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ART. I.—DR. ASA BURTON'S THEOLOGICAL SYSTEM.*

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THE object of this Article is to call the attention of the theological world to a most able, but we fear neglected, author, who is not dead but only sleepeth. We are coming to the grave of Lazarus; we hope to witness a miracle. We trust the Redeemer is there; and, though some of the spectators may say he has been dead four days and by this time savors of oblivion, yet we are waiting for the voice, *Lazarus, come forth!* and the apparent death will be only a season of suspended animation. We believe, to have Asa Burton appreciated, he needs only be to read and known; and it would be the crowning act of a long life to bear some humble part in recalling his reputation and influence to their proper station.

To the prevalence of any literary performance two things seem to be necessary: first, merit and originality; and, secondly, a power of appreciation in the cotemporaries of the author. The shepherd, in Virgil, who sang to the mountains and woods—*studio inani*—could only hear a perishing echo. It was Virgil himself that recorded the music and prolonged the

* *Essays on Some of the First Principles of Metaphysics, Ethics and Theology.*
By ASA BURTON, D. D., Pastor of the Church of Christ in Thetford, Vermont.
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the inner principle, the ruling motive ; the hunger of the heart ; that intense love which it is impossible to resist, and which secures obedience to all the divine commands." Now this in principle is precisely the sin of Adam. This would precisely explain Calvin's paragraph, which we have just quoted, and the answer to the sixteenth question in our Catechism. Suppose two travelers to be walking the same road, one several miles before the other. The foremost has a most precious jewel, which he despises and throws away ; the second finds it, despises it, and refuses to take it up. In the inner disposition and the outward act their sin is the same.

Our conjecture is a very hasty outline ; and if ever the latent work of Dr. Burton comes to light, we shall see how far it is correct. It is sometimes easy to trace the path of Hercules by the magnitude of his foot.

ART. II.—THE TRUE CHARACTER OF THE ADOPTING ACT.

BY REV. E. H. GILLETT, D. D., Harlem, N. Y.

THE last number of the *Princeton Review* (Oct., 1868), contains an article entitled, "Dr. Gillett and Liberal Presbyterianism," which the editor states to be by the author of "Baird's Digest." It essays to controvert the position taken in the article, "The Men and Times of the Reunion of 1758," which appeared in the July number of this REVIEW. We have read it with all the attention due to the subject it discusses and the arguments it offers, and we are constrained to say, that if it is the best plea which can be made against the position which we took in our article, we have no fear that our conclusions will be set aside.

Our aim was to manifest the spirit of the Presbyterian fathers as evinced in the period of division and reunion more than a century ago. We traced the history of the organization of the Synod of New York, showing that Jonathan Dickinson was its master spirit, and that, meeting at Elizabethtown, and electing him as its first Moderator, the course

and policy which it pursued must have been largely determined by his influence. We noted its distinct adoption of the standards on the basis of the Adopting Act of 1729, and the implied disapproval of the protest of the Old Side at the time of the division, in which they objected to the membership with them of all who had not subscribed the standards "*according to our last explication of the Adopting Act.*" We adduced confirmatory evidence of this, derived from different sources, and noted the significant persistence of the New Side in adhering to the "paragraph about essentials" while prosecuting the matter of reunion. We showed conclusively that this persistence was continued till it triumphed, and that thus the New Side secured terms characterized by the Old Side as "opening a door for unjustifiable latitude, both in principles and practice." We inferred, as the facts of the case seemed to warrant, that the basis of the reunited church was really the basis of the Synod of New York, or of the New Side, and that, "equally removed from bigotry on the one hand, and laxity on the other, it has left behind it a history which we need not blush to record."

To this Dr. Baird replies, "if this be true, in the sense intended, we of the Old School must confess our position to be an innovation on the established principles of our church." If such a confession seems to him humiliating, rather than magnanimous, it is natural enough that, with his sympathies, he should be reluctant to make it, and that his arguments should bear some marks of the pressure under which they are put forth. We think they do, and we find nothing in what he has offered that materially affects the soundness of the conclusions of our previous article.

He has presented much, indeed, which is quite irrelevant. He has expended two or three pages in dilating upon the stupidity or unfairness of New School writers in confounding the Preliminary Act with the Adopting Act, and naming the latter when they refer to the former. A more extended acquaintance with writers of his own side would have taught him that—if a literary offence has been committed—they are almost equally obnoxious to reproof, and that he has the al-

most solitary merit of that pedantic accuracy which he would commend.

Nearly a page, however, is devoted to setting forth the excellencies of "Baird's Digest;" but we can not see that the general merit of that compilation materially affects the soundness of our argument.

His commentary on the Adopting Act (we must be pardoned for classing the Preliminary and Adopting Act together under that designation—a usage which we found, not made), is designed to show that it was never intended to mitigate the rigidity of the most liberal subscription. As each one can read the Act and form his own conclusions, we shall need no apology for differing from Dr. Baird in our interpretation of the Act. He insists anew upon the reaffirmation of the standards by the Synod, especially upon that of 1736; but he says nothing, so far as we can perceive, that tends to weaken our position, except upon two or three points which we will now consider. One of these points, which we regard as very important, is Dr. Baird's assertion of Jonathan Dickinson's inconsistency. There is, indeed, no chance for him to maintain his views, if he does not *prove*, as well as assert such inconsistency. We said, that his "*carefully considered and well matured views* had not changed. He had given them in print to the world, and he *never recalled them.*" Dr. Baird says, "this is a very remarkable statement for a writer familiar with the history." We have only to remark that none but a writer *unfamiliar* with the history, could have made such a comment.

Jonathan Dickinson is acknowledged on all hands to have been the master spirit of the New York Synod. He shaped its policy. He was its first Moderator. When the measure of an Adopting Act was proposed in the original Synod in 1729, he was one of the Committee that framed it, and its provision for scrupulous consciences was undoubtedly inserted at his instance. Herein the liberality of his views was reflected. This was the feature of the Adopting Act which reconciled him to it. But we have no evidence that he ever belonged to that class known in the Irish Synod as "Non-subscribers."

True, he did not believe that subscription alone would be a wall of defense to the church. He contended that it was not necessary to the being or the well-being of the church, and he published these views. But any one "familiar with the history" should know that, in connection with the Irish Synod, there were three parties, one of which was represented by the Dublin ministers,* and it was with the views of this third party that Dickinson's accord. These views we assert *he never recalled*. If so, we demand the proof. Dr. Baird says that, within five months after he published his pamphlet, he joined in declaring the necessity of taking care that the faith once delivered to the saints be kept pure and incorrupt, and, therefore, in enforcing on all the ministers of the Synod a declaration of their agreement in opinion with all the *essential and necessary articles* of said confession, etc. Suppose this to be the case. He simply joined in the Adopting Act which he helped to frame. This might indeed be inconsistent with the position of the Irish Non-subscribers, but not necessarily with that of the Dublin ministers. Dickinson was a man of too much good sense, not to say orthodoxy, to stultify himself by taking the ground of the Belfast Society.

