a greater degree, and is far more fruitful. What

did we lose by that memorable schism? What have we gained since it took place? How does the character of what we have acquired compare with that of what we lost? What is the actual condition of the whole mass, viewed at the two extremities of these ten years—our whole Church to-day, compared with our whole Church before the Schism? It is in no spirit of boasting—it is in a spirit of profound humility and gratitude to God, whose hand was over us for good, alike in what we lost and in what we have gained—that we challenge every considerate man in our communion to answer these questions to his own heart. We solemnly declare, that if there ever was a case in which the manifest blessing of God upon a course of human conduct can be said to have set the seal of divine approbation upon any earthly transactions, it is our opinion that the Presbyterian Church in the United States has that attestation. Let her cherish it as an “immediate jewel of her soul.”

Our congregational friends at the North, it seems, do not live up to their privileges. Of the six Associations, Conso-ciations, Conventions, Conferences, &c., with which our Assembly is in correspondence, only one (the General Conference of Maine) sent any Delegates to the last Assembly. In our remarks, suggested by the consideration of the organization of that Assembly, we cannot omit some allusion to its Corresponding Members, which, if full, would amount to some sixteen persons. The position which the Presbyterian Church ought to occupy towards all the sister churches of the world, and especially those of our own country, cannot, assuredly, be a matter of discussion in her own bosom. Every thing points her out as one of the leading churches of the world—and on this continent, certainly, there is none in advance of her. It is, therefore, preëminently her duty, not only to do all in her power to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, but also to avail herself of her high position to induce others to do likewise. In this respect, there has been no dereliction of duty on her part. She has held out the hand of concord as steadily and as promiscuously as the most ardent friend of Christian union could ask. What has she gained by it? Perhaps, the satisfaction of having done her duty. If anything more, we should be glad to have it pointed out. Most especially

in all her relations with the Congregational Churches of America, for above forty years past, she has been exposed to dangers, which have proved themselves to be most serious, and has received benefits which have been of the most dubious kind. What influence our entanglements with Congregationalism had upon our condition, from the commencement of this century up to our great Semi-Pelagian Schism, and what obstacles the entire Congregational force, in and out of our Church, presented, in the first place, to the predominance of the Old School party, and afterwards, to the purgation of the Church by it, are matters in regard to which the opinions of men are settled, and which do not require particular notice here. At the division of the Presbyterian Church, the overwhelming proportion of the Congregational element, which had been gradually infused into it during fifty years, was either cast out of it in 1837, or seceded from it in 1838. After that, the Congregational bodies at the North, we believe without exception, sympathized with the New School party, and to a great extent, they made no secret of their decided preferences. When, in 1839, the decision of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania confounded the small Erastian party that remained in our body, waiting for an opposite decision to leave it with the more eclat, and brought the Congregationalists of the North to a clearer view of what was to be the result of their open preference of the Semi-Pelagian Assembly, a new aspect was put on the whole affair, and both bodies of Presbyterians were recognized as equally entitled to be called the Presbyterian Church. As years have rolled on, things have gradually settled on this basis, and the Presbyterian Church, passing over many serious grounds of complaint, and many still more serious grounds of suspicion that she was improperly countenancing errors it was her duty to testify against, found herself restored to the ancient status with these various bodies going under five or six different names, but all of them Congregational in government, and few or none of them sound in doctrine, according to our notions of soundness. Meantime, Presbyterianism has almost died out of New-England, where it once had considerable strength, the process of its decay going on, step by step, with the progressive departure of the New-England Churches from the faith of their fathers — a sig-

nificant fact, worthy to be held in lasting remembrance. As long as there was any prospect of bringing the whole Presbyterian Church into such a condition as was satisfactory to New-England Congregationalists, no public effort was made to plant their system, openly and by name, either in the region occupied by Presbyterianism, or within the new States growing up on its borders. Indeed, the very opposite course was sedulously pursued, and the impression sought to be made was, that the two forms of doctrine and order were sufficiently alike to satisfy every enlightened conscience and every pious heart, and that, at the best, forms of church order were matters of small moment. There are, perhaps, tens of thousands of persons now living, who have been members, and many of them ministers, successively, of both denominations—many of them changing back and forward, repeatedly, upon this precise view of the case. After the events of 1838, and the finale of the matter in 1839, it became gradually more and more evident, that the Presbyterian Church was thoroughly in earnest in its spirit of reform; that no hope remained, by any new process, of congregationalizing it, either wholly or in part; and, therefore, that the entrance of Ministers and members from other denominations into it, was to be taken, in all time to come, as a real and fair transaction, meaning what it had before only professed to mean. Thereupon, another new aspect was once more put upon the whole subject; Congregationalists fell suddenly in love with their form of church order, which, indeed, was newly discovered to be not only exclusively divine, but alone compatible with high efforts, exalted piety, or perfect developement. Periodicals were established expressly to advocate its new pretensions, institutions were endowed to spread it through the land, and a settled plan of proselyting and planting churches was widely set in operation and vigorously pushed, wherever an opening could be found—which was none the less acceptable if it promised to divide a Presbyterian congregation—to destroy one—or to supplant one. Simultaneously with this new movement, a settled plan of discrediting the Presbyterian Church was set on foot, and for a number of years past, we believe it has never failed to occur, that every year the character of the Church has undergone discussion of a derogatory kind on some subject or other—generally

