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ART. I.—MAXIMS FOR SERMONIZING.

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MAXIMS for the composition of sermons are of two classes, *general* and *special*,—those, namely, which relate to the fundamental discipline that prepares for the construction of a sermon, and those which are to be followed in the act of composition itself.

I. Before particular precepts can be given with profit, it is necessary to call attention to some *general* rules, the observance of which greatly facilitates the process of writing a discourse. The sermonizer often loses much time and labor in the season of immediate preparation for the pulpit, because he has made little general preparation for the work. As in mechanics the workman always seeks to increase the efficiency of a force by applying it under all the advantages possible; so the intellectual workman should avail himself of all that can render his direct and immediate efforts more effective and successful. A dead lift should be avoided by the mind, as well as by the body. Power in both the material and mental worlds should be aided by a *purchase*. If the sermonizer goes to the construction of a sermon after he has made preparation of a more general nature, he will be far more successful than if he

Christo instituta, aut esse plura vel pauciora quam septem, anathema sit." In default of a historical proof of the seven sacraments from the writings of the church fathers, Roman divines, like Brenner and Perrone, find themselves compelled to resort to the *disciplina arcani*; but this related only to the *celebration* of the sacraments, and disappeared in the fourth century upon the universal adoption of Christianity. The Reformation of the sixteenth century, returned, in this point as in others, to the New Testament; retained none but Baptism and the Lord's Supper as proper sacraments, instituted and enjoined by Christ himself; entirely rejected extreme unction (and at first confirmation); consigned penance to the province of the inward life, and confirmation, marriage, and orders to the more general province of sacred acts and usages, to which a more or less sacramental character may be ascribed, but by no means an equality in other respects with baptism and the holy supper.

ART. VI.—THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION IN ENGLAND
AND IRELAND.

By E. H. GILLET, D. D., New York.

IN 1729 the Synod of Philadelphia passed the well known Adopting Act. It disclaimed all "authority of imposing our faith upon other men's consciences." It professed "abhorrence of such imposition;" yet "that the faith once delivered to the saints might be kept pure and uncorrupt, the Synod declared their "agreement in, and approbation of, the Confession of Faith, etc.," directing also that every candidate for the ministry should declare "his agreement in opinion with all the essential and necessary articles of said Confession, either by subscribing, etc., or by a verbal declaration of his assent thereto, as such minister or candidate should think best." Provision was made in favor of scruples or mistakes which did not

concern articles "essential and necessary in doctrine, worship or government."

The act bore upon its face the features of compromise. It was so unlike the practice of the church of Scotland * that Wodrow declared, "I know not well what to make of it." He very justly suspected half the truth. "I doubt it's some of those that have come from Ireland, that have carried their heats, which had well nigh consumed them at home, to the Synod of Pennsylvania." Andrews' letter to Colman shows how reluctantly a portion of the Synod was brought to consent to the measure. The well-known views of Jonathan Dickinson would have classed him with the Non-Subscribers in London or Ireland, and yet the Act was passed with the most surprising unanimity.

The action of the Synod had a Transatlantic origin. A large proportion of the membership of the body was from Ireland, and in Ireland the subscription of the ministers to the confession had been urged forward largely by the apprehensions of the laity. Non-subscribers there had excited a well-grounded alarm by the errors which some of them were reputed to favor. Security against these errors, and the popular feeling of the churches, demanding some measure analogous to that adopted in Ireland, required of the Synod action of some kind. But this action must necessarily be so shaped as not to offend the principles of the large number of England and New En-

* In Scotland in 1709 there was a reference to the Assembly from the Synod of Dumfries, anent all ministers and elders, their subscribing the Directory and Covenants. Wodrow's Cor. I. 6. In the same year some few (commissions) were passed as informal for want of subscribing the Confession of Faith, and such were ordered to do it. Ib. 18. Warner in a letter to Wodrow (123) speaks of "the Westminster Confession which we own and press." In 1710 there was "an act passed for uniformity of doctrine" (151). In 1713 the Committee on Overtures passed an overture that "Presbyteries be censured that send ruling elders who do not subscribe the confession of faith" (452). In 1722, (II. 655) "there was a motion came from one of our Synods to the Assembly, that all ministers who are suspected of declining from our standards should be called upon to renew their adherence to our confession of faith." Other matters crushed it out and "there was no time to ripen it." Wodrow speaks of it as "a distinct question from subscribing, which none among us were opposed to that I know of, and they would soon be taken up if they did." In 1725, he says, "the act appointing the confession to be signed by all intrants, ministers, elders and deacons, is like to carry in the Assembly." At a later date, it had been approved by all but two Presbyteries. (III. 212.

gland members, who, like Jonathan Dickinson, resented the imposition of human forms of faith upon the consciences of men. Otherwise a lamentable division, like that which had occurred in London, as well as to some extent in Ireland, would inevitably ensue.

The English Dissenters, both Presbyterians and Independents, had strong and invincible prejudices against the authoritative imposition of human forms of belief on the consciences of men. They had a traditional aversion to ecclesiastical tyranny in any shape. Among their venerated ancestors and predecessors in the ministry, not a few had been made transgressors for a word. Episcopal canons had elevated things indifferent to the rank of essentials. The Act of Uniformity had made the very term of subscription well-nigh hateful. Conformity had been the price of benefices and ecclesiastical honors, and sacramental tests had become the passports to civil office or emolument. Persecution had taught them also to hold in light esteem their differences among themselves, and the celebrated John Howe, who was spared, till 1705, to transmit to a new generation the traditions of his own, said, with his own great authority, as well as with the concurrence of his ablest contemporaries, "then shall we be in happy circumstances, when once we shall have learned to distinguish between the essentials of Christianity, and accidental appendages; and between accidents of Christ's appointing and of our devising. Much more, when every truth or duty contained in the Bible can not be counted essential or necessary; when we shall have learned not only not to add inventions of our own to that sacred frame, but much more not to presume to insert them into the order of essentials or necessities, and treat men as no Christians for wanting them."