Shall we be told that he did actually take this ground, and that his own language proves it? We admit that scraps may be taken from his writings which have such an appearance. For instance, it may be asked, did he not assert his reasons "against requiring as a religious duty what God has not proposed as such, nor required of us," against "enjoining as terms of communion what God has not enjoined?" Did he not insist that "all impositions of our own institutions upon other men's consciences (whether we give them the character of divine ordinances or not) are culpable by the verdict of our blessed Saviour," rebuking those who taught "for doctrines the commandments of men?" Did he not assert that the injunction of a rite, (in itself) innocent and indifferent, in the Jewish Church, by the lawful authority, was censurable? Did he not admit that "we shall also confess ourselves chargeable . . . when we impose the Athana-

* An account of these will be given further on.

sian creed, and damn all that do not believe the whole of it, though not one in five hundred understand it?" Did he not declare, "I am loath to do anything in the worship of God that will expose me to that reprimand, who hath required this at your hand?" Did he not say that where the commission of Christ as the great Head and King of the Church was wanting, "Christians are bound to withstand and oppose all these impositions and all infractions of their Christian liberty, and even in lawful and indifferent things not to be brought under the power of any?" Did he not declare that what was worse than all the rest, was the injunction of things indifferent and unessential, and "their imposition as terms of communion, without the least allowance to scrupulous consciences?" Did he not add: "We do judge for ourselves that Christ has given power to no man upon earth to make any such injunction, to ordain any such impositions, or to vex our consciences with any such inventions of men?" Did he not most emphatically assert and argue "that proposing and requiring as a religious duty what God has not proposed as such, nor required of us; the enjoining terms of communion which God has not enjoined, and the imposing any terms of communion by penal sanctions, is teaching for doctrines the commandments of men?" Did he not emphasize his objection to "church injunctions, religious injunctions, and the making these injunctions terms of communion?" Did he not argue that "lawful authority" would go beyond its sphere and invade Christ's prerogative "when it made that a duty which God had not made, and imposed it upon the conscience?" Did he not seem to exhaust the resources of language in expressing his disgust at "all these impositions upon men's consciences which tend to embitter their minds one against another, to *ensnare them to profess a practice contrary to their opinion*," and did he not condemn them, as well as "all human institutions in the affairs of religion, all church impositions, all terms of communion which Christ has not appointed," characterizing them as "repugnant to our holy religion," and declaring that they "must fall to the ground?" And will it be contended that a man who used such language was not a

Non-subscriber, or that, without recalling his "carefully considered" views, he could join in declaring the necessity of taking care that the faith be kept pure, and that therefore the ministers of the Synod declare their agreement with all the essential and necessary articles of the confession ?

We admit that this is a strong—a very strong—case to all appearance. But there is one fatal flaw in it. All the words and sentences quoted above are taken from the writings of Jonathan Dickinson *after* the date at which Dr. Baird insists that he must have recalled what we denominated his "carefully considered and well matured views."

It follows, of course, *either* that he never did recall them, *or* that, if he did, he soon went back to his original views, and retained them, as we might easily show, while the Synod was taking its stricter action, and taking away the "too great latitude" of the Adopting Act as "dangerous." Here are the two horns of the dilemma, between which Dr. Baird is at liberty to choose. In the one case he takes back all he has said on the subject, and concedes what we claim ; in the other, he admits that Dickinson, in securing the Adopting Act pure and simple as the basis of the New York Synod, and ultimately of the reunited Synod, introduced what even he must admit was a very "liberal Presbyterianism."

One or other of these positions he must necessarily take, and this, too, after having attacked the character of Dickinson for consistency, without any sufficient warrant, and subjecting himself to the recoil of that attack in the misapprehension of Dickinson's views, and the utter lack of acquaintance with the facts necessary to form a correct judgment, which he has so conspicuously exhibited.

If Dickinson was ever a "Non-subscriber," (in the technical signification of that term,) he was such to the end.*

* As it is still possible that some person, ill-informed or misinformed, might risk his reputation for historical accuracy by asserting that Dickinson, at a later period than that of the time when the extracts quoted above were written, may have recalled his liberal views, we will give the sketch of his character drawn by an intimate friend, ere yet the sod was green over his grave. We do it, not only in vindication of his consistency, but as showing something of the reputation which the man, whom Dr. Baird would represent as a change-

Dr. Baird may find it difficult to reconcile the language of his pamphlet, with his acceptance of the Adopting Act, but it is because he does not really apprehend the position and views of the ablest man on the New side. Dickinson was not inconsistent. He *never recalled* his "carefully considered" views. And more than any other man in our history he shaped the policy of our Church, and he shaped it in accordance with a liberal Presbyterianism.

If Dr. Baird's assault upon the character of Dickinson for consistency recoils so damagingly upon himself, he does not seem to be much more successful in other quarters of the field. He complains that we confound the distinction between the Preliminary and the Adopting Act, and ignore the latter altogether. To this we have only to say, that we have followed the usage of writers on both sides, who have justly classed the two acts together, under the more familiar title,

ing, maintained among his contemporaries. It is to be presumed that Thomas Foxcroft, who says of Dickinson that he "was pleased usually to transmit his papers to the press through my hands," knew him as well as any critic of this present generation. Yet he presents the following sketch of that man whom Bellamy styled "the great Mr. Dickinson":

"Yet I must be allowed to drop a tear over my deceased friend, endeared to me by a long acquaintance, and on the most valuable accounts, as a scholar, a Christian, and a divine, of the first rank in these parts of the world. . . . He had a soul formed for inquiry and penetration, accurate judgment, and disinterested attachment to truth. With a natural turn for controversy, he had a happy government of his passions, and abhorred the perverse disputings, so common to men of corrupt minds: nor did he (as is too customary with those of an argumentative genius) suffer the eagerness of contention to extinguish the fervor of devotion, or of brotherly love. In his example, he was truly a credit to his profession; by good works adorning the doctrine of Grace he was so zealous an advocate for. Though he had generous sentiments, with regard to freedom of inquiry and private judgment in matters of conscience and salvation, detesting all persecution and imposition in religion, nor approving of subscription to human tests of orthodoxy; yet nevertheless, as one set for the defense of the Gospel, he boldly confronted what he took to be error, and knew not how to sit an idle spectator when he apprehended an assault made on the Christian faith. He could not bear the thought of being found either a traitor to the cause of Christ, or a coward in it. Whenever he saw it openly invaded, or secretly undermined, he stood ready to appear in its defense, without consulting his ease or his credit."