the subject of slavery — in one or more of the Congregational bodies to which delegates are sent by the General Assembly; a late and very flagrant case of this description having been made a subject of discussion in the newspapers since the adjournment of the last Assembly. The sum of the whole matter, so far as fifty years of experience can reveal its true nature, is simply this: that the Presbyterian Church must, one way or another, submit to be Congregationalized, or she must buckle on her armour and take the field openly against this imperfect and insufficient system which is called Congregationalism; or she must, under the forms of a hollow alliance, patiently and ignominiously see her character traduced, her proper field of labor invaded, and her churches, in many places, distracted by those whose power to harm her results mainly from her own endorsement of them. The first alternative, the Church has plainly shown, she will not submit to; the second one, she has, with a noble forbearance, always manifested the greatest reluctance to embrace; the third one is now in a process of experiment upon her, and it remains to be seen how long she will endure it. Two things seem to us worthy to be suggested: the first is, that the time has surely come, to consider whether New-England has no claim upon our Church for the true faith and order of the Gospel; whether we can show any sufficient warrant to excuse us from planting Presbyterianism there, any more than in any other land, where it is so sadly needed; and whether, in this, as in all other cases, the true remedy to prevent trouble to ourselves by the errors of other people is not to enlighten them in the knowledge of that truth which is the immediate remedy for their own mistakes. The other suggestion is this: In point of fact, the general meetings of Congregationalists, to which the Assembly sends delegates, neither are, nor do they profess to be, in any proper sense, powers ecclesiastical, or governments at all; and, except for the force of a foregone conclusion, and the power of long received impressions, it would be extremely difficult to show why a government ecclesiastical, professing to act by divine warrant, should treat on equal terms with a gathering of gentlemen, met confessedly without power, to advise about things ecclesiastical, any more than if they meet about other matters as nearly touching the progress of religion or

morality. In the nature of the case, there is little more reason why a Presbyterian Court should send delegates to, and receive delegates from, one of these bodies, than why it should do the like with a Bible Society, or any other benevolent association. Upon the whole, it seems to us manifest enough that the progress of the last ten years has widely changed the position of the Presbyterian Church in regard to Congregationalism. Congregationalism seems to have perceived this fact sooner than Presbyterianism did, and to have acted on it characteristically. There were not wanting those, in our Church, who, from the moment of the disruption, perceived that, if we were true to ourselves, this change must occur inevitably, from the past and established character of American Congregationalism; and who urged upon successive Assemblies the propriety of considering both the suggestions made above. The time had not then come — perhaps it has not yet come; possibly some unexpected change in the spirit and conduct of the other party may defer it for the present, or continually. Still, it is obvious that the position and spirit of the Presbyterian Church are not what they were before the disruption. Her inward life has developed itself on this important subject, as decidedly as on any other; and whatever course of conduct she may, on reflection, consider it her duty to adopt, there can be no doubt, it will be essentially modified, in accordance with the whole tenor of her vital developement since 1838. Before passing from this topic, we must express our regret, that only two, out of the numerous separate bodies of orthodox Presbyterians in the United States, are as yet in such relations with the General Assembly as to send delegates to it, and receive them from it. The German Reformed Church and the Dutch Reformed Church are the two referred to. All the rest of the orthodox Presbyterian bodies in America hold aloof from us. It is their fault, not ours. The sentiment has rapidly gained ground in the Presbyterian Church, that the bonds of union between all the orthodox Presbyterians in this country ought to be greatly strengthened; and the proceedings taken by the Assembly a few years ago, in connexion with the Bicentenary of the Westminster Assembly, were all pregnant with it. This is, beyond doubt, the true point at which to commence the great work of Christian union. Let no

Church insert prominently, in its creed, or insist in practice, upon any thing but what it judges to be essential truth — essential in itself, or essential in its connections ; but then, let every Church faithfully express and adhere to what it professes. This is the first point, and altogether fundamental in any concord amongst honest men. The second step is to be taken by the closer union of Churches essentially agreed — as, for example, by the great family of orthodox Presbyterians ; and until this step is taken, all progress beyond it, and in disregard of it, must necessarily be substantially impossible — for if those who do agree cannot agree, how can they agree who do not agree ? Agree they may, in non-essentials, or agree they may, to suppress the truth ; but neither of these is Christian union. The third step would be, to bring as near together as possible the several great classes of churches thus previously in concord, and would require to be adjusted on grounds different, in many respects, from the second step, but all of which presuppose that it had been taken. The failure which we have recently witnessed, of the grand experiment which exploded at London, is but a new proof of the fundamental truth of these views ; and, in one aspect, the general results of our whole relations with Congregationalism are another. The Presbyterian Church, since 1838, and more especially since the Bi-centenary of the Westminster Assembly brought the whole subject strongly under her consideration, has manifested an increasing earnestness in the right direction, upon this most interesting subject ; and this fact exhibits a striking symptom of the nature and tendency of the inward power that is at work in her bosom — a power which it is our express object to discover and to illustrate.

