

COMMUNICATIONS.

LETTER FROM DR. GREEN.

To the Editor of the Watchman of the South.

PHILADELPHIA, Aug. 30th, 1837.
 My Dear Sir—An absence from the city prevented my receiving your communication of the 3d instant, for more than a fortnight after it was written. I had indeed seen it publicly announced that a religious periodical, devoted to the maintenance of our doctrines and institutions, was in contemplation, to be issued at Richmond; and with many others, I rejoiced at the information.

On the subject of the Plan of Union, on which I am to give you the substance of my remarks, I spoke twice. My first speech was perfectly extemporary, and I cannot do better than to transcribe, with some small corrections and additions, the report of it which is given in the New York Observer. It was as follows—

"Dr. Green said, it was now six and thirty years since the articles of union, referred to in this resolution, had been originally formed. There were, he believed, but few on that floor who had then been present. He had himself been one of those who were concerned, if not in the formation, yet certainly in the adoption of the articles, now the subject of consideration. But he did not rise to defend their constitutionality, for he was satisfied that they were unconstitutional throughout. It ought to be recollected, however, that the state of the churches at that time, was exceedingly different from their present state. The supreme judicatory of the Presbyterian church had then but recently become a delegated body. The Synod of New York and Philadelphia, by which, in the year 1788, the present constitution of this church was formed, was not a delegated body; and being then the supreme judicatory, it was subject to no rules, but such as were dictated by expediency, and a general sense of duty and responsibility to the great Head of the church: And it did so happen, that when the same men who had formed, or helped to form the Synod, came to sit in the General Assembly, which was a delegated body, with limited powers, clearly and strictly specified, it seemed as if they could not be brought to keep in their recollection the change which had taken place in the relations they had formerly sustained, and the consequent change demanded in the habits of thinking and acting to which they had been long accustomed. Many acts were at that time done; which, if proposed now, would not be listened to a moment. As one example of this kind of action, he stated it as a fact, that for two or three years after the formation of the General Assembly, members of Presbyteries, without ever having been elected or commissioned as members of the Assembly, and who were in attendance only as spectators, were invited to sit, and actually did sit, as correspondent members with all the same privileges which, in that character, they had possessed in Presbyteries and Synods. The records of the General Assembly contain the evidence of this fact, and show the period and the considerations on which this practice was abolished. Dr. G. said he had been speaking of what he personally knew, and testified of what he had witnessed; and that his statement might serve to explain how a plan so palpably and grossly unconstitutional as that under consideration, ever came to be adopted by the General Assembly of 1801.

"In addition, however, to the inherent unconstitutionality of this plan, circumstances had arisen, which took from it the only ground on which it had originally stood. It was avowedly, professedly, and in terms, an arrangement for the frontier settlements. But he desired to know if Western New York, for whose behalf the plan was confessedly formed, was now a frontier settlement. So far from it, that country was as fully cultivated and as densely peopled as many of the oldest settlements in our land. It never had been intended that the singular arrangement of what was usually called the accommodation plan, should be continued, when the settlements for whose benefit it had been contrived, should cease to be a frontier. It was expected that by that time, the churches would be fully organized, either in the Presbyterian or the Congregational form. The church, therefore, for years past, had been acting on a system which, at its beginning, was avowedly temporary in its character, and whose perpetuity was never so much as contemplated; a system which provided an expedient for the time being, to enable feeble and infant congregations to obtain the stated administrations of the gospel, when otherwise they must have been entirely deprived of the means of grace. The Assembly, therefore, were now called to act on an instrument, under circumstances wholly different from those in which that instrument had been adopted. He hoped that this would be well considered; and that it would be remembered, that the plan proposed to be abrogated was not only unconstitutional in its nature, but now wholly out of date."