For his political and popular sympathies, it is enough to refer the reader to what is said of him in Dr. Hatfield's History of Elizabeth. The evidence is there given which shows that he was a man of the people, and no bigot to *conservative* ideas. Indeed, the character as well as abilities of Dickinson entitle him to our highest respect. It is enough to say that the contemporary history of the Presbyterian Church in this country presents the name of no man who can be regarded as his superior, if even his peer.

and treated them—properly—as mutually supplementary parts of one common measure. But surely, to throw the *Preliminary Act* aside altogether, and account it of no significance, when the vital issue depends upon it, and this, too, on the technical ground that it is to be distinguished from the Adopting Act, is a course of proceeding which every judicious reader can characterize for himself. If the theological sentiment of our Church is discernible in the latter, the spirit of our Church is discernible in the former. That *Preliminary Act* is really the hinge of the whole controversy, and in directing attention specifically to its language, and the liberal tone which characterizes it, we are only doing what the very nature of the case demands. If Dr. Baird could say that no Preliminary Act was ever passed in connection with the Adopting Act and qualifying it, or that it was without force or significance—mere *obiter dicta*—he would indeed say something to the point, but the assertion would be as gratuitous as his impeachment of Dickinson's consistency.

Dr. Baird is perfectly indefinite as to the strictness of subscription or assent required. He seems to imply in one place that *articles* but not *doctrines* might be scrupled, and in another that no "indulgence" for scrupulous consciences was allowable, but that the Confession was to be adopted in a full and unreserved manner—no greater liberty to be extended to any than the members of the Synod actually exercised. It is altogether uncertain what he understands by "essential and necessary articles," or what latitude is allowed to the "scruples" of subscribers. If he would come forward and define what he has thus left indefinite, it is possible that he might materially assist in pulling down his own structure. Yet his whole course of argument seems to ignore utterly the existence or practical force of these terms.

Dr. Baird claims that the "paragraph about essentials" on which the New Side insisted, and which they repeatedly characterized as "rational and Scriptural terms," had no reference to a subscription to the standards. But does his own interpretation help the matter? Suppose the New Side referred in this case to synodical decisions, must not these

decisions be, sometimes at least, those in which the subject of doctrine is involved? Their own provision, for the withdrawal of those whose scrupled compliance, is declared "not intended to extend to any cases but those which the Synod judges essential in matters of *doctrine* and discipline." The principle involved in the "paragraph" is surely broad enough in its application to cover a great variety of cases, and that of subscription among others. That the Old Side so understood it, is quite obvious. They expressly declare themselves "not convinced that the alteration in that article proposed by you, about what is essential, and what is not, is necessary: nay, we apprehend that such an alteration as stated by you, has a bad aspect, and opens a door for unjustifiable latitude, both in principles and practice." We simply contend, from recorded evidence, that the "door" *was* thrown open and has never been shut. Dr. Baird, by his interpretation of the "parable about essentials," does not begin to prove the contrary.

He says we never hear a word of the Old Side impeaching the New of adopting lax principles of subscription. What then did the protest of 1741 mean, insisting that no person should sit and vote with them who had not subscribed the Confession, etc., "according to our last explication of the Adopting Act"? What was the meaning of the suggestion that the New Side, by the terms they insisted on, would open a door for unjustifiable latitude, both in principles and practice? If their impeachment was mild, it was doubtless because their weakness made them modest. The New Side outnumbered them, nearly three to one, and it was not for them very boldly to impeach till they could exercise a jurisdiction, or speak with an authority that would command respect. To do otherwise would have been simply to make themselves ridiculous.

It is quite entertaining to note how summarily Dr. Baird cuts the Gordian knot which Dr. Hodge puzzled himself to loose. The latter investigates the meaning of the phrase, "essential and necessary articles," employed in the Adopting Act. He says, "Mr. Dickinson had avowed his wish to es-

tablish the essential and necessary *doctrines* of Christianity," as the condition of ministerial communion. Mr. Thompson wished the explicit adoption of the Westminster Confession to be that condition." He assumes throughout that the "essential and necessary" articles applied to "doctrine" as well as "worship or government." Yet Dr. Baird's charge against New School writers is, that "they assume that the act indicates a discrimination between "necessary and essential *doctrines* of the Confession, and those which are not so." He insists that "nothing of the kind is there to be found." "The essential and necessary *Articles* of the Confession are the subjects of its distinctions . . . and it is not until the last sentence, which has every appearance of being an extemporaneous addition to the document, that we find the phraseology slide into 'those extra-essential and not necessary points of doctrine.' "

This is a point which we leave Dr. Baird to settle with Dr. Hodge. Until the latter confesses his mistake, we do not feel called upon to interfere. For the present we appeal from the contributor to the editor of the *Review*. We can not however pass, without notice, the easy method which Dr. Baird adopts of disposing of a word fatal to his theory. It has (to his eyes) "every appearance of being an extemporaneous addition to the document." If he will but apply this summary method to the phraseology of the Preliminary Act, he may save himself much tedious argument, and write history independent of facts.

But as Dr. Baird has challenged the correctness of our conclusion, we are not content with evincing the inconclusiveness of his objections. There are collateral evidences of the truth of our main position, which can not and should not be overlooked.

The Adopting Act had a transatlantic origin. We need, in order to understand the spirit of it, to know the manner and circumstances of its introduction. The question of subscription or assent to the standards, had been discussed for years in Ireland, before it attracted any considerable attention in the Synod of Philadelphia.

What were the views of the ministers of the Irish Synod on the terms of subscription at the opening of the controversy which resulted in the division? Were they strict constructionists? In 1720, the Synod revived their former rule, obliging intrants into the ministry to subscribe the Confession, with an allowance, however, that if an intrant should scruple any phrase or phrases in it, he might use expressions of his own instead of them, which the Presbytery should accept of, if they judged him sound in the faith, and that his explanations were agreeable to the *substance of the doctrine* to be explained. Was this strict construction? Wodrow says, it "is as large a concession as, I think, could well be made to intrants."

In a pamphlet published in 1722, it is stated that, according to the rules of the Synod, "every Presbytery (the only assembly among them which 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 doctrine* contained in the Westminster Confession, or in other words, what propositions are necessary to be professed and what are not." There can be no question that this was a correct statement of facts. Its bearing on the point before us is manifest.