There are also foreign Churches in correspondence with the General Assembly. A French and an Irish Minister were present in her sessions — as was, not many years ago, an Asiatic Bishop — and were both heard on the state and claims of their respective Churches. These are noble exhibitions — precious tokens of a better day to come. The Presbyterian Church of Ireland and the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland are now in correspondence with us. A few years ago the United Secession Church of Scotland stood in the same relations to us — relations which seem to have been silently given up as unprofitable, to say the least.

Nor is it long since the Congregational Union of England and Wales sent commissioners to us, and we to them twice, across the ocean. It is significant that we have never done this since the disruption. It seems to have been considered ridiculous, as it indeed is, for a Church Court to send persons four thousand miles, across the seas, to represent it in a voluntary association of gentlemen, whose objects and efforts were nearly as much political as they were religious, and whose entire annual sessions did not occupy twenty four hours; and no effort seems to have been made to renew the intercourse, even by letter, for some years past. With the Churches of the continent of Europe, no direct intercourse has ever been established. No one who has not spent some time in Europe can have any idea, how great and how general is the ignorance which prevails in regard to America and every thing in it, even amongst educated people; nor, as to Great Britain, how great is the prejudice against this country. The intercourse between the United Secession Synod of Scotland, and the Congregational Union of England and Wales, and the Presbyterian Church of America, resulted, as we have intimated, in nothing permanently useful—and was soon abolished. That now existing with the Presbyterian Church of Ireland has been fruitful chiefly of irritating complaints against us; and that with the Free Church of Scotland—undertaken on her part with the direct design, frankly avowed, of immediate and substantial advantage to herself—has been quickly transformed into an opportunity for annual lectures to us. It is a grand mistake to suppose, that any of the Churches of Europe are in a condition to become teachers of the Churches of this country; and it is equally erroneous to imagine, that any of the Churches of Great Britain have the least idea that this is the true state of the case. Our country and our Church have a great destiny to work out—a grand mission to perform, no mean part of which is the influence to be exerted back upon Europe herself. The grand problems God has solved by us, in matters ecclesiastical, are more important to mankind, and are more pertinent to the state out of which Europe is struggling to emerge, than the analogous problems in matters temporal, whose solution on this continent will be one main cause of the political regeneration of mankind. In this respect the

Presbyterian Church in America occupies a position, rendered more effective and imposing by the consideration, that in Scotland, Ireland, Holland, France, Switzerland, and a large part of Germany, Presbyterianism is the prevailing, and to an immense extent, the almost exclusive form of Protestantism. It is a great error to judge the Presbyterianism of Ireland by Cook — that of France by the Monods, or that of Switzerland by D'Aubigné. There is not a Synod in our Church whose condition is not blessed, when spiritually compared with the best one in Europe — *possibly*, excepting Scotland. Difficulties exist amongst us — desolations surround us — vacant congregations — ministers inadequately supported — a state of piety far too low — of alms-giving, far, very far, beneath the proper standard — of effort and sacrifice, wholly inadequate. But taken, for all in all, it is the best that exists. They who have seen nearly all, may confidently assert it. Recent events abroad give this whole subject an inconceivable importance, and render it doubly necessary that the Presbyterian Church in this country should comprehend her real position, as regards foreign Presbyterian Churches, and be prepared to fulfil her great duty to them. If she could but make widely known amongst them, what she is, what she has done, and by what means God has brought her to her present estate, she would perform for them a service, which could not be estimated, and clear up before their vision, the darkness in which all of them walked so long, and amidst which most of them are still groping about. The Presbyterian Church of Ireland is still pensioned by the State; the Free Church of Scotland still embraces the union of Church and State as a settled article of faith; the Reformed Church of France is probably more than half Semi-Arian; that of Holland is still an intolerant Church; and throughout Switzerland and Germany, it is not saying too much to assert that the mass of the ministers are not sound in the faith, and that the mass of private professors give no sufficient evidence of true piety. A great reformation has been progressing, and in most countries of Europe, has produced immense fruits amongst the Reformed, which is but another name, for Presbyterian Churches. But a work still more immense remains to be accomplished. And the object of these statements is simply to make obvious our strong impression, that

the position of the Presbyterian Church in regard to all these foreign Churches—towards some more manifestly, towards others less so, but still towards all—is that of an example propounded for imitation—that of a fortunate sister ready and capable to teach great lessons, which God has taught her a century before them. Well and wisely, then, has the Assembly declined, from year to year, calmly and gently, yet firmly declined, to be schooled about questions of which they know little and we know every thing. Her duty calls her a step beyond. Let her clearly and loudly enunciate, for their guidance, in this, their dawn of deliverance, the grand truths—secrets yet to them—on which so much of her own strength depends. Let her proclaim the freedom of the Church, not half way, as in Scotland and Ireland, but wholly and clearly, as here. Let her lift up her voice for sound doctrine and scriptural order, the great primitive foundations of a true and stable Church. Let her plead for the exercise of that indispensable discipline, which will secure godliness in the members of the Church, and save it from the curse which, throughout Europe, cleaves to it, of being, to so deplorable an extent, an ungodly assemblage of unconverted men. Let her utter her loud testimony—a testimony accumulated through a century and a half—that such a Church, truly free, sound in faith and scriptural in order, filled with Godly men, may be implicitly relied on, to build up, to maintain and to extend, the kingdom of the Lord, not only without the aid, but under the frown of the powers of this world. And let her complete her sublime testimony with the solemn truth, that any Church essentially destitute of these conditions, supposing it to be in her power to secure them, neither deserves, nor will ever permanently enjoy, the blessings of God; while any Church having and faithfully keeping them, will never be forsaken of Him. What mission would be more glorious than one bearing along with her sympathy and prayers, a testimony like this, from the Presbyterian Church of America to her sister Churches in foreign lands, in this day of their extraordinary visitation, and of the fearful shaking of all things around them!