After I had spoken as just stated, the debate was continued till the close of the evening session, and was left open to be resumed on the following morning. The last speaker before the adjournment was the Rev. Mr. Cleveland, who earnestly opposed the abrogation of the plan, and urged that the question under debate should be argued and decided on constitutional principles. Having employed a part of the interval of adjournment to make some preparation, I obtained the floor of the house at the re-opening of the debate on the subsequent morning, and spoke to the following effect—

Mr. Moderator—I was equally gratified and surprised, on hearing the last speaker insist with earnestness, that we should keep to the ground of the constitution, in discussing and deciding on the subject now before the house. I was gratified to find that the friends of the Plan of Union were willing and desirous to rest its claims on constitutional principles; for by these principles we certainly ought to be governed, in resolving either to retain or reject the plan: And I was surprised, Sir, greatly surprised—to hear what I did on this point, coming from the quarter from which it came; because, although something specious may be said in favor of this plan, as a matter of expediency, yet on the ground of the constitution, I am perfectly confident that it can never receive even a plausible defence. It most palpably violates the constitution of our church, in three articles out of the four, in which its provisions are embodied and expressed.

I shall endeavor to show in a few words, for many are not necessary, first, that this plan deprives certain officers and members of the Presbyterian church of some of their most valuable rights and privileges; and then, that it confers important rights and privileges on other individuals in direct violation of the constitution of our church. I presume, Sir, that I am safe in saying, that in any matter of controversy, the right to a fair trial in the courts of our church, and of an appeal from the lower courts to the higher, is one that every Presbyterian numbers among the most precious and valuable that his church reserves to him. Let us examine this plan, and see how it affects this right and privilege. The plan, Sir, you will find takes it away entirely. For it declares in the 2d article, that when a Presbyterian minister is settled—as by this strange plan he may be settled—over a Congregational church, and any difficulty shall arise between him and the church, or any member of it, "the difficulty shall be referred to the Presbytery, to which the minister shall belong." But mark well the proviso, under which this stipulation is made; it is this—"Provided both parties shall agree to it; if not, to a council, con-

sisting of an equal number of Presbyterians and Congregationalists, agreed upon by both parties." Here a Presbyterian minister is clearly and completely divested of any absolute right of an appeal to his Presbytery, a right and privilege explicitly assured to him by the constitution of his church. This right, by the article before us, is made to depend on the consent of the very party with whom he is in controversy; and if his consent is not granted, the cause is to go for adjudication to a mutual council, a body utterly unknown to our constitution; and from this council there can be no appeal, either to a Synod, or to the General Assembly. Note it then as a point undeniably plain, that on this process, a Presbyterian minister is deprived of all right of an appeal even to his own Presbytery, unless the very party with whom he litigates will graciously grant him the privilege, and all appeal to a Synod, or the General Assembly, is, in every event, wholly and forever foreclosed. If our constitution is not violated, and set at naught, in this article, let somebody tell us, if they can, how it may be done.

Again—The 3d article of this singular plan provides for the settlement of a minister of Congregational principles over a Presbyterian church; and the whole article shows that the minister here contemplated is supposed to remain a Congregationalist, and to avow himself to be such. Is this, Sir, consistent with our constitution? Surely not. Does not the constitution of our church require that every minister, when installed, shall explicitly recognize the binding force of his ordination engagements? We know it does. But perhaps it will be said, that the constitution does not specify the particular church in which his engagements at ordination shall be made; and that they may be made in a Congregational church, as well as in one that is professedly Presbyterian. The absurdity of this supposition will at once be glaring, if we cast our eyes on the 2d and 3d questions proposed to every Presbyterian minister at his ordination, and to which he is required to answer affirmatively. The questions are these—"Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith of this church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures? And do you approve of the government and discipline of the Presbyterian church in the United States?" Now, Sir, a Congregational minister never does and never can answer affirmatively to these questions, or to any other of equivalent import; because by doing so he would, by that very act, disavow Congregationalism and declare himself a Presbyterian. The admitted fact, therefore, that the minister contemplated in this 3d article remains a Congregationalist, is a demonstrative proof that he has never brought himself under any obligations to conform to our constitution, in doctrine, government or discipline; and thus the plan sets aside, in this instance, a most important provision of our standards. How many Congregational ministers have actually entered the Presbyterian church at this open door, and for years past, without ever adopting our constitution, have been members of Presbyteries, Synods and General Assemblies, nobody can tell; but it is no violent presumption that the number has not been small. But further—This 3d article provides that the Congregational minister, who is set over a Presbyterian church, shall have a difficulty with his church, or with any member of it, his cause shall be tried by the Association to which he belongs, if both parties agree to it; otherwise by a council, one half Congregationalists and the other half Presbyterians, mutually agreed on by the parties. Here, a whole Presbyterian church, when in controversy with its minister, is absolutely deprived of a trial by any of our constitutional courts. The church may choose whether it will submit to the Association, or to a Council, but it can in no event appeal to a Presbytery, a Synod, or the General Assembly. Is this Presbyterianism? It is neither Presbyterianism nor Congregationalism; but an illegitimate something, partaking, in part, of the nature of both; and in which the nature of both is deteriorated.