There can be no doubt that in some minds the reaction in this direction had been excessive. Baxter's "refined Arminianism," as Dr. McCrie calls it, and John Howe's liberality help us to trace the progress of dissenting doctrinal opinion till it was ripe for the engrafting upon it of non-subscribing notions; and the Whistons, Clarkes, and Hoadlys found within

the ranks of dissent an echo to their own errors. We shall have occasion as we proceed to note the extensive sympathy and correspondence which prevailed between the English dissenters and the Presbyterians in Dublin and the North of Ireland.* Indeed the pious fund of the latter owed not a little to Drs. Reynolds and Evans of London, who also interested themselves in behalf of the feeble churches in this country, just then struggling into existence; and there was scarcely a question which commanded attention at London which was not discussed at Belfast, or a difficulty in which the Irish church was involved for which counsellors were not invoked across the channel.

The doctrine of the Trinity became a subject of controversy about the year 1695. Several divines of the church of England participated in the discussion, especially Sherlock and South. Public attention was still directed toward the subject, when Thomas Emlyn, pastor of a church in Dublin, was found (1702) to have adopted Arian views, while an intimate friend of his in England had already gone over to Socinianism. Emlyn relinquished his pastoral charge, but published a work in vindication of his views. For this he was indicted for blasphemy, and was imprisoned for two years in a London jail.

It was shortly after this that William Whiston, then mathematical professor at Cambridge, embraced Arian views,† for which, in 1710, he was expelled from the university. Some years before he had been on intimate terms with Rev. James Pierce, who, says Whiston, "was really the most learned of all

* As early as 1710, Wodrow says (Cor. I. 19) "if my information fail me not, there is a general laxness of principles among too many of the new intrants to the ministry, even in the North of Ireland, and a mighty inclination to a conformity in everything to the English Dissenters and ministers of Dublin." In 1712 p. 255) he says, "many are very much inclinable to new schemes, and the methods of the English Dissenters, and very much off the bottom of their mother church of Scotland." In the next year: "I am sorry for what you assert, but fear it is too true, that there are Presbyterians in Ireland who will not allow themselves to be of the same principles with the church of Scotland in government. I wish they would coin some other name for themselves, whereby we might be distinguished from them."

† Life of Whiston I. 178.

the dissenting preachers that I had known, but was at this time (1708) a preacher at Newbury in Berkshire." Pierce wrote to Whiston with some alarm at what he regarded at first as groundless reports, and remonstrated with him on the folly of his Unitarian notions. Three years later the two men met accidentally in a London theatre. Whiston asked Pierce if he had read the volumes which he (Whiston) had recently published. Upon replying that he had not, Whiston laid the matter before him so earnestly that he procured the volumes, read them, and became a Unitarian.* In 1713, he accepted a call as colleague pastor, with Rev. Joseph Hallet, of a large congregation in the city of Exeter.† With Mr. Hallet, Whiston had been some years previously in correspondence, and in his school, several of the pupils had embraced, as early as 1710, the Arian system. "We were about five or six of us," says one of their number, "who understood one another in this affair, but we conversed with great caution and secresy." Mr. Pierce in his own vindication says, "Dr. Clarke, Mr. Whiston and other writers who differ from the common notion had been read here before my coming."

But the matter could not long be kept secret. In 1715, it began to be talked of in public and in private. The Deity of Christ was often disputed, particularly in the house of a layman who boarded some of Mr. Hallet's pupils. Rumors that three of the four dissenting ministers of Exeter had rejected, and now secretly opposed the doctrine, were rife. Mr. Pierce's orthodoxy was suspected, 1717, and he was requested by some of his most influential friends to preach on the subject of the Satisfaction of Christ. He complied with the request; but the peace that ensued was only temporary. The advocates of the new opinions began to boast their strength, asserting the sympathy of the ministers, and even defying the Assembly, representing the churches of the West of England, to take cognizance of the matter.

Again Mr. Pierce—in common with the other ministers—

* Life of Whiston, 144. † Murch's Presbyterians in the West of England. 386.

was requested to preach a sermon which would embody his views on the disputed points (Jan. 1718). Somewhat reluctantly as well as tardily, he complied. Some few only were satisfied, but several months passed by, and the Assembly (May, 1718) dispersed without adverting to the subject. But within a few weeks attention was called to it anew, and it was evident that the next Assembly, called to meet in September, would be compelled to consider it. At a preliminary meeting it was proposed, that on account of the rumors of the spread of Arianism, the ministers should take measures to purge themselves from suspicion. The Exeter ministers did not encourage the plan. By some it was earnestly opposed.

On the following day, the ministers declared their views. Mr. Pierce denied that he held the views of Sabellius, Arius, Socinus, or Sherlock. He believed the Son and Holy Spirit to be divine persons, but subordinate to the Father. Some gave their views in Scripture language, and some in the words of the Assembly's Catechism. Only three members refused to make any declaration at all, disowning any authority which claimed the right to demand their opinion. It was then recorded by the clerk as the general sense of the Assembly, "that there is but one living and true God; and that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are that one God."

But those who favored the new opinions were not thus to be silenced. The Exeter press teemed with pamphlets on the controversy, and publications were sent down from London to fan the flame. Some of these were denounced as blasphemous, and gave occasion for fierce invectives. By the members of the Establishment, the dissenters, on whom indiscriminately the odium of heresy was cast, were held up as objects of contempt and horror. They could not appear in the public markets without being told, "you have denied your church first, and now you are denying your Saviour."* To many of the citizens of Exeter this state of things was intolerable. They sent to some of the leading London ministers for ad-

* *Bennet's Dissenters*, II. 171.

vice, and the counsel they received was to select some of the neighboring ministers who could judge of the matters in question more intelligently than those who were so distant.

This advice was followed. Seven neighboring ministers were consulted, and their conclusions, formed after careful deliberation, were adopted by the Committee of Thirteen who acted virtually as the body of elders and trustees of all the Exeter churches. The ministers were applied to by them with the request that they would give them satisfaction in regard to their views on the Divinity of Christ. Messrs. Pierce and Hallet refused; and the committee at once closed their church doors against them.