Our readers may be apt to conclude that it is time for us to advance into the body of the Assembly, upon the threshold of which they have been so long detained. Let

us, therefore enter the venerable body. The proceedings of all our Church Courts, it has always seemed to us, ought to be more fully recorded than they are. The interests of truth, the claims of history, the just responsibilities of persons and parties, would all be better consulted, as we suppose, if our Minutes were made to assume somewhat more the form of a full and regular journal of proceedings. It is often of as much importance to know what a body refuses to do, as to know what it does—or, more properly speaking, that which passes in the negative, is as really an action, as that which passes in the affirmative—and is, often, as important to be remembered; and it is far from being useless or uninteresting, to tell us, and to tell posterity, who suggested, and who matured, who spoiled and who defeated, measures that coming generations may judge of very differently from ourselves. To illustrate our idea about omissions and suppression, we will cite a remarkable instance which is exhibited in the Minutes before us, and for which the whole Assembly seems to be responsible. In the obituary notice of Dr. Ashbel Green, prepared by a Committee of the Assembly, and recorded in its Minutes, (pp. 22-24), not the slightest allusion is made to his illustrious part in the reform of the Church; nor to the fact that any such event had ever taken place: although that venerable man devoted a number of the best years of his life, mainly, to the service of the Church, in its critical history from 1830 to 1840, and performed, perhaps, the most important and the most fruitful duties of his whole life, in the eminent position he occupied, towards the Church, during those eventful years. At the period that he aided in forming the present constitution of the Church, he was a very young man—and by no means one of the most conspicuous of the actors on that occasion; his connection with the College of New Jersey, though useful and honourable, was not remarkable for any particular or lasting results; and his pastoral-work was not specially distinguished from that of many of his cotemporaries. But his undoubted position as one of the chief leaders in the reform of the Presbyterian Church; his courage, his faith, his ability, in the convulsions which preceded and attended it; his vast influence, and the wisdom, firmness and moderation, with which he used it during

those eventful years, and throughout that fearful crisis: these are the very things that made him justly honoured,—and pointed him out, most signally, as a benefactor of mankind, and of the Church of God. And yet while the less important are clearly stated, the more important things are not even alluded to, in the somewhat protracted record of his death! This is very strange: and but for our personal knowledge of the Committee, that prepared the record,—and for so many other proofs of the character of the Assembly that adopted it, without objection — we should be obliged to say, was very ominous. As it is, it must, we suppose, be ranked with that general character of all our ecclesiastical Minutes, to which we have before alluded, which every careful — certainly every curious reader of them, must have noticed with regret, and for which our readers must make allowance, in perusing these pages.

During the controversies which preceded 1838, it came to be openly discussed, as a question of fact, what really were the standards of the Presbyterian Church—a discussion which was carried even into the Assembly itself: and it was received and practised, by a large portion of the New School party, as an indisputable rule of moral duty, that whatever those standards might be, and however clear their sense might appear to be,—they were obligatory on the conscience, only *for substance*, and that only in the signification given to them by the person who might receive them. Even these wide limits were found too narrow; and some of the earliest exercises of power, on the part of the New School body, were directed to fundamental changes, in the Presbyterian system. On the other hand, it is altogether characteristic to observe, how the Old School body has manifested, since the disruption, a growing attachment to the standards of the Church, a reluctance, more and more settled, to make any considerable changes in them, and a general and fixed purpose, to build itself upon the foundation and in the spirit of its ancient formularies. The indications of this general tendency were very striking in this Assembly of 1848, and we may class them among the safest and soundest symptoms a Church can exhibit. Truth is simple and uniform; above all truth, that which is divinely revealed is the most invariable; and that concerning which the divine revelation is ended, must be the most unchangeable. Dogmatic