The 4th article of this Plan relates to a congregation consisting partly of those who hold the Congregational form of discipline, and partly of those who hold the Presbyterian form. In this case, the article now under consideration recommends that "the church choose a Standing Committee, from the communicants of said church, whose business it shall be to call to account any member of the church who shall conduct himself inconsistently with the laws of Christianity, and to give judgment on such conduct." Here we find a court or tribunal created, authorized explicitly "to give judgment" on delinquent church members. Now, as our constitution knows nothing of such a court or judicature, as the Standing Committee here mentioned, it was indispensable to its constitutionality that the presbyteries should have been consulted, and that at least a majority of them should have approved of its existence and its functions. But we all know that the presbyteries never were consulted on this subject—it is not even pretended that they were. It follows inevitably and indisputably, that the appointment of this Committee, invested with powers which deeply affect our whole system of government, was an act of usurpation—a stretch of unconstitutional authority—which nothing but the fact of its existence could ever have convinced us, that our fathers and brethren in the General Assembly of 1801 could have perpetrated. That they did it inconsiderately, and not with a bad but a good design, no one can believe more firmly, or admit more cordially, than myself. But this alters not the nature, the inherent unconstitutionality, of the act itself. Among other objectionable matter that it contains, it takes away from every individual condemned by the Standing Committee, the constitutional privilege of an appeal to any higher court than a presbytery. But this is the smallest of its practical mischiefs. It violates to the letter, the second part of my general position; namely, that this Plan of Union confers important rights and privileges on certain individuals, in direct violation of the constitution of our church. This is implied, generally, in what I have already shown; but the subject deserves to be looked at, for a few moments, more particularly.

The unconstitutionality which I have now in view, is summarily this—that the article before us, while it sets aside entirely the church Session—a constitutional court—invests committee-men with some of the most important powers of ruling elders; and yet omits to take any engagement from them for the faithful discharge of their duties. What, sir, is a ruling elder, according to our constitution? The Form of Government, chap. v., says—"Ruling elders are properly the representatives of the people, chosen by them for the purpose of exercising government and discipline, in conjunction with pastors or ministers." Now, the Committee-men of this Plan are not chosen by the people, but exclusively by the church; and it does not appear that the pastor is to act with them at all, when they call to account the delinquent members of the church. Again, a ruling elder is, by our constitution, inducted into office by the same solemn adoption of the doctrines and government of our church, which is required of a minister. But these committee-men neither adopt any part of the constitution of our church, nor enter into any engagements whatever, for the faithful discharge of their duties. In every constitutional judicatory of our church, ruling elders, unless they voluntarily waive their privileges, compose at least a large part of it as is composed by the clergy. But in the article before us, no provision is made for a committee-man to

appear in any of our church courts, except in the presbytery. His appearance there, indeed, is clearly unconstitutional; because our constitution says, expressly, that "a presbytery consists of all the ministers, and one ruling elder, from each congregation within a certain district;" and so, also, in the Synod and General Assembly, ruling elders, in number equal to the clergy, compose an essential part or element of both these bodies. But the Plan manifests an utter disregard of Presbyterian principles, in this, as in other respects, that it makes no provision for any lay representation, either in the Synod or the General Assembly. We know, indeed, that the Plan has received a construction that has supplied all this deficiency, and that committee-men have, in part, been members of Synod, I believe, to the present time; and of the General Assembly, till within a few years past. But this only shows the enormity of the abuses which have arisen out of this Plan; for the appearance of a committee-man in any judicatory of our church, except the presbytery, is a violation of the Plan itself, as well as of the constitution of our church.