Meanwhile the London ministers had become involved in the controversy through the request presented from Exeter for their advice. Some of them drew up a paper such as they conceived appropriate in the circumstances, and laid it before the general committee representing the Presbyterian, Independent and Baptist denominations of London and vicinity. To secure more full deliberation, and give more weight to the advice, all the ministers were called together. They met Feb. 19th, 1719. Over one hundred were present. No conclusion was arrived at, and the meeting was adjourned to the 24th. On that day Thomas Bradbury proposed that to give more weight to their advice, they should accompany it with a declaration of their own belief in the Trinity. On this point the Independents were almost unanimous, yet it was rejected by a vote of 57 to 53.*

This vote gave alarm to the laity, and such was the state of feeling that when the Assembly met again (March 3d), the dissatisfaction at the interpretation given to the votes found free expression. It was replied, that all grounds of suspicion might be at once removed by an immediate declaration of the sentiments of members, and a subscription to the doctrine in question. To this, strong objection was made, although some opposed it only as inopportune and setting aside the order of

* Wilson's *Dissenting Churches*, III. 518. Bennet, II. 176.

the day. The matter was insisted upon; and when the moderator refused to put it to vote, sixty ministers who favored a declaration withdrew to the gallery of the house, while fifty remained below to consider the "advice." The former subscribed the first article of the church of England, and the answers to the fifth and sixth questions of the Assembly's Catechism, while each party adopted "advices" of its own, and forwarded them to Exeter.

Several ministers, as Calamy, Watts, Neal, Price, Marryat Hall, Bays, and others, refused to be identified with either party, and withdrew from a scene of so much tumult and noise. Some idea of the bitterness which prevailed may be gathered from a single incident. Bradbury was the leading man among the subscribers. As he closed his speech to withdraw to the gallery, he was hissed. He retorted that it was the voice of the serpent, and it might be expected against a zeal for him who is the seed of the woman.

The "advices" from both parties did not reach Exeter until after the committee had adopted decisive measures. The Exeter Assembly, which convened in May, felt that something more should be done to vindicate their orthodoxy. No measure seemed to them more proper than to affix their names to the first article of the English church. Fifty-six ministers of Devon and Cornwall accordingly subscribed, while nineteen, professing to act on the principles of the London Non-Subscribers, refused to do so. The names of Pierce and Hallet stood at the head of the list.

The London Non-Subscribers disclaimed heterodox views with respect to the Divinity of Christ, but no declarations which they could make could prevent the prevalence far and near of suspicions of their soundness in the faith. Old friendships were rent in sunder. Lasting alienations were produced. Congregations were divided. Men seemed to breathe the atmosphere of distrust. The writings of Emlyn, Whiston, Clarke, Pierce and others were widely read. In Scotland there was reason for alarm when Professor Simpson was not only suspected of favoring the new opinions, but was publicly

charged with heterodox views. In Ireland friends of Simpson, some of them his pupils, were to be found. But suspicion was especially directed against what was known as the "Belfast Society," from the fact that several of the ministers in that place and vicinity held frequent meetings for conference, and were reported to have adopted some of the views of the non-subscribers. Yet the Society had been in existence for several years, and numbered among its members some of the ablest ministers of the Irish church. As late as 1716, when it was proposed to apply to the government for a legal toleration, the members of the society expressed themselves ready, in conjunction with their brethren, to sign the Westminster Confession as the symbol of their faith.

Nor was this all. Previous to the restoration of Charles II. in 1660, every candidate for licensure or ordination was expected to subscribe to the National League and Covenant. After that, the Westminster Confession was usually subscribed. This was made necessary by an act of the Irish Synod in 1698, and the same act substantially was renewed in 1705. According to all we are able to gather from contemporary testimony, this subscription did not exclude such explanations or exceptions as the Presbytery judged consistent with general soundness in the faith, but it did most effectually bar the subscriber, by his own act, from objecting to the principle of subscription itself.* It was, therefore, with no little surprise and pain that the Synod of 1719 heard from the lips of Rev. John Abernethy, one of its most honored and able members, the avowals which he made, and the views which he presented, in a discourse which derived peculiar significance from the juncture at which it was delivered.

The Sermon of Mr. Abernethy, preached at Belfast, Decem-

* The proposal of a brief formula in 1716, as the basis on which a toleration might be sought, gave great dissatisfaction in Ireland. It was regarded in Scotland as "quitting our Confession of Faith, and coming into a loose uncertain formula anybody almost may subscribe, as the terms of their legal toleration they are seeking." Some of the people protested against it, and a Quarterly Synod at Belfast, "to quiet the people, resolved that they would declare that they would not go on with the toleration unless the Confession of Faith be recovered to us."

ber 9th, 1719, was based on Rom. xiv. 5, and entitled "Religious Obedience founded on Personal Persuasion." Many of his positions would at this day be accounted truisms, and much which he says of the rights of conscience as against mere authority or intolerance would pass unquestioned. He speaks for instance against making "arbitrary inclosures within the Church of Christ," and remarks that "such as we can not know to be unworthy of God's acceptance, we should not judge unworthy of our fellowship, but receive them as brethren into Christian communion, and not exclude them by the rigid test of an exact agreement in doubtful and disputable points." There are also, he contends, things which to some are matters of conscience, which yet "are not essential to Christianity;" nor are we to suppose that God "requires of us, as the condition of pleasing him, an infallible certainty in understanding his word, and the strict conformity of our sentiments to the truth." If in inferior matters we can not be accepted without persuasion, much more is this the case with respect to the fundamental doctrines and precepts of Christianity. The latter should be enforced only by persuasion, and the former should not be rigidly imposed. Human jurisdiction does not extend to matters of conscience, and no man is to be determined by the decisions of men. Each must judge for himself what is matter of conscience, he is not amenable for this judgment to any power on earth, nor is he safe in "a blind submission to others, whatever authority they may have, or in whatever stations they are placed." Moreover, there is no ecclesiastical authority which has any dominion over the faith of Christians, or consequently any over their consciences. Hence are to be seen "the just limits of church-power." "Its decisions bind the conscience as far as men are *convinced*, and no farther," and any higher claim of authority is inconsistent with edification. "If a decision of men binds any person, 'tis in matters wherein *he thinks* they have power; when they carry their pretensions farther, determine things wherein his judgment does not allow their authority, their decrees must be regarded by him as void." From Christ's will revealed in the