theology would appear, therefore, to be the department of truth in regard to which, the minds of Christian men, from generation to generation, ought to remain the most uniformly settled—and the least liable to change or distraction. In like manner, questions of Church order,—supposing God to have revealed a form of Government for His church—which Presbyterians have constantly asserted, must be considered capable of final and definitive settlement, upon an unalterable authority. Positive and fundamental truth, thus reached, cannot be affected by any subsequent developments, short of a divine revelation; and all those new views which may be obtained by a closer consideration of the subject, or a more careful comparison of established truths, must generally be confined to the clearer elucidation of what is already known, either in itself, or in its relations—the weakness of the human faculties is so deplorable, and the vastness of the subject, both in itself, and its influence, is such, that it is a mark of wisdom and not of ignorance, to rely with diffidence on our individual conclusions, when they conflict with the general testimony of God's people, and the constant consent of successive ages, in which the Divine Spirit has never wholly forsaken the Church of Christ. That inward life of the Church, therefore, which prompts it to avoid all needless innovation, to shun all vain experiments, to settle itself into a permanent and fixed order, both of faith and action,—and to revert to ancient landmarks, and old paths, rather than to cast about for changes and inventions—is, to all appearances, the healthful life we should expect to find begotten and developed under the power of that truth, which is itself immutable; and it is, at all events, a life, a power, an inward movement, most distinguishable in itself, and most worthy to be understood, and observed. So also, the honest and faithful adherence to that which is professed,—the upright reception into one's own bosom, of the truth he delivers to others—with all its consequences,—the simple and sincere submission of our own conduct to our own principles—the settled and tenacious pursuit of our own established views; here, indeed, is another manifest and distinct form of life, which, to say the least, is firm and powerful, and which, as we judge, is both wise and pure.

Whether we turn our thoughts to the Doctrine, the Or-

der, the Discipline, or, if we may venture to add a fourth category, the Practice of the Church, during the last ten years, we shall find abundant facts to illustrate these suggestions. Scarcely a meeting of the Assembly has convened during that whole period, that questions deeply affecting one or the other, and frequently all, of these grand divisions, have not come prominently before the body, in a way to test the actual sentiment of the Church, and to exhibit the tendency of her developement. To assert that there has been an absolute constancy and uniformity of decision and action, in the right direction, would be great extravagance; nay, even to deny that there have been occasional and very serious departures from what seemed to us wise and right, would be uncandid. But if it be considered that the Church had been, for many years previous to 1838, in a condition most unsatisfactory to her most faithful children, and that she had been rapidly departing farther and farther from the safe and true course; if it be remembered that she was arrested in her downward career, and brought back to her ancient moorings, by means of very severe and unusual remedies—the ultimate effects of which might possibly be different from what was hoped; if it be borne in mind, that after 1838, she was launched upon a new course, and that after a great declension and a great convulsion—and that what we are now seeking is evidence of the manner in which she has borne herself in her new career—we may confidently assert, that the current of proof is most satisfactory and conclusive, and the mass of her decisions and actions clearly indicative, that the impulse which is bearing her onward is right and powerful. Let a few examples suffice: In regard to *Doctrine*: how pertinacious have been the efforts with which she has been tormented, in every form, to change her faith on the subject of incestuous marriages? And yet, the more the subject has been discussed, the more apparent is the settled faith of the Church in the statements embodied in her standards; and, though she has been entrapped into some hurtful and inconsistent decisions, still her purpose to stand by her faith and to require her members, and especially her office bearers, to do the same, has not wavered, and, we trust and believe, never will. In regard to *Discipline*: how steadily and earnestly has she been tempted, on every hand, and from

every quarter, on the difficult and dangerous question of slavery? And yet, unseduced and unterrified, she has adhered, through good report and ill report, to her ancient testimonies. Not presuming to defend every form of expression she may have uttered, in regard to this vast and intricate question, we must, in all candour, allow that there has been, throughout her long and repeated testimonies, a consistency and a fixedness extremely remarkable amidst the convulsions and changes of the last hundred years; and the steadiness and intelligence with which she has, during the last ten years, and upon repeated consideration of the subject, amidst the storm of passion beating upon her from every extreme of opinion, and from both sides of the Atlantic, still vindicated her settled discipline, and proceeded in the more ample execution of her fixed opinions, is a phenomenon worthy to be studied—a proof of heroic devotion to her convictions, and a symptom of the nature and force of her inward life, amongst the most striking in all her history. If it consisted with the particular design of these observations, there is much that ought to be said upon this aspect of the history and development of the Church; as it does not, it may suffice to remark, that, in our opinion, the testimony of the Church, taken as a whole, and subject to the exception we have already expressed, is not only wise, moderate, and scriptural, but that it presents, perhaps, the only ground upon which the religious denominations of the country, if not the country itself, can be saved from division and disunion. Surely, it is no small praise, that this Church has occupied, and has steadily maintained, a position so important. Again, as to *Church Government*: every one must be familiar with the discussions and agitations which have occurred since the disruption, in regard to the nature and source of all Church power—the relations of the Ministers of the Gospel to the Church and its Courts—the position, rights and powers of Ruling Elders—the nature and constitution of Church Courts—and similar questions. These have been matters of high dispute in the Church of God, from a very early period of her history; they will continue to be fundamental points of division amongst Christian sects as long as the Despotism of Popery, the high Aristocracy of Episcopacy, the Republicanism of Presbyterianism, and the Anarchy of Congregational-