At this juncture what was the relative attitude of the two principal parties in the synod? Fortunately, this question is answered in an elaborate presentation of their distinguishing views, endorsed among others by Joseph Boyse, the antagonist of Emlyn, and whose name has no stain of sympathy with Arianism affixed to it. One party asked: what incon-
venience can there be in the subscription required, "especially when such a charitable allowance is made to a person called to subscribe, or other ways 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 doctrine*?" The other party held that no church or society should "form exclusive tests or standards as conditions of any religious communion." "There is not the least

insinuation in Scripture," so they also maintained, "even in the most general terms, of any authority given to men to examine the orthodoxy of Christ's servants, by pre-composed forms of their own devising. No particular form of confession is prescribed in Scripture different from the Scripture itself." They adopted the principle "that nothing can be made necessary by men to Christian communion with Christ, which Christ has not made necessary." Regarding the Westminster Confession as a valuable abridgment of Christian doctrine, they esteemed a voluntary subscription to it as "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."

Here was the difficulty—not, in the language of an Non-subscriber, "what doctrines shall be professed, but in what form this profession shall be made." The subscribers were not charged with such strict or bigoted orthodoxy as to make "the explicit profession of every single proposition in the Westminster Confession necessary to qualify a person for the ministry." Abernethy himself distinctly says: "I can scarcely believe any minister in Ireland thinks so." He asserts "we all acknowledge" that the Confession contains the most essential truths as well as unessential principles. The strictest constructionists did not fail to make or accept this distinction, while the Non-subscribers, adopting the principle of the old Non-conformists, "that no human power ought to make anything necessary to Christians, as a term of communion, which Christ has not made necessary," applied it to ministerial communion, and rendered the concessions which the subscribers were willing to make, of no avail.

We can be at no loss as to the ground taken by the sub-

scribers in the north of Ireland. It was liberal and Christian, and yet it was more strict than that of the "Dissenters" in England and the south of Ireland. The Dublin ministers occupied a position intermediate between the two leading parties of the Irish Synod, in whose proceedings they were accustomed to participate, sometimes leaning toward one and sometimes toward the other. They asserted, "That pious ministers 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." But they were still more positive in declaring "'tis a dangerous thing, 'tis an heinous injury, to reject or desert those (or even to grieve their hearts and weaken their hands), whom Christ himself will receive and own as faithful laborers in his vineyard, and that, merely for acting according to the best of their judgment, in matters wherein ministers, truly sound in faith, and of great integrity of life, may easily entertain different apprehensions." In their view it was "hard and unwarrantable to exclude such from the ministry among us, whom Christ has eminently qualified for public service in his church, and who are ready to give all reasonable satisfaction to their ordainers concerning their acquaintance with, and belief of, the principles of Christianity by their own voluntary declarations, and by answering any question which those that are to ordain them may think fit to ask as a further trial of them."

Holding these views, they proposed as an expedient designed to meet the difficulty (offering it at an *interloquitur* of the synod), that the intrant should be allowed his choice, either to subscribe voluntarily, according to what was known as the Pacific Act, or to make a declaration of his faith in his own words, in which, if anything be found contrary to sound doctrine and the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ, the presbytery may refuse to admit him. This they deemed preferable to a mere subscription to a formal confession. It was, moreover, in consistency with their own practice, "all the

Dissenting churches, both in England and the south of Ireland," esteeming the Westminster Confession "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."

Such were the relative attitude and opinions of parties in Ireland in the matter of subscription. The synod, as a body, were more liberal than the Church of Scotland. They conceded what Wodrow declared was the utmost allowable limit, while many of them were "very much off the bottom of their mother church of Scotland." They were not charged by the Non-subscribers—so far as we can learn—even in a single instance, with a bigoted insisting upon non-essential points. And when the principles of the Non-subscribers bore their legitimate fruit, and the synod was compelled to give a more definite interpretation to the Pacific Act, they simply said that the *phrase* or *phrases* to which the intransigent was to be allowed to except, should not be understood to extend to *doctrine*, or, in case it did, the Presbytery should proceed no farther in the matter, but refer the case to the General Synod.

It is unnecessary to turn aside to consider the views of the English Dissenters on the subject of subscription.* They were certainly not more rigid than those of the great majority of the Irish Synod. In this country Jonathan Dickinson, and probably most of the ministers from New England, sympathized more with the Dublin ministers than with either of the extreme parties. Assuming, therefore, as we are warranted to do, that the ministers from Ireland in this country did not, in their views of subscription, go *beyond* the stricter party in the Irish Synod, we have the necessary data for determining the probable character of that Act for the adoption of the Westminster standards, upon which all parties could harmonize. Would it not be preposterous to suppose that the ministers from New England should consent to the imposition of terms more rigid than the Non-subscribers

* On this point, see the article, "The Westminster Confession in England and Ireland," in the AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN AND THEOLOGICAL REVIEW for Jan., 1866.

of Ireland ever complained of as imposed by their subscribing brethren? Shall we charge upon the fathers of the American Presbyterian Church, without clear and conclusive evidence, a narrowness of view and spirit, which would make all the articles of the Confession of equal importance, and leave no latitude for the scruples of candidates? Shall we assume that, in circumstances specially favorable to a liberal construction of the standards, and with men like Dickinson and Pier-son, adopting views kindred to those of the Dublin ministers, the latitude which the Irish Synod has allowed to the scruples of candidates was to be allowed no longer? *Credat Judæus Apella.*

But is there any evidence that it was ever proposed that the Synod of Philadelphia should impose more rigid terms of subscription than those of the Irish Synod? If so, it must be found in Thomson's Overture. Examining this document, we find that he urges that the synod adopt the Westminster standards as "the public confession of our faith, as we are a particular organized church," that the synod, by Act, oblige the Presbyteries to require candidates to subscribe, or otherwise acknowledge, *coram Presbyterio*, the said confession, and not preach or teach contrary to it, and so of intransigent ministers; yet that the synod enact—and here we trace the manifest influence of the proceedings of the Irish Synod—"that if any minister within our bounds shall take upon him to teach or preach anything contrary to any of the said articles, unless, first, he propose the said point to the presbytery or synod, to be by them discussed, he shall be censured so and so."

This is the extent of the proposition contained in the Overture: A minister, before he teaches or preaches against any article of the standards, must lay the matter before the presbytery or synod and have it discussed. As the proposal stands, we should suppose that it fell short of, rather than exceeded, the strictness of the Irish Synod. Can any one believe that a body composed, to a large extent, of men sympathizing with the Dublin ministers, would grant freely more than the Overture asked? The meaning of the Acts imposing the Confession on licentiates and intransigents must harmonize

with the clause which allows persons, scrupling articles of the Confession, to lay them before the synod or presbytery. But, if so, it implies that at some time—and what time so appropriate as that of licensure and intrance?—these scruples, if they existed, should be heard and weighed. That the Overture, even while thus considerate in this provision for scrupulous consciences, yet should have been accounted objectionable by men like Dickinson, shows plainly enough how little place any rigid or bigoted strictness would find for itself in the body of the synod.