Gospel, men are to "learn what to believe and what to practice, and without submitting implicitly to human declarations and decisions in any point of faith or duty, may, by following impartially their own light, obtain his approbation." The author closes with the exhortation, "let us stand fast in the liberty wherewith he has made us free; let us call no man or society of men our masters, for one is our master, even Christ, and all we are brethren."*

It is easy to see that these positions, taken in connection with the express declaration that all doctrines were non-essential, on which "human reason and Christian sincerity permitted men to differ," were intended to apply not only to Christian communion, but to ministerial fellowship, and that they really tended to the dissolution of all ecclesiastical order or doctrinal unity. The Belfast Society, shortly after, at a conference with some of their brethren, who were anxious to prevent such divisions as had occurred in England, freely announced their opposition to subscribing confessions of faith as tests of orthodoxy. Some of the Presbyteries also, it was found, had sanctioned what was accounted "a lax mode of subscription." It is not strange that alarm was excited by such facts as these. Attention was called to them by one of the ministers, and the reply of the Belfast Society, entitled "The Good Old Way, or a Vindication of Some Important Scripture Truths, and all who preach them, from the Imputation of Novelty"—only aggravated the suspicions already excited.

It was at this very juncture that a translation of the "Nubes Testium," by the younger Turretine, was published in London.† It was a very forcible plea for Christian unity and for-

* Abernethy's Tracts. London, 1751. p. 217-353.

† A Discourse concerning Fundamental Articles, etc. London. 1720. A correspondent of Wodrow in 1715 speaks of "Mr. Turretine at Geneva, who is much reflected against by the people:" and the gradual corruption of the Geneva church is imputed "to a triumvirate of their ministers who have a correspondence with the church of England." In 1717 Wodrow inquires "how far Arminianism is crept in among them," and refers to suspicions that Turretine and others were venting new schemes of doctrine, and quitting many of Calvin's tenets. "I am told that young Turretine hath taken a great deal of the English education thither."

bearance, in which we seem to see reflected the views of Calamy, Watts, and others who sided neither with the subscribers or non-subscribers. On some points it favored one party, and on other points the other. It maintained that some articles were fundamental, and others not, although no attempt, except in a very general way, was made to distinguish one from another. In opposition to Dr. Evans, and almost in the very words of his opponent, Dr. Cumming, it declared that "besides those points which are expressly, and in so many words, declared to be necessary, those things likewise which flow from those principles, by *plain and necessary consequence*, must be added to the Catalogue of Fundamentals, or things necessary." Yet these fundamentals are "plain," "few in number," "often repeated and inculcated in Scripture," and "to impose upon Christians," anything beside these is to "act tyrannically, and in an impious manner arrogantly to claim that authority which belongs to God only." It is thus shown to be a duty to "endeavor to secure the essence of religion, and then patiently to bear with one another in all the rest," while "persons who differ in things not fundamental should regard each other as brethren, and maintain Christian communion together, etc."

The Apostle Paul also "shows that Christians who had right sentiments, ought not only to be patiently borne with, but that others ought to accommodate themselves to their weakness," and though "he so sharply inveighs against false teachers, he is very large in recommending charity and forbearance, even in so great a diversity of opinions as this was." Again, we are told that "communion ought to be maintained with all those whom we do not know to be unworthy the name of Christians; and certainly they can not be accounted unworthy of it, who hold all the fundamentals, and differ from us only in things which are not fundamental"—"things not considerable enough to disturb their peace, and to separate them from one another." The argument for mutual forbearance is then powerfully enforced by various considerations, and every reader of that day could perceive the bearing of the argu-

ment, on the one side against the position of the non-subscribers who (as Dr. Evans) denied the binding obligation of "plain and necessary consequences" from texts of Scripture, unless expressed in Scripture words, and the subscribers on the other hand, whose zeal seemed like to swallow up their charity. Turretine declared expressly that "some things are of so great moment, that he who errs in them, and departs from the doctrine of Christ, is not only to be sharply rebuked, but to be removed from the communion of the church." This would meet the views of the subscribers. He held, however, that "it may oftentimes be justly questioned, whether any particular doctrine ought to be placed among fundamentals, as a consequence drawn from an important place of Scripture, or a particular exposition of some general doctrines, and thus seemed to favor one of the special pleas of the non subscribers.

The publication of this translation of the treatise at such a juncture was doubtless intended to quiet animosity and lead to a compromise of differences. Its special value to us is that it indicates the position occupied by the middle party, who refused to side either with the subscribers or non-subscribers. The latter, however, seem to have been least satisfied with it. Dr. Evans, in a letter to Rev. Dr. John Cumming, of the Scotch Church, London, contended that "care must be taken that such a stress be not laid upon *Scripture consequences* as will reflect upon the perfection of the Scriptures themselves, and their plainness and sufficiency etc., or that shall countenance the impositions of fallible men, and place their deductions from Scripture on a level with the sacred oracles themselves," etc.

Dr. Cumming in his reply, assuming that the main difference between the subscribers and the non-subscribers was in reference to the Trinity, disclaims all disposition to impose anything, by mere human or church authority, upon others, and proceeds to vindicate the position taken by him in a discourse to which Dr. Evans objected, viz. "that *manifest and necessary consequences of plain Scriptural propositions* are as much a divine revelation, and so to be regarded, as the princi-

ples from which they naturally and necessarily flow." Here was the point both of attack and defense. A non-subscriber in the "Occasional Paper," Vol. 3: No. II., had maintained that "*all consequences and decisions, in themselves considered, are no other than human reasonings, in which there may be sophistry as well as right reasoning; and therefore there may be uncertainty and error, as well as security and truth;*" and these consequences must be always distinguished from the authority of the Holy Scriptures themselves; and how useful soever they may be for instruction or persuasion, they can never have authority to determine men's faith." In reply, Dr. Cumming argues that "plain Scripture *consequences* are matters of revelation, and have the authority of Scripture, in determining articles of faith." "The truths, or things contained in Revelation," he says, "and not the arbitrary signs of conveying or representing them, are the proper and ultimate object of our understandings." "A proposition in the *English* tongue, that *truly* expresses the sense of Scripture, is as much a divine revelation, and so to be regarded, as the same proposition in the Greek or Hebrew originals."