ism, are maintained in the world. The followers of each class of these theories have always been subject to subdivisions amongst themselves. The Congregationalism of America is very different from that of Europe; Prelacy has its High and its Low Church; and even Popery is not all Ultra-montane. The Presbyterian body, perhaps, has always had in its bosom subdivisions of an analogous kind; and the same laxness which permitted Congregationalism to infuse its elements so extensively throughout her system, extended to all her opinions, especially in regard to the Government of the Church. It is very manifest, that serious differences of opinion, on all the questions stated above, do now exist in the Church; and that principles, some of which are thoroughly Prelatical, and others as thoroughly Congregational, are not only extensively held, but have received countenance from various Church Courts, if not from the Assembly itself — some of whose very worst acts have related to this general subject. Various propositions have been made, in relation to those Ministers who, having no cure of souls, still continue to exercise church power; and various questions have arisen, in regard to the nature of the Ruling Elder's office. It is not very clear what interpretation should be given to the general action of the Church, taken as a whole, on all these subjects; nor is it, by any means, certain, what is the actual state of her opinions, in regard to them. For our own part, our belief is, that the testimony of Scripture, the sense of our ecclesiastical standards, and the very nature of the case, must control the decisions of every really sound Presbyterian Church in the direction of that strict and ancient order from which we had greatly departed; and many indications exist to prove that the sentiment of our Church is setting in that direction. To a certain extent, there is, perhaps, a sectional division, on several of the disputed points; the South and West, inclining in what we consider the right direction, while the Eastern section of the Church, upon these, as upon various other matters, seems the slowest to shake off the spell of the past generation. The subject is one of far more importance than many have supposed, and will, according to the manner in which its various parts are disposed of, exert an important influence over the future character of the Church. In regard to the matter — which

several late Assemblies have had under consideration, and which has been several times, in several different forms, submitted to the Presbyteries—touching the Demission of the ministerial office, we judge it to be wholly impossible to determine, by the votes given, what was the state of opinion which produced them—seeing the most various, and, indeed, opposite principles, might have conspired to secure the result, as yet reached. The very agitation of the subject under consideration, is a proof that the Church sees something worthy of her serious examination; and the indeterminate nature of her acts, in regard to it, is proof that her general sentiment is scarcely, as yet, thoroughly fixed. May God give her grace to remember that she has no more power to make a government than a creed; her sole mission, in both cases, being to ascertain and to declare the mind of God. And, finally, touching her *Action*, a few words: And here are two distinct questions— one regarding the *nature*, the other respecting the *power*, of the action itself. In regard to the former question, it is well known that many of the soundest members of the Church are of opinion, that the general practice of the Church shared the fate of her doctrine, her discipline, and her order, and was, to a great extent, adulterated during the long and close embrace of Congregationalism. The mode of conducting revivals of religion—even of admitting members into the church—the very manner of conducting public worship, both for substance and for form—the introduction of little creeds and covenants for separate congregations—the manner of training ministers, collecting funds, and conducting even our largest operations—voluntary Societies—Boards—Agencies—great gatherings to manufacture fictitious excitement—turning our Church Courts into exhortatory instead of business meetings; endlessly, and every where, did the leaven work, and, perhaps, to a considerable degree, works still. Many things have been corrected—many are in the process of correction. During the last Assembly, the movement, though slight in some cases, and perhaps not fortunate in some others, was yet clear, that it is the mind of the Church to assert her just and rightful control over Boards, Seminaries, Agents, and every thing else; and to vindicate, more and more, the great principles of subordination and accountability, throughout all her

borders and all her institutions. The thing for the Church to do, it seems to us, is to perform herself, and by her own divinely appointed means, the whole work committed to her by her Saviour. Until she sees this great and precious truth in all its fulness, it is the next best thing that can happen, that she should hold firmly and steadily in her hands an effectual control over all the appliances and means she has seen fit to create, to aid her in her work; and seeing that things are as they are, this is, perhaps, the natural way for her to pass from her former to her true position. It is a stage in her true progress; and the proof that she has entered upon that stage, is, in the same degree, an indication that she is developing herself aright. As it regards the *power* with which the Church has acted since 1838—compared with her previous movement—and the manifestations of her rapidly increasing efforts, in every good and every great enterprise—the indications are such as ought to fill our hearts with joy. How many churches have been built—how many souls converted—what a vast increase in numbers—what a prodigious extension of her borders—what immense sums collected to endow schools, colleges, and seminaries—to print books—to educate ministers—to spread the Gospel through the earth! In 1838, the Church was mainly dependent on a close corporation, located in Boston, for her facilities in the great work of Foreign Missions, and her Assembly was without any direct agency at all in this glorious work. In 1848, her most extensive operation is her Foreign Missionary work; she has a Synod erected in India, and a member on her floor represents a Presbytery on the Ganges! Ah! these are proofs, never to be mistaken, that God is with her—that a true life is within her—and that she is accomplishing a glorious developement.