And yet, according to Dr. Baird, we are to believe that, because the synod “needed no indulgence for themselves, and adopted the book, man by man, in a full and unreserved manner,” therefore they neither provided or designed to give to others greater liberty than they claimed for (does he mean exercised) themselves. In other words, we are left to infer that this American Synod—composed of Irish ministers who, in general, according to Wodrow, scarcely came up to the standard of Scotch subscription, and of ministers from New England, some of whom came near rejecting subscription altogether, at once went beyond all the precedents of the mother church, beyond all the demands of Thomson’s Overture, indeed beyond anything which, so far as we know, any member of the synod desired. We must decline to accompany him in his belief that a stream will rise higher than its fountain. Such a thing can occur, whether in the realm of nature or of morals, only by the lifting—not to say blinding—power of fogs and vapors.

Dr. Archibald Alexander has recorded his own indebtedness to the father of Dr. Moses Hoge of Virginia. When that venerable man was eighty-four years of age, young Alexander met with him at the house of his son, and he remarks, “I know not that I ever received so much instruction in the same time from any one as from this old gentleman.” Unquestionably this “old gentleman” was a man of more than ordinary intelligence. He was capable at least of understanding the meaning of the Adopting Act; yet he was a seceder, and he “left our church on account of the ‘Adopting Act’ which per-

mitted candidates to make some exceptions when they received the Confession." And yet we are told by Dr. Baird that the old gentleman had no "shadow" of reason for his course—that "the 'liberal principles' of Dr. Gillett find no shadow of countenance in the Adopting Act of 1729."

It is a well-known fact that the manner in which the Confession was allowed to be received by the Adopting Act was the pretext for most of the secessions from the Presbyterian church which occurred subsequently. For half a century it was the capital on which they traded, and they made, from the very terms of the Act, a plausible apology for their own course, and one which carried conviction to the minds of thousands.

It will not be amiss to note some historical illustrations of this fact. The early history of the Associate church in this country is well supplied with them. Alexander Craighead, in withdrawing from the church, put forth, among his published reasons for leaving the connection, the following, which was his "principal inducement;" viz., that neither synod nor presbytery had adopted the Westminster standards by a public act. Cuthbertson and Gellatly were very ready and bold in their allusions to the laxness of the synod and its ministers, and the provocation which they offered to the Newcastle Presbytery and the Presbyterian ministers generally, derived its force from this fact. The synod's action of 1736, asserting that it had adopted and adhered to the standards "without the least variation or alteration, and without regard to the said distinctions," was the result of the pressure brought to bear upon them by popular opinion, that discerned in those "distinctions" a proviso for such as scrupled unqualified subscription.

But even this action did not set suspicion at rest, so long as the Adopting Act (including of course the Preliminary Act) stood unrepealed. The synod was still taunted and reproached for the manner in which the Confession had been adopted. It is unnecessary here to dwell upon the controversies which were thus occasioned. We give a specimen of the statements which were freely made and repeated on every favorable occasion, showing the light in which the stricter Pres-

byterian bodies of the country *professed* to regard the Synod of Philadelphia, or subsequently the conjunct synods.

The Associate Synod, from the time of its organization, has published and republished, almost down to the present time, that "the adherence to the Westminster Confession, requires of ministers belonging to the Synod of New York and Philadelphia, is with an exception of what, not only the synod itself, but any Presbytery subordinate to it, may judge 'not essential or necessary in doctrine, worship and government.'— And who knows what this may be? Were the Articles, deemed not essential or necessary, specified, it would then appear, what was the public confession made in that church: but while they are not, we can not say what this is."

In like manner a smaller body of Presbyterians insisting, at the close of the last century and the commencement of this, on the grounds which justify their separate organization, set forth the case thus: After speaking of the Presbyterian emigrants from Ireland to this country, they add—"By the junction, it is reported of some Congregational ministers who had settled in the Middle States, and adopted the Presbyterian system, they formed themselves into a Synod. As they were a new and independent ecclesiastical body, they had no ecclesiastical standards by which it might be ascertained whether they had an orthodox belief of the Scriptures or not. At length they professed adherence to the Westminster Confession of Faith, in 1729; but in such a way as left their orthodoxy at as much uncertainty as if they had never professed to adhere to it; for their ministers were required to adhere to it, with a permission and liberty to refuse and reject any article or articles in doctrine, worship or government, which the synod, or any presbytery subordinate to it, may judge not necessary or essential; so that the whole of the orthodoxy of the whole body is referred to that; and after, synods and presbyteries will, themselves, be orthodox: for who could possibly predict what they would account necessary and essential?— Or whether, at last, they would count an adherence to any article of that Confession, or any other creed or confession, essential?"

Nor do they admit that the matter was mended by the course of the united synods. "A good many years ago, the Synod of New York and Philadelphia agreed that there should be synods formed in different parts of the country, and that they should meet thereafter, at convenient and appointed times, in one General Assembly. The General Assembly, after some years,* took the Confession of Faith compiled by the Westminster Assembly into consideration: and after they had cast out many things contained in that book, . . . and modeled to their own taste, the thirty-three chapters of the Confession, properly so called, and the Catechisms contained in that book, they adopted it as their constitution. Yet it appears that they neither made it a term of ministerial or Christian communion. This appears, etc. . . These loose latitudinarian Laodicean principles of the above-mentioned synod, seem to be prevalent through the whole body to which they belong, or with which they are connected." No "New School" was then in existence to bear this reproach which was freely bestowed upon the entire church.

In 1783, one of the stricter branches of the American Presbyterian Church published its catechism of nearly 200 pages. It was elaborately prepared, and of course was designed to vindicate the peculiar views of the body by which it was put forth. In it we find the following question and answer, bearing especially upon the meaning and scope of the Adopting Act:

"What are the distinguishing principles and practice of the Synod of New York and Philadelphia?"

"This Synod, and the people under their inspection, are the most numerous body of Presbyterians in the United States. They are composed of ministers and people from different countries; hence it is not surprising, that they are not of one heart and one mind in the faith. However, it appears to be a received principle among them, that whatever is disputed among the pious and learned, ought not to be a term of communion in the Christian church; and hence they live generally in peace with one another, notwithstanding their jarring sentiments.

They have not adopted expressly the directory for public worship, nor the propositions concerning presbyterial government; and though they have adopt-

* To one familiar with our history, it is unnecessary to point out the mistakes in these statements.

ed the Larger and Shorter Catechism, as also the Confession of Faith, but with this proviso: 'And in case any minister of the Synod, or any candidate of the ministry, shall have any scruple with respect to any articles of said Confession, he shall in time of making said declaration declare his scruples to the synod or presbytery, who shall notwithstanding admit him to the exercise of the ministry within our bounds, and to ministerial communion, if the synod or presbytery shall judge his scruples not essential or necessary in doctrine, worship or government.' Adopting Act, 1729. Hence it is that to quote the Confession of Faith or Catechisms upon any disputed point with the members of this synod, has very little weight with many of them."