"The dispute," says Dr. Cumming, "is not about *words*, but *things*; not what *phrases* are canonical, but what doctrines are truly divine." "If we may not," he adds, "with an undoubted confidence, build our faith upon plain inferences from Scripture, *because there is a mixture of human reasonings in the collection of them*, neither can we with a firm persuasion found our faith upon express declarations, because it is by our *rational faculties* that we *search out* and apprehend their sense and meaning. So that if this objection proves anything, it proves too much." "It destroys all certainty in matters of faith." Thus it is seen that the notions of the non-subscribers—though the author disclaims the intention of fixing the charge of Arianism against them generally—are calculated to demolish all distinction between heresy and sound doctrine, for Arians would accept the express *words* of Scripture.

After discussing prevalent views concerning the Trinity, Dr. Cumming presents considerations on the proposed agree-

ment of the subscribers and non-subscribers. Here he claims that the conduct of the subscribers in their stand against "the encroaching errors of the day" was due simply to "a hearty and well-governed zeal for that great and distinguishing doctrine of the Gospel which must determine the fate of Christianity itself." They were no bigots, or sticklers for mere words. Dr. Cumming himself remarks, that if the Assembly at Exeter, "had peremptorily resolved to admit of none who should refuse subscription to one certain form, this might be thought a hardship; but when men are left at liberty to use their own words, . . . for human creatures to complain of this as an imposition, . . . is an imposition on the sense and reason of all the world." He adds, "nor did we ever say that it was absolutely the duty of ministers to declare their faith in such human words, as others might prescribe to them." The non-subscribers held that nothing more could reasonably be required of a minister than that he should declare his belief of what the Scripture makes a part of the Christian faith, as to any matter in question, and that he be willing upon every proper occasion to give his sense of those parts of Scripture, in which these points are delivered, in such words as he thinks proper to convey his sense." Dr. Cumming claims that the resolution of the subscribers at the Exeter Assembly amounted to no more than this. He would not have it considered as a thing intolerable, "to require of young students, that before their admission into the ministerial office, they do, in some human words or other, sufficiently express the soundness of their faith in the ever blessed Trinity." To discern in such views as these the traces of bigotry, or a disposition to make every phrase of a confession of fundamental importance, would certainly seem to require an extraordinary keenness of vision.

Without lingering to notice the less important publications on both sides, which the controversy evolved in England,* we

*It is perhaps impossible to form anything like a complete list of the publications produced by this controversy among the English Dissenters. One of the most important on the part of the subscribers was entitled, "The Doctrine of the Blessed Trinity stated and defended, 1719." Long, the friend of Matthew Henry, wrote

return to affairs in Ireland, where these publications doubtless had an important influence. We trace, at least in connection with the Irish Synod at its meeting in June, 1720, the same spirit which we have seen displayed among the London ministers. The meeting was opened with a sermon by the late moderator, Rev. Robert Craighead, of Dublin, who favored a temporizing policy, corresponding to that urged in Turretine's volume. He based this policy principally "on the ground that the views of the members of the Belfast Society, even if erroneous, involved only points of inferior importance, and that they ought to be freely tolerated in the church, so long as they held, as he was convinced they did, the doctrine of the Trinity and the other leading doctrines of the gospel."* His discourse was entitled, in accordance with its design, "A Plea for Peace; or the Nature, Causes, Mischief, and Remedy of Church Divisions."

The result of the synodical discussions was the adoption of what was known as the "Pacific Act," which reflects plainly

the Introduction. Jeremiah Smith, successor of John Howe, Benjamin Robinson, and Thomas Reynolds, united to write the body of the work. Dr. Thomas Ridgley wrote "The unreasonableness of the charge of Imposition exhibited against several Dissenting ministers in and about London considered etc. 1719." Emlyn in the same year published a reply to Reynolds and his three brethren. Thomas Bradbury published several sermons bearing on the controversy, and in 1719, "An answer to the reproaches cast on the dissenting ministers who subscribed their belief of the Eternal Trinity." This was in answer to a pamphlet, "An account of the late Proceedings of the dissenting ministers at Salter's Hall, etc." Bradbury's sermons appeared in 1720, and in 1723. Rev. Joshua Oldfield who presided at the meetings of the non-subscribers, published in 1719, "A pacific discourse upon the subject of the Trinity, with a view to heal the differences, etc." In 1720, Dr. Z. Marryat published a volume of sermons, entitled "The Exalted Saviour; or Jesus Christ the Lord and God of True Believers." In the same year, Dr. James Foster, commended as a preacher by l'ope, published an "Essay on Fundamentals, with a particular regard to the Doctrine of the Ever Blessed Trinity," designed to check the prevalent censorious spirit. In 1721, Dr. Ridgley published "An Essay concerning truth and charity, in two parts. 1. containing an inquiry concerning fundamental articles of faith, and the necessity of adhering to them in order to church communion. 2. Some remarks on the behaviour of the Jews and primitive Christians, toward those who had either departed from the faith, or by any other means rendered themselves liable to excommunication." In 1722, Rev. Simon Brown wrote a keen pamphlet against Dr. Thomas Reynolds, and in the same year Dr. Watts brought out his "Christian Doctrine of the Trinity," for which he was charged by T. Bradbury, with making the Divinity of Christ to evaporate into a mere attribute. These are some of the more important publications not mentioned in the text.