The practical application of truth to life is one of the severest tests by which to determine the real condition and tendency of a Church. To perceive truth with clearness, and to hold it with some steadiness, do not necessarily imply that vigor and fidelity which are necessary, in its strict practical enforcement. Along with these latter qualities, a calm, patient and just consideration of the rights and responsibilities of individuals, who may be personally implicated, and a corresponding regard to what is demanded by

the purity of religion and the glory of God, are indispensably necessary in the righteous decision of every case in which the Church interprets and applies the mind of God. It is not wonderful, therefore, that this most difficult part of the administration of the affairs of the Church, is generally the most neglected part; and it is hardly saying too much to assert, that its wise, honest and enlightened execution is one of the surest indications of a highly prosperous condition of the Church. The thing we here intend is Discipline, in its large sense—that watchful care of the flock of Christ, and that firm, but affectionate enforcement of the laws of His Kingdom, which pervades and regulates the outward life of every member, every officer, every congregation, every court, in it. Herein lies the practical and daily proof, that the Church is not a voluntary association, but that it is a real power, ordained of God; and herein is the incessant appeal to Christ, as the only Head of that Kingdom which He purchased with His blood, and to His laws, as the only, but still the constant rule of conduct for all who are members of it. Before 1838, there was scarcely such a thing—at least, for many years—as a sound and Christian Discipline, in this sense, in the Presbyterian Church. How much false doctrine—how much disorderly conduct—how much evil, the Church would endure, no one could determine; but the notion that she could not safely endure any, was so far from being the common sentiment, that the uttering of it was seldom, if ever, heard. Such cases as came before the Church Courts generally, and more especially before the Assembly, were decided far more by their party aspect, than their own merits—when really decided at all; and were, most frequently, evaded, compromised, or suppressed—unless when the guilty were openly acquitted, or the wrong publicly made to triumph. The calm, impartial, honest trial of cases, in the Assembly, upon their merits, was, most certainly, not the ordinary rule, for ten years preceding the disruption of the Church. Whoever, with recollections upon his mind, will read the published Minutes of the Assembly of 1848, will be struck with astonishment, and, we think, admiration, at the extraordinary change manifested in the conduct of that Court, on this whole subject, in all its bearings. It is not so much to the conclusions which the Assembly arrived at, in the

various difficult matters of Discipline brought before it, to which we now allude, as it is to the manner in which they were all taken up, investigated, and decided. In this aspect of the matter, there is scarcely any thing, in all the manifested life of the Church, during ten years, that is more striking or hopeful. Perfect justice to individuals, without respect of persons, and without fear, favor, or affection—perfect fidelity to truth, without regard to time, place, or circumstance—these are the ancient, distinctive traits of true Presbyterian Discipline. And, surely, every indication of their existence and living power, ought to be hailed with joy—above all, by those who have witnessed the ruin brought on the Church by their extinction, and who have watched the multiplied blessings which have attended their renewed life. No one, who has not participated in such duties, can be fully aware of the difficulty and self-denial involved in an attempt, on the part of nearly two hundred conscientious men, to spend parts of four or five days, in the midst of other business, in unravelling and deciding a complicated case of Discipline. No thoughtful man can fail to see the dangers, both to persons on trial, and to truth itself, incident to examinations and decisions which are final, under such circumstances. It is in this view, especially, that the question concerning *Commissions*, of all Church Courts, and particularly of those that are high and numerous, are so important, and are attracting so much attention. It can scarcely be doubted, that, if it be lawful and proper to establish them, they would be of immense advantage, in many respects; and as, from the nature of the case, their determinations would always be liable to the revision of the particular Court that constituted them, it is not easy to see how they could be used to the injury, either of the truth, or of persons on trial. That they are lawful, seems to us evident. No one doubts that it is lawful to appoint *Committees*, that are far more permanent than it was ever contemplated to make *Commissions*. There is really no difference between the two, except this, that the former are appointed to examine and report—the latter, to examine and decide; and the Church Court appointing them, has the same power to reverse, if it pleases, the decision of its Commission, as to confirm the report of its Committee. The General Assembly has been in the con-

stant habit of appointing permanent Committees, and that of persons not members of the body; and all the Boards of the Church are really nothing but permanent Commissions, for Executive, instead of Judicial, business—or else they are utterly indefensible in their conception and their action. But, the very doubt of the lawfulness of Commissions arises from a misconception of the nature and origin of church power. The General Assembly does not derive its power from the Presbyteries, nor is it limited to the exercise of powers named in the Constitution of the Church. It derives its powers, and its very right to exist and act, from God himself, and may, *the Bible alone considered*, do every act which any lawfully constituted Church court may do. *The Constitution of the Church considered*, the Assembly is specially bound, by a human Covenant, to do the things therein required of it, and to abstain from doing, any thing therein prohibited to it—as for example, not to constitute with less than fourteen Commissioners; but in no wise, is it bound by that Constitution, to abstain from doing any thing, not therein forbidden to it—which might otherwise lawfully be done. The notion that it can do nothing, but what that Constitution allows and provides, is utterly repugnant to the original Constitution of the body, to the history of our own, and other Presbyterian Churches, to the nature of the case, and to the Divine oracles. For our part, we would travel a day's journey, to see the General Assembly ordain one Foreign Missionary. The true analogy of our Constitution, is to those of the States, not to that of the Federal Union; and instead of saying our Church courts can do nothing, but as they are allowed and directed by the Constitution of the Church,—which is the case of the Federal Government,—it is far truer to say, they can do any thing not forbidden in the Constitution, which is the case of the State Governments. The reason is obvious. The Bible, and not the Constitution, is the real source of power; the Constitution being only a Covenant in which we have agreed, to a certain, and very limited extent, what is the sense of the Bible; but not *all* its sense, on the subject of Order and Discipline. Our belief is very strong, that the best thing the Assembly could do, in the present matter, would be annually to appoint, before it adjourns, a Commission of its own members, who, with such other