We trust it has been made sufficiently evident that the Adopting Act has given occasion for the charge of latitudinarianism against the Presbyterian church. Knowing the attitude and spirit of those who brought the charge, we can make proper allowance for its exaggerated tone. But will any man say, there was no fire where there was so much smoke? Of what use is it to attempt to throw in the shade the historical fact, that the Adopting Act of 1729, re-affirmed by the united Synod of New York and Philadelphia, gave a plausible pretext for the assertion that the Presbyterian Church in this country was lax—we should say liberal or rather Scriptural—in its terms of ministerial communion? And yet, with facts and statements like those we have cited above, contradicting him, and utterly inexplicable in his scheme of history, Dr. Baird asserts that "the 'liberal principles' of Dr. Gillett find no shadow of countenance in the Adopting Act of 1729, nor the reunion of 1758, nor any where else in the history of our fathers."

Verily, if this be so, the fact is an anomaly in history. It is inexplicable on all the common principles of human reasoning.

It may, perhaps, be supposed by some that "liberal principles" as to terms of Christian and ministerial communion were not prevalent at the time of, and subsequent to, the Adopting Act, except among a few ministers from New England who sympathized with Dickinson. To obviate any such mistake, we need only turn to the publications of the day, issued by, or receiving the sanction of, the New Castle Presbytery or its members. They were not heedless observers of the controversy concerning terms of communion which was carried on between the Seceders and the Presbyterians of the

Irish Synod. The champion of the latter, Samuel Delap, in his "*Remarks on some Articles of the Seceders*," (1749,) discussed largely the question of the terms of ministerial and Christian communion. He says :

"I see no inconsistency between a Christian's endeavoring, in a Christian manner, and by suitable means, to pluck up every Plant that God has not planted, and using charitable Forbearance toward fellow-Protestants, agreed in the most important Articles of Christianity, and by Profession united in Christ the Head ; though he believes they are weak in the Faith; and that there is a mixture of Wood, Hay and Stubble in the Spiritual Building, with the Gold, Silver and precious Stones : As zeal for Truth is commendable, so God has commanded moderation and charitable Forbearance among the Disciples of Jesus Christ.

He contends "that the narrow terms of ministerial and Christian communion, specified in the Seceders' new Covenant, and ratified by their Act of presbytery, *are not the terms of communion revealed in God's word* ; and that such matters of doubtful disputation among learned and pious men, *ought not to be made terms of ministerial and Christian communion in the church.*" "The New Testament," he says, "gives no ground to make matters of doubtful disputation among the true disciples of Christ, articles of a solemn covenant with God, and terms of communion in the church. Our blessed Saviour did not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. . . . The disciples of Christ were subject to many errors and infirmities while he was with them. They were under doubts . . . under a mistake, etc. In the first ages of Christianity, the church was far from inserting into their creed matters of doubtful disputation."

"The Creed generally received in the primitive churches is but a short enlargement and exposition on the Form of Baptism; and the substance of it is contained in that which is commonly called the Apostles' Creed. . . . *Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Origen, Augustine, Chrysostom, Jerome, Cyprian,* and other Fathers of the Church, were chargeable with some errors ; if every one of their errors could justly be made an exclusive term of communion, none of them could have had communion with one another."

The bearing of these principles on the subject of subscription to the standards is obvious. They were accepted and en-

dorsed by the New Castle Presbytery, who refer to them with express approval, and who, five years later, (1754,) issued their "warning" against the errors and practices of John Cuthbertson. They were ready to "acknowledge his separation guiltless, if he was obliged to withdraw on account of the imposition of sinful or unscriptural terms of communion." That the matter might be set in a proper light, they observe "that all religious truths and duties are not equally important. . . . Some . . . are but circumstantial and some fundamental. It is the duty of the strong to bear the infirmities of the weak, . . . but if there ought to be forbearance, then it will follow that some religious truths and duties ought not to be terms of communion in the church. The pretense of keeping the church pure is plausible at first sight, and seems mighty friendly to strict holiness, but they involve themselves by the above principle in an unhappy contradiction; for if they are for holding fast every truth and duty, let them hold these among the rest, viz., that every truth and duty is not equally great, and may not be made equal terms of communion; that brotherly love and the communion of saints are more excellent than many other duties in religion; that we ought to bear with some mistakes and weaknesses in our brethren, and not unchurch them for some different sentiments and practices. Now if such great things as these are cast out of religion for the sake of purity, what kind of purity is it? It is a kind of strictness beyond what our Lord and his apostles taught, therefore let it be *Anathema*."

It is thus that they insisted that all truths were "not truths of such importance as to be made terms." Assuming the correctness of Delap's position, that matters of doubtful disputation *ought not* to be made terms of communion, they remark:

"That may be called a matter of doubtful Disputation, or, (which is the same thing,) a disputable Point, concerning which clear and certain Evidence can not ordinarily be obtained; and concerning which, the Holy and Learned dispute, who are agreed in the great Fundamentals of Religion, relating both to Doctrine and Worship, Discipline and Government. It is certain the Apostle forbids the receiving of Christians to doubtful Disputations, *Rom. xiv, 1*, which is, in other words, to forbid making such matters Terms of *Communion*!"

They add, moreover :

“ To make doubtful Disputations *Terms of Communion*, and that by Solemn Covenant Oath, especially when our information of the Truth of Matters of Fact depends upon fallible History, is, instead of being a moral Duty, a *very great evil*. The Articles of our Faith, and Forms of Communion, should be founded upon and taken from Scripture, that the Conscience may be convinced of all from Divine Testimony.”

Such were the views published by the New Castle Presbytery, in their own name, when met by charges of laxness in regard to terms of ministerial and Christian communion. They set forth their own principles lucidly, and defended them manfully. They insisted on a distinction in favor of *fundamental* truths. They urged Christian forbearance between ministerial brethren. They maintained that none but plain scriptural terms of communion should be imposed, and they pronounced *Anathema* on “a kind of strictness beyond what our Lord and his Apostles taught.”

And yet with such facts on record, establishing beyond all question or doubt the “liberal Presbyterianism” of the New Castle Presbytery, and going as far as any party in the church can have any plausible pretense for going, the Rev. Dr. Baird asserts, that “the liberal principles of Dr. Gillett find *no shadow of countenance* in the Adopting Act of 1729, nor the reunion of 1758, nor *anywhere else* in the history of our fathers.”