Having adverted to the abuses to which this Plan has given rise, permit me to mention one of these abuses, which is on record, in the printed Minutes of the General Assembly, for 1826. In that year, it appears that Mr. Josiah Bissell, from the presbytery of Rochester, was admitted as a member of the General Assembly, after an ardent debate, in which his right to a seat in that body was contested. Those who opposed him entered their protest against his admission, and assigned, in substance, the following reasons—1. "Because he was neither an ordained minister nor a ruling elder. 2. Because he was not even a committee-man. 3. Because he had not, either from the constitution, or from the conventional agreement, recorded in the Digest, pp. 297—299, the shadow of a claim to a seat in this House." This Protest was signed by two and forty members of the Assembly, and the name of the Rev. Dr. McAuley stands at the head of the list. The General Assembly, as usual, appointed a committee to answer the protest, and it was as follows—I read the whole—"Mr. Bissell was admitted by the Assembly, for the following reasons—1. The commission which Mr. Bissell produced was in due form, and signed by the proper officers of presbytery. 2. Every presbytery has a right to judge of the qualifications of its own members; and is amenable to Synod, and not to the General Assembly, except by way of appeal, or reference, or complaint, regularly brought up from the inferior judicatories, which has not been done in the present case. 3. It would be a dangerous precedent, and would lead to the destruction of all order in the church of Christ, to permit unauthorized verbal testimony to set aside an authenticated written document." Now, sir, let it be well observed, that in answering the protest, there is no direct denial whatever of its allegations. Let it be observed, too, that the assertion, that the presbytery had a right to judge of the qualifications of its own members, while it is equivocally true, may be essentially false. The Presbytery doubtless had a right to judge whether Mr. Bissell had the qualifications for a seat in the General Assembly which the Plan of Union specified. But it is equally clear, that they had no right beyond this. Their judgment could not give him the proper qualifications, if he had not those which the plan made indispensable: And the very point at issue was, whether he had or had not, the specific qualification, made essential by the Plan of Union. The protesters most unequivocally declared that he had not; and the committee do not affirm that he had, otherwise than by an ambiguous inference, which might or might not be just. The fair conclusion is, that the protesters were right, and that the inference of the committee was altogether inconclusive and evasive. This conclusion is much corroborated by the additional evasion, contained in the committee's reply. Their plea here is, that it would be dangerous to accredit verbal testimony in opposition to an authenticated written document. Granted as a general, but not as a universal truth. But why put it forward on this occasion, in place of a direct denial, if such a denial could be made? The committee, being of Mr. Bissell's party, did certainly know what were the facts of the case; and if the facts had not been such as the protesters affirmed that they were, the committee, beyond a question, would have said so, and have put an end at once to all controversy and doubt on the subject. They not doing it, is a tacit admission, *conclusive*, however, though both tacit and reluctant—that they well knew that Mr. Bissell was neither minister, ruling elder, nor committee man; and the result of the whole is, that the Presbytery of Rochester in the year 1826, commissioned and sent to the General Assembly, in the character of a ruling elder, a man who was not a ruling elder, nor possessed of any qualification to render him rightfully a member of that body. I confess, Sir, I am shocked while I say and think of this. If such a transaction had taken place in a civil court, it would probably have been followed by an indictment, for an offence which I will not name. The act might be, and I hope was, performed by the Presbytery hastily and inconsiderately; and it appears it was sustained by a majority of the General Assembly of 1826. But apologize for it as we may, nothing on earth can ever justify it. And I do verily believe, Sir, that it has been very far from being a solitary act of its kind. On the contrary, there is great reason to apprehend that the instances have been numerous, in which not only committee men, but simple church members, have come to the General Assembly, commissioned as ruling elders, and have taken their seats accordingly. And when, in addition to this, we take into view what has already been shown, that Congregational ministers, who have never adopted our standards, may have been, and doubtless have often been, sent as commissioners to the General Assembly, we have this result—that for many years past, not a small portion of the Supreme Judicatory of this church, in which questions are finally decided which vitally affect the church in doctrine, government and discipline, have been voted upon and often carried, by men who have felt themselves under no obligation to regard a constitution which they have never bound themselves to obey—by men, in fact, who have legislated for a church to which they did not belong. In these circumstances, is it any wonder that our church has been distracted? Is it any wonder that false doctrine and pernicious measures, however censured and exposed in writing, or condemned in the inferior courts, have looked forward to the court of the last resort for countenance and protection, and have not looked in vain. Is it not rather a wonder that our church could have preserved its existence in such circumstances?—A wonder, that having it in our power (for we always had it in our power) to put an end to these intolerable evils, we have borne with them so long?