* Reid. III. 167.

enough the moderate spirit of the Synod.* It disclaimed any design, which might have been suspected, of laying aside the Westminster Confession and Catechisms; forbade any disrespectful expressions concerning them in future; recommended the Confession as being a very good abridgment of the Christian doctrines contained in the Sacred Scriptures; and expressed approval of the plan "now practiced by the presbyteries, that if any person called upon to subscribe, shall scruple any phrase or phrases in the Confession, he shall have leave to use his own expressions, which the Presbytery shall accept of, providing they judge such a person sound in the faith, and that such expressions are consistent with *the substance of doctrine.*" The significance of this language is made more evident by another act of the Synod, directing ministers to insist in their preaching, "on the great and fundamental truths of Christianity according to the Westminster Confession of Faith." Of these a brief summary was given, not unlike that which individual churches have of late years in many instances adopted as the confession of their faith.

To give more effect to the "Pacific Act," it was recommended that no further publications on controverted points should be issued by the ministers, and that all parties be on their guard against hasty suspicions. A committee, likewise, of which the members of the Belfast Society were leading members, was appointed to recommend peace and mutual charity to the contending ministers in London, informing them that the Synod had fallen into such peaceful measures as they hoped would perpetuate and strengthen their own good agreement.†

The healing measure adopted by the Synod proved insufficient. Within a month, Mr. Halliday, who had been called to Belfast, declined to subscribe the Confession in any form. He insisted that no church had any right to demand any fuller confession than the one he offered, which was to the effect,

* Wodrow, speaking of the Pacific Act, says, "it has given a larger door there than we allow in this church, at least by any direct act of Assembly, and is as large a concession as, I think, could well be made to intrants." (Cor. II. 635).

† Reid. III. 172, 173.

that the Scriptures were the only rule of revealed religion, a sufficient test of orthodoxy, settling all terms of ministerial and Christian communion, to which nothing might be added by any synod or assembly; that he found all the essential articles of the Christian doctrine to be contained in the Westminster Confession, and that he received these upon the sole authority of the Holy Scriptures. The confession was accepted by the presbytery as satisfactory, although four members protested against accepting it.

Mr. Halliday had been previously suspected of unsound views on the subject of the Trinity, and now the Belfast Society, which had composed the majority of the Presbytery, had manifested their disposition to set aside the Confession altogether. It was natural that the alarm should be quickly taken and widely spread. The Belfast brethren were advised to disband their society. They resented the counsel, and published a letter in their own defence, a copy of which was sent to each of the Presbyteries. They claimed that they had not violated the constitution, or disturbed the peace of the church, nor were they enemies to the Confession.

But it was impossible thus to quiet the alarm. Moderate members of the Synod had, as they thought, reason to apprehend that both Arian and Arminian errors had taken root within its bounds, and the laity especially were filled with apprehensions.* Still, out of regard for peace, as well as respect for the Belfast brethren, nothing of a controversial character was published.

The Synod of the following year was largely attended. Memorials from seventeen congregations, asked, that in order to silence the aspersion of enemies that the church had deserted her standards, and quiet the apprehensions of her friends, the members of the Synod and of the Presbyteries might be re-

* "We have (1721) lamentable accounts of the Dissenters in the North of Ireland. The Bishop of Bangor's loose principles and the notions of Non-Subscribers at London, have got in among too many." (Wodrow's Cor. II. 597.) "However it be as to Arianism, I am pretty sure that several ministers incline to the Arminian principles." (p. 632.)

quired to subscribe the Westminster Confession as the confession of their faith. Instead, however, of granting this request, the Synod passed a resolution declaring their adherence to the Divinity of Christ as an essential doctrine of the Christian faith, and that its rejection or denial should be a ground of process against offenders. The ministers of Dublin approved the resolution; but the Belfast brethren declined to vote for it, not, as they said, because they did not hold the doctrine in question, but because they were opposed to all authoritative human decisions as tests of orthodoxy, and because they judged such decisions unseasonable at that time.

Another measure was proposed—the voluntary subscription of such members of the Synod, as saw fit, to the Confession. This was opposed by the Belfast brethren in a warm discussion that continued for several hours. It was, however, carried by a large majority, two of the party of the subscribers only opposing it as an unprecedented and unauthorized method of issuing scandals or offences. A large number consequently subscribed the Confession, yet such was the moderate and kindly spirit of the Synod, that they adopted a resolution in which they declared that they insinuated nothing against the non-subscribing brethren, as if they were unsound in the faith, and in which they recommended to the congregations not to entertain jealousies against their ministers because they did not subscribe. Even the case of Mr. Halliday, which had occasioned a protest, and claimed the attention of the Synod, was passed over in the easiest way possible, and with but slight regard to the authority or acts of the Synod itself.

In the ensuing months some controversial pamphlets were published, but the one which claimed the largest measure of attention was on the side of the non-subscribers. It was from the pen of Mr. Abernethy, and was entitled “Seasonable Advice to the Protestant Dissenters in the North of Ireland, being a defence of the late General Synod’s charitable declarations.” The manuscript of it was put into the hands of the Dublin ministers, Rev. Messrs. Choppin, Bayle and Weld, to be published under their eye, with a recommendatory preface by

themselves, but without any mention of the author's name. This pamphlet, not merely for its ability, but on account of the light which it throws upon the whole controversy, is worthy of special notice.

The aim of this large pamphlet was to vindicate the course pursued by the non-subscribers, and to show that the difference between them and their opponents was by no means fundamental. The argument of course, although presented in a mild and persuasive tone, is a special plea, but the facts embodied in it, endorsed by Rev. Messrs Bayle, Choppin and Weld, and never, so far as we are aware, called in question, show beyond mistake the spirit of the subscribers.

The Dublin ministers say in their preface: "that pious ministers themselves should differ in their sentiments about matters of expediency, and particularly about that of the expediency of subscription to human compositions, that descend to the decision of many particular points which are comparatively of small moment, and about which the wisest and best divines may disagree, is not to be wondered at." They propose, in order to obviate the difficulty, the "allowing the intrant his choice, either to subscribe according to the Pacific Act, or to make a declaration of his faith in his own words, in which, if any thing be found contrary to sound doctrine and the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Presbyters that are to concur in his ordination may refuse to admit him." This, they think "will no way derogate from the honor of the Westminster Confession, which is justly esteemed by all the Protestant churches both in England and the South of Ireland as an excellent and useful summary of the Christian doctrine, though they never insisted on a subscription to it as necessary to the admission of persons into the ministry among them."