When the synod of New York and Philadelphia prepared and published “The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church” (1789), they incorporated into its Introduction the memorable declaration, that they “believe that there are truths and forms, with respect to which men of good character and principles may differ: And in all these they think it the duty, both of private Christians and societies, to exercise mutual forbearance toward each other.” It would be easy to show—from the recorded diversities of opinion among the ministers of that day, some like Wilson and Patillo urging a large latitude on certain points—that these opinions are in keeping with the tolerant spirit subsequently evinced in repeated instances in the history of the church.

.. We do not care, however, to rake up anew the evidence ad-

duced by those whose *Reformed* Presbyterianism is assumed by them to be a protest against the laxity of the Presbyterian church in every stage of its history subsequent to the Adopting Act. We leave to them the liberty of making what they can of the obnoxious doctrines of McCorkle and Patillo, never condemned or discountenanced by the judicatories of the church. They may dwell if they choose on the laxity of the Pittsburg Synod, in quietly approving Porter's sermon, dilating upon the vanity or tyranny of creeds and confessions. The cases they cite in vindication of their separation from a body so lax as they represent our church to be, may find some apology in their provincial obscurity. But we must say, that whatever divergence they may exhibit from the right line of the standards, they are not without a precedent in high quarters. Creditable or discreditable as it may be accounted to the honor of the church, it is stated by Dr. Priestley, that when he landed in this country at the close of the last century, the only pulpit in which he was invited to preach was that of Princeton. The only theological professor within our bounds whom we can recall as rejecting the Calvinistic doctrine of imputation, and caricaturing it as being sentenced "to an eternity of misery because of the transgressions of one who sinned before I was born," was one of the successors of Dr. Witherspoon, as a teacher of theology at Princeton. Dr. Samuel Stanhope Smith made it the merit of one of his latest volumes, that only a *moderate Calvinism*, not unacceptable to an Episcopal Bishop, was to be found in it; and he did not succeed in suppressing his chagrin that Dr. Ashbel Green counted his textbook unsound in the "doctrines of grace." Our church has afforded shelter too long and too extensively to varied interpretations of the doctrines of our standards, to allow us to set its history over against a liberal interpretation of the Adopting Act, and the attempt to do so can result only in its own defeat. We have been as a church, for the most part, consistent in tolerating diversities of belief, substantially sound and Scriptural, however varied among themselves. The Adopting Act, as we claim to understand it, has been no false symbol of our subsequent history. The plea for strict terms of

subscription comes with an ill grace from a quarter where they have been practically set at naught. There are indeed many incidents in our history which, with every candid mind, must set the question at rest; and as we consider them successively, they meet us with cumulative and overwhelming evidence.

Among the Scottish clergy of his day, Robert Wodrow was perhaps as strict as any in his views of subscription to the standards. When the Pacific Act of 1720 was passed by the Irish Synod, requiring licentiates to subscribe the Westminster Confession, yet allowing any person scrupling any phrase or phrases in the Confession liberty to use his own expressions, which the Presbytery should accept of if they judged the person sound in the faith, Wodrow remarked that it "has given a larger door there than we allow in this church, at least by any direct act of the Assembly." He adds, it "is as large a concession as, I think, could well be made to intrants." But the action of the American Synod evidently, in his judgment, went beyond this. He attributed it to Irish ministers, carrying the heats that had consumed them at home across the Atlantic. He admitted that it was a mere guess, and that he should be glad to find it otherwise. But he remarks, "we have here a copy of their Act about subscription, which *know not well what to make of.*" And yet Dr. Baird reads this same Act through the spectacles of his *Digest*, and says, "the liberal principles of Dr. Gillett *find no shadow of countenance* in the Adopting Act of 1729."

No one, at this day, will question the orthodox Old Schoolism of Dr. Ashbel Green. Nothing would have been more gratifying to him than to be able to say of the Adopting Act that its strictness was inconsistent with all "New School" laxness of doctrine. But his judgment of it, expressed with characteristic emphasis, was, that "*it gave and took, bound and loosed, in the same breath.*" Dr. Baird, however, concludes his examination of it by declaring—and that too after evidently attempting to show that it was designed by "implication" that no man should scruple "one word to anything in the doctrinal statements"—that "the liberal principles of Dr. Gillett *find no shadow of countenance* in the Adopting Act of 1729."

Dr. Hodge probably would not thank us for volunteering to vouch his exemption from the bias which Dr. Baird charges on New School writers, and yet he says frankly: "It must be admitted that the language of the Act leaves the intention of its authors a matter of doubt." He insists that the interpretation which he gives to it is the only one which will save it "from the charge of direct contradiction." He adds: "It is very evident indeed that the Act was a compromise." And yet this "ambiguous" document, this "compromise," which only Dr. Hodge's interpretation can save "from the charge of a direct contradiction," is, in the view of Dr. Baird, so lucid, strict and consistent, that he does not hesitate to say that "the liberal principles of Dr. Gillett *find no shadow of countenance* in the Adopting Act of 1729."

The Adopting Act—including in the use of the word the Preliminary Act—bears concession on its face. It was so understood at the time. It was so interpreted by different parties. The Old Side implied the fact in their protest against persons sitting with them in the synod who had not accepted the standards according to "*our last explication of the Adopting Act.*" It was assumed by the New Side, when, four years later, they organized themselves on the basis of the Adopting Act simply, utterly ignoring the "last explication." It was asserted by the Seceders, and those who were in sympathy with them, and the assertion was persisted in, generation after generation. And yet the whole scope of Dr. Baird's elaborate effort is the conclusion that "the liberal principles of Dr. Gillett *find no shadow of countenance* in the Adopting Act of 1729."

The well-known views of Jonathan Dickinson were, as we have seen, such that, with his consent, the Synod of New York could have been constituted only on a liberal basis.* These views he held unchanged, and the language which we have quoted from him on terms of communion, etc., was employed after the "last explication of 1736." He *never recalled or modified* them, and yet Dr. Baird, scouting the very idea of

* The Synod of New York and Philadelphia simply accepted in this respect the basis of the Synod of New York.

his consistency, and pronouncing the assertion of it a remarkable statement from one familiar with the history, declares that the "liberal principles of Dr. Gillett find no shadow of countenance in the Adopting Act of 1729, nor the reunion of 1758, nor any where else in the history of our fathers."