members of the body, as chose to attend, should sit after the Assembly adjourned, and hear and determine, all cases of Appeal and Complaint; and that, the next succeeding Assembly should confirm, by its vote, the decisions of the Commission; unless, in very difficult or important cases, in which, upon a short and clear brief of the facts in proof, and the principles involved, the Assembly should review the decision of the Commission, and determine the case afresh. Such is the practice of the Church of Scotland. Such, or some thing similar, must, we suppose, ultimately become the practice of our Assembly—or very important, and we fear, very hurtful changes, may be resorted to, either in the Constitution and powers, of the Assembly itself—as for instance, to deprive it of its universal appellate jurisdiction; or in the mode of trying causes before it, to such an extent, as to amount to a ruinous delay of justice, or even to its denial. It will be impossible, materially to change the present relations of the Assembly to the Church, without running the risk of introducing principles, which are totally at war with Presbyterianism, or others, which may, at last, by their unforeseen effects, subvert the whole fabric. To resort to Synodical, instead of Presbyterial representation, in order to get a small Assembly, for the dispatch of business, which some have insisted on; is to remove the Assembly, too far from the people, and the Churches,—to reduce the importance, and change essentially and injuriously, the position of the Presbyteries, and to alter, in many important particulars, the character and relations of the Synods themselves; the result of all which changes, in the course of years, is far beyond the wisdom of man to foresee. On the other hand, to strip the Assembly of its full and universal jurisdiction, as the Assembly, in which the Church itself, is met, which others have advocated, is simply, and at a blow, to revolutionize the Church itself, and to convert it from one Church, into as many Churches as there may be Synods. As a prudential matter, therefore, the friends of our present Church order, may find in the establishment of such Commissions, as we have indicated, one of the most permanent safeguards, of very important and fundamental principles.

Many other topics suggest themselves, some perhaps, more interesting than several of those to which we have

alluded, by which to illustrate, in connection with the Minutes, which we have made the basis of these observations, the progress of the inward life of the Church, during the last ten years. We have already, perhaps, occupied too much space in the developement of our conception. The subject, however, is worthy of deep consideration, and large and frequent exposition; and we are not aware of its having been attempted in this light before. The life of man—his real, inward life—is developing itself, day by day; and will, probably, continue to do so eternally. Every corporation, state assembly, and body, constituted of men, must necessarily be subject to the same grand law, during their whole existence; and amongst the rest, the visible Church. In it, as in man himself—the indications of its condition and tendency, may neither be so positive nor so numerous, as to satisfy a casual observer. It is not, on that account, less important to study them. The virus of disease often fatally poisons the human system, before even the victim himself, is aware of any danger; and the moral condition of a Church, may be well nigh desperate, before malignant symptoms are palpable, even to good men, in and around her. When a few ministers and elders, in the Assembly of 1831, made a determined stand, against what seemed to them, manifest and crying heresies, corruptions and disorders, they were treated with open derision; and when the Act and Testimony was issued in 1834, its authors and immediate promoters, were denounced as traducers of good men, and disturbers of God's Church. Yet, in 1837, nearly one half of the Church, was found to be in a condition of flagrant departure from her doctrine and order—and in 1838, were no longer in her communion. A few more years of indifference would have placed the New School party, in the absolute control of the Church, and her destinies; and the orthodox would have had only the alternative, of making a feeble secession, or of being tolerated amidst the corruptions of the Church of their fathers. Nor was it mainly, if at all, the great and trusted men of that day, or of this day, that gave notice of the impending danger; nor the metropolitan churches and institutions of either day, that lifted up the voice of warning. Nor have those who saw the danger, and gave the warning, and stood in the breach, when few stood by them, escaped the

common fate, meted out, in this world, to such as are faithful in times of darkness. Many of them are gone to unhonoured graves; many live on, in unnoticed obscurity;—few, very few, have either sought or received the just consideration of the Church, which God made them the means of saving. It is enough, that God put on them so great an honour. It is enough, that their labour was full of precious fruit. It is enough, that succeeding years have demonstrated the wisdom of their counsels, the righteousness of their acts. The proofs we have been now exhibiting of the state and prospects of the Church they loved so tenderly—establish the very things, for which they laboured and prayed; and if they tend to awaken in the Church, a deeper gratitude for God's past mercies, a more earnest watchfulness over her own life, and higher efforts to accomplish her destiny, they will have the effect they would have desired. The Semi-Pelagian controversy in the Presbyterian Church, is the most fearful crisis through which that Church has passed, since it was planted in America. The catastrophe in which it terminated in 1838, including the events of 1837 and 1839, is the most important era in her history. The influences springing from that controversy and that catastrophe, will not pass away with the generation which witnessed those great events. The time has come for those influences, so far as our Church is concerned, to begin to make themselves distinctly visible. Great lessons are to be learned by their faithful contemplation. Great duties are to be performed, by their wise and powerful developement. It is under the impression of these important truths, that we have endeavoured, with candour and simplicity, to trace a few great outlines of a subject, which on many accounts, is obnoxious to the present generation; which the Church itself has not, perhaps, fully appreciated, but which those who follow us, will, probably, regard with profound interest.