Mr. Abernethy himself says, "If any one thinks (*though I can scarcely believe any minister in Ireland thinks so*) that the explicit profession of every single proposition in the Westminster Confession is necessary to qualify a man for the ministry, he must act according to his judgment, etc." Again he

says, "according to present rules, every presbytery (the only assembly that ordains, and consequently which in particular cases judges of qualifications for the ministry) must judge for themselves what profession of an intrant is to be accounted a sufficient proof of soundness in the faith, or agreeable to the *substance of the doctrine* contained in the Westminster Confession, or in other words, what propositions are necessary to be professed, and what are not."

In presenting a summary of the views of the two parties, he represents the subscribers as holding that "a bare profession of the Bible can not be sufficient, as not distinguishing between the sound and the unsound;" that there is no inconvenience in the adoption of a formula of sound doctrine, especially "when such charitable allowance is made to a person called to subscribe, or otherwise declare his assent, in case there appear to him any difficult or obscure expressions, to explain them, which will be accepted if he does not explain away *the substance of the doctrine*." This certainly—and it is from the pen of a non-subscriber—shows plainly enough in what sort of a spirit subscription was required of intrants and candidates.

On the other hand, the non-subscribers are represented as regarding "the Westminster Confession as a valuable abridgment of Christian doctrine, and as such very useful both for ministers and people. A voluntary subscription to it they will esteem a satisfactory profession of faith, so far as to qualify a person for the ministry, but they can not agree to make it an invariable standard, even with the allowance of explaining any scrupled phrase or phrases. For when phrases in it, which a serious and orthodox Christian may except against, are laid aside, even the remainder ought not to be made a test, and a wise and good man, whom no church has a right to exclude out of the ministry, and who agrees to the substance of the doctrine, may conscientiously scruple subscribing to the human form, when enjoined as a term of communion."

"Both parties," adds Mr. Abernethy, "I believe will own

I have done them justice in representing their opinions fairly."*

In speaking of the Westminster Confession, he says: "In that excellent system, we all acknowledge the most essential truths of religion are contained, as well as some principles which are unessential." He remarks of "the Presbyterian ministers in the North," that "they understand their principles, and will not give them up. They have acted agreeably to them in their late excellent charitable declaration." Still there were, among the laity especially, "zealots" who "raise a vehement cry for Presbyterian principles and constitution, which yet they must desert before they can obtain their end."

But Abernethy's pamphlet did not quiet matters. On both sides were to be found men who declined to comply with his terms or accept his concessions. The asking of a minister to confess his faith in the essential doctrines of the gospel was characterized as a tyranny equaled only by the Romish inquisition. The Westminster Confession was denounced as full of inconsistencies, and as containing unscriptural propositions. The minds of the subscribers were shocked by the latitudinarian views boldly avowed, and the bearing of the principles professed by the non-subscribers. At a loss what to do, some of them resolved to take advice of the Scottish ministers. Several of these met in a private capacity, and the result of their deliberations was that the Irish church should still maintain subscription to the Confession; that if the non-subscribers can not, in consistency with their known principles, consent to this, they ought, as a minority of the whole body, to withdraw, and manage the affairs of their own congregations apart; yet that in this case they should still be entitled to Christian and ministerial communion, so long as they taught nothing contrary to the received Protestant doctrine.

In the Synod of 1722, it was evident that a considerable

* In the course of his pamphlet, Mr. Abernethy remarks that "one of the principal objections (or suspicions rather) against the non-subscribing ministers is, that they are not sufficiently attached to the Presbyterian form of church government."

number of the subscribers had become satisfied that a separation of some kind was inevitable. By the influence of their more moderate brethren, however, the crisis was adjourned, and a series of compromise resolutions was passed, in which the necessity of some doctrinal formula, and adherence to the confession and Presbyterian government were asserted, while Christian forbearance toward the non-subscribers was recommended.

Before the close of the year new causes of difference arose. The dissatisfied portion of the congregations at Belfast determined to establish a new congregation, and called as their minister a Mr. Masterton, a strong opponent of non-subscribing principles. They sought aid for the erection of an edifice from the churches in Scotland, and in this matter were opposed by the non-subscribers. They were charged, also, in open presbytery, with having slandered them; and Col. Upton, a subscribing elder, retorted upon them, that what they accounted slander was the simple truth. They *did* hold principles which opened a door by which error and heresy might enter the church. A keen debate ensued. The withdrawal of subscribers to return to their homes, left the non-subscribers in the majority, and they carried a resolution to the effect that Col. Upton had not sustained his charge.

Upon his appeal, the case went up to the Synod of 1723. The controversy had meanwhile been carried on in pamphlet form, and both sides had become more bitter. All eyes were now directed to the issue of Col. Upton's case. Nine days were occupied with the trial of his appeal, when it was arrested by the claim of the non-subscribers that proof should be adduced that the works in which they had for three years allowed their views to go abroad without question or complaint, were indeed theirs. The matter was therefore necessarily deferred to the next meeting, but the Synod did not separate without indicating the position they were prepared to take.* They affirmed the principle maintained by Col. Up-

*Reid, III. 205.

ton, that "the condemning of all creeds and confessions, and declarations of faith in human words, as tests of orthodoxy, opens a door to let in errors and heresies into this church," and they declared, that though it was possible for candidates to declare their faith in words of their own to the satisfaction of their ordainers, yet it was far too great a trust and extremely dangerous to the church, to commit to a few ordaining ministers the sole power of judging what must be satisfactory to the entire body.*