We have no doubt that Dr. Baird himself will readily admit that John Thomson, the author of the overture which led to the Adopting Act, understood the results of his movement and understood the latitude intended in the Act itself. Yet he says expressly (1741) : "I suppose that what our brethren value the printed declaration (Preliminary Act included) which they mention, most for, is the *too great latitude expressed in it*, which fault was amended in the following year, when that latitude was taken away as dangerous." And yet Dr. Baird, in the face of the fact that this "too great latitude" is asserted by Thomson to be "expressed" in the Adopting Act, and that in the following year it was taken away as "*dangerous*," declares that "the liberal principles of Dr. Gillett find no shadow of countenance in the Adopting Act of 1729."*

It is, of course, perfectly obvious that when the New York Synod, in 1745, and the reunited Synod, in 1758, took their stand on the Adopting Act of 1729, simple and unqualified, making no mention whatever of the modification of 1730, which took away the *too great latitude as dangerous*, or of the explication of 1736, they left the original latitude of the Adopting Act just as it was before the Synod of 1730 tampered with it ; and yet Dr. Baird sums up his attempt to convince us of error, by saying that "the liberal principles of Dr. Gillett find no shade of countenance in the Adopting Act of

* The manner in which Dr. Baird disposes of Pres. Davies' testimony, is only less amusing than the process by which he eliminates the word *doctrine* from the (Preliminary) Adopting Act, as apparently an "extemporaneous addition to the document." One would scarcely suspect, from the manner in which he sturs over the matter, that Davies has said, "that we allowed the candidate to mention his objections against any article in the Confession, and the judicature judged whether the articles objected against were essential to Christianity, and if they judged they were not, they would admit the candidate notwithstanding the objections."

1729, nor the reunion of 1758, nor any where else in the history of our fathers."

"*This is a very remarkable statement for a writer familiar with the history.*" It is by no means so remarkable for one who manifests such ignorance of it. "If it is true, in the sense intended," then history may be written in the teeth of evidence and an author's prepossessions may shape his facts. That it is not true, we are thoroughly convinced, and we have no doubt that our readers will share our convictions. If it is not true, then, by the confession of Dr. Baird, the position of those whom he assumes to represent is "an innovation on the established principles of our church." We trust that if our remarks do not work conviction in his mind, he will continue to prosecute his investigations, not disheartened by his present mistakes. A historic knot, as well as any other, is sometimes drawn fast in virtue of two opposing forces, and we feel under obligation to him for the occasion he has afforded us of vindicating what we deem the truth of history. If he has assailed our character for *patience* in the past, we are confident that he will do so no longer. Indeed, we question whether, after the remarkable declaration that "the liberal principles of Dr. Gillett find no shadow of countenance in the Adopting Act of 1729," any historic statement that could fall from his pen would at all move, or even greatly surprise us. We shall be prepared, we trust, to listen with perfect composure to whatever he may have to offer, and we take leave of his attempted refutation in the words of the "great Mr. Dickinson," whose character he has so unwarrantably assailed: "Thus I have entertained you with some counter evidences, and have more at your service, if these won't satisfy."

The question as to the spirit of American Presbyterianism—whether it was of a liberal or rigid type—is one at this present time of special significance. We do not, indeed, feel ourselves bound and fettered by precedent, for our fathers—like ourselves—were fallible men, and we do not believe that wisdom died with them. But, entering upon the inheritance they have bequeathed to us, we claim the right to know and determine its metes and bounds. We want the question set-

tled, not by technicalities, not by abnormal incidents of their history, not by special pleas that blink vital facts, but by historical evidence, fairly and impartially weighed. If the Adopting Act of 1729, re-accepted and endorsed by the united synod of 1758, and constituting the doctrinal basis of our church, while defining its policy, was not what we have claimed it to be, the fact can be shown. That Dr. Baird has not shown it, we presume all candid readers will admit, and that he can not show it they will be apt to infer. If he can not do it, who can? And shall mere surmise or insinuation or theological prejudice be allowed to wrest from facts their historical significance, and obscure the fame and memory of men whom we delight to honor?

We claim in behalf of the American Presbyterian Church, that, considered in its historical aspect, it is liberal in spirit, while resolute in maintaining the vital doctrines of the Reformed faith. It has been charged with bigotry on one side, and with laxness on the other, but it has never more than temporarily swerved from the line of fidelity to the spirit of its symbols. We do not believe that this passing time is a fitting occasion for the shadow to go back on the dial of its history. The mind of the world was never more active than to-day, never more disposed to resent the narrowness of inherited or antiquated ideas, rigidly imposed. There is much in the signs of the times to occasion alarm. Many a good man's heart fails him for fear. It is an anxious and pertinent inquiry, What shall be done?

There are two paths of policy before us which we are invited to consider. One is that of a rigid repression of all interpretations of the meaning of the standards, unless they are of a certain specific type. The other is that which, while allowing a larger liberty, and placing less confidence in authoritative decisions, has faith in that grand harmony of divine truths, so fitly compared by Andrew Fuller to "chain-shot" bound together by an iron-linked connection, and necessitating the acceptance, sooner or later, by all rightly constituted minds, of that system of truth which we find so excellently comprehended and embodied in the Westminster Standards.

It is this last which will invite and win over scrupulous consciences, while the other will tend only to exasperate and provoke rebellious protest. One fences in, or shuts out, by virtue of a human authority that overtops the limitations of the divine word. The other allures by Christian gentleness and invites the weak in faith to no doubtful disputations.

And yet our history, and the spirit of our church, furnish no shelter for Broad-church notions, in the accepted meaning of that phrase. We are Calvinists—not as accepting all that Calvin taught—not as bound by his authority—not as calling him or any man master, but as excluding from the scheme of divine truth those systems of religious error, against which the career and teachings of the Genevan Reformer have become a historical protest. Our Christian sympathies are as broad as the church of Christ under all its forms, but we believe that, as an organized body, we can, for the present at least, harmonize appropriately and act effectively only by adhering in a considerate and liberal spirit to the standards of the Westminster Assembly. Planting ourselves on these, and claiming the sanction of the Fathers of the American Presbyterian Church in our manner of adopting them, we feel that we combine sufficient safeguards against fatal error with a liberality of spirit, and a toleration of minor diversities, which reflect, in a measure, the mind of Christ.

ART. III. THE UNION QUESTION IN SCOTLAND.*

By Rev. MELANCTHON W. JACOBUS, D. D., Prof. in the Western Theological Seminary, Allegheny City, Pa.

It is a signal fact that the great Presbyterian Church, on both sides of the water, is moving vigorously in the direction of organic and visible union. However it may have been initiated, here or there, no one can doubt that it forms an era in the history of this great denomination of Christians, and that it is accordant with many special leadings of Providence,

* *Fifth Annual Report of the Union Committee of the Free Church of Scotland, presented to the General Assembly at Edinburgh, May 28th. With the Debate thereon.* THE REV. ROBERT BUCHANAN, D. D., Glasgow, Convener. *The Daily Review*, Glasgow.