There was no longer any truce to the war of controversial pamphlets. The Belfast ministers denounced the Synod. Masterton replied to Abernethy's pamphlet. Mr. Halliday, in behalf of the Belfast ministers, published "Reasons against Subscription," which provoked a sharp reply. One of the non-subscribers, a Mr. Nevin, was reported to have denied the proper divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ, and his case, together with that of Col. Upton, came before the Synod in 1724. There was a large attendance, unprecedentedly such, 123 ministers, and 106 elders. Col. Upton's necessary absence prevented the issuing of his case. The zeal against Mr. Nevin led the Synod to adopt the rash measure of cutting him off from the communion of the Synod, while some of the articles against him were referred to his presbytery to be investigated and issued. The non-subscribers resenting the injustice, as they considered it, declared that they would still persist in holding communion with Mr. Nevin. The division was extended to the congregations. Several separations took place, and some of the ministers declined to hold intercommunion with others. A young man, a Mr. Colville, whom one of the Presbyteries refused to ordain, crossed over to England, was ordained by the London dissenting ministers, and returned to claim installation over a church to which he had been called. It is scarcely surprising that his claim was rejected ;

* In 1723, says Masterton (Wodrow's Cor. III. 73), "there seemed to be a disposition toward a rupture with the non-subscribing ministers; but by want of time, and the influence of menacing letters from Dr. Calamy in London, and Mr. Bayle in Dublin, the Synod came to no conclusion about it."

but it contributed not a little to increase the mutual exasperation of feeling.

In these circumstances the Synod of 1725 met. Colville had appealed to them from the Presbytery, but the Synod suspended him for a limited time from the exercise of his ministry, and in spite of the opposition of the non-subscribers, resolved to inflict the penalty of suspension on every member of their body who should hold ministerial communion with him, till his suspension was removed. They gave full liberty also to those persons "who scrupled communion with ministers of non-subscribing or non-declaring principles, to follow the light of their own consciences therein." They interpreted the Pacific Act as not warranting the questioning of any of the *doctrines* contained in the Westminster Confession, but only the *phrases* in which they were expressed. If any intrant declined assent to any doctrine of the confession, the presbytery should proceed no further with his case till the General Synod should decide upon it, his objections being transmitted meanwhile to other presbyteries to be considered. Another measure of the Synod was a new arrangement of the presbyteries, by which, for peace sake, all the non-subscribing ministers were placed by themselves, composing the Presbytery of Antrim.

The measure was effectual—although offered by the non-subscribers—in preventing the confusions which had hitherto prevailed, while it reduced greatly the influence of the non-subscribers, who were left to differ with none except themselves. But in other quarters, the excitement was by no means allayed. The Presbytery of Dublin interfered in the case of Mr. Colville, who had disregarded this Synod's order, and settled him by a committee of their body over his congregation. Pamphlets on both sides were issued, and the presbyteries were engaged in vain discussions on expedients to promote peace.

The Synod of 1726 had a difficult task before them. They felt that longer ministerial communion with the non-subscribers would put them more and more in a false position. The

manifesto of the Belfast brethren, which was read in full Synod, was quite unsatisfactory. "Moderate men had hoped,* that while the non-subscribers would still have objected to subscribe any invariable creed, and the Westminster Confession in particular, they would have specified in their expedients some leading truths of the gospel as a substitute for the latter, and would have joined in requiring all future candidates for the ministry to declare in their own words their assent to these truths—a proposal which would not have contradicted any principle which they had hitherto professed to hold.†" But no such offer was made; and it was plain that the very basis of any proper ministerial communion was wanting. The Synod, therefore, declared their adherence to their own principles, and their deep concern that, by the course of the non-subscribers, it was no longer possible to maintain ministerial communion with them in church judicatories as formerly, consistently with the faithful discharge of their ministerial office, and the peace of their own consciences. On the final vote, there were thirty-six ministers in favor of it, and thirty-four against it.

Almost immediately the subject of subscription began to be agitated in this country. It was discussed, however, in a friendly spirit, and with the warning beacon of Transatlantic divisions in full view. Some compromise was necessary on both sides, and it was, after a period of judicious delay, fully secured. This delay had doubtless satisfied the ministers that something must be done in order to afford satisfaction to the members of the churches, as well as to preserve them from the danger to which they would naturally be exposed in case any of the Irish non-subscribing ministers emigrated to this country. Its proper significance is only apprehended when

* "I wish they would speak out," (said Wodrow in 1721), "and not trifle in generals, and talk of imposition, and such thread-bare things, and frankly own the passages they stumble at." In 1723, a letter of Mr. Kennedy of Ireland makes him "fear the non-subscribers have somewhat at bottom against some of the articles of our Confession. And if they would speak out, this would be much more generous and fair, and like honest men."

† Reid, III. 244.

we take into consideration the several elements of which the Synod was composed, together with their varied shades of opinion, as well as the historical antecedents of this action, both in England and Ireland.

ART. VII.—MILL'S EXAMINATION OF HAMILTON'S PHILOSOPHY.*

By HENRY B. SMITH, D. D.

ENGLAND seems to be fairly waking up from its metaphysical slumbers. The seeds sown by Coleridge, Bentham, and Hamilton, are fast bearing fruit. Thirty years ago John Stuart Mill wrote that "out of the narrow bounds of mathematical and physical science, there is not in England a vestige of a reading and thinking public, engaged in the investigation of truth as truth, in the prosecution of thought for the sake of thought." Ten years later he published his *Logic*, based on the inductive method. Hamilton's *Discussions and Lectures* awakened new interest in the highest themes of speculation. And now Mr. Mill publishes an extended and penetrating criticism upon all the main questions involved in the Hamiltonian philosophy. The best trained and clearest utilitarian intellect of the century enters into an unsparing criticism of the ablest representative of the modified Scottish philosophy. The contest is animating, even though the result be not decisive.

The combatants, too, are well matched; though Mr. Mill has the advantage of controverting books rather than contending with a person; his blows strike only the massive armor of his great foe. But he is a candid and chivalrous opponent; he says, "it would have been worth far more, even to myself, than any polemical success, to have known with cer-

* An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy, and of the Principal Philosophical Questions Discussed in his Writings. By JOHN STUART MILL. 2 vols. Boston. W. V. Spencer. 1865.