I say, then, in conclusion, sir, that as this Plan of Union has, confessedly, never been sanctioned by the Presbyteries, it has always been unconstitutional, and every act performed under it, has been an unconstitutional act. Nay, sir, since this Plan (as I have shown) is, in all its essential parts and features, completely anti-presbyterian, the Presbyteries themselves could not have sustained it, without repealing, by that very act, a large part of their previous constitution. The Plan was revised and drawn up by Dr. Jonathan Edwards, then President of Union College. He had recently come into the Presbyterian Church from his settlement in New Haven, and had probably retained a predilection for the Congrega-

tional principles and usages to which he had been accustomed; and, as I stated yesterday, the Assembly adopted the Plan, without advertent to its palpable inconsistency with the constitution of our church. The length of time during which we have acted under it, so far from being an argument that we should continue to do so, furnishes the most powerful motive to urge us to abolish it without further delay. It has been principally instrumental in polluting, dishonouring, and distracting our church: And it does seem to me, that we owe it as a sacred duty to God and to that section of his church in which we are office-bearers, most solemnly bound by our ordination vows to consult its purity and peace, to abrogate, at once, this unconstitutional and mischievous Plan of Union; and for myself I shall vote accordingly."

Thus, my dear sir, I have endeavoured to comply with your request. Doubtless, my spoken and my written speech must differ somewhat, both in the arrangement of the thoughts and in the language used in expressing them; for I have lost the few notes that I had before me when I spoke; and the report of the speech in the New-York Observer is imperfect, although I do not charge it with any misrepresentation. In writing, I have not hesitated to express a thought that occurred, as pertinent, whether satisfied or not that I uttered it orally in the Assembly. I have already said, that I spoke to the same "effect" as I have written; and that I suppose is all that can be said, when speeches are written in the same circumstances in which mine has been penned.

Now, my friend, God, in his good providence, has mercifully, and most manifestly, interposed in our favour. Under his gracious ordering, a great and most desirable reformation has begun in our church. But let us keep in mind that it is only begun. It must be carried out by Presbyteries and Synods, before it can be considered as established; and the next General Assembly will, to the full, be as important as the last. We need to be very humble, very prayerful, and very vigilant. If we are, I have the utmost confidence that our church will soon see happier days than any that she has seen for twenty years past—that she will arise and shine, her light having come, and the glory of the Lord having risen upon her. You have my best wishes and prayers, that God may direct, bless and succeed you in your new and arduous vocation, and in all your labours in the Gospel of our dear and common Lord.

Affectionately and sincerely yours,
 ASHBEL GREEN.

Rev. Wm. S. Plumer.

For the Watchman of the South.

THE TRUE STATE OF THE CASE.

Mr. Plumer,

In deciding a controversy nothing is more important than to ascertain the exact grounds on which it stands. In the dispute which now agitates the church, it is my full persuasion that the orthodox, or old school party, are acting merely on the defensive, and that with a good conscience they could not have acted differently from what they have done. These orthodox-men have been charged with grasping at power; I do not perceive that they have aimed at the exercise of any other power than what was necessary to preserve the standards and government of the church.

It is fully believed by the orthodox, that there is an intention in the new school party to revolutionize the Presbyterian church. The noted conversation overheard between Doctors Skinner and Beecher, goes strongly to establish that point.—Declarations of a similar tendency, from other leading members of the party, might be adduced; but it is the less necessary to seek after evidence of this kind, as I think it can be shewn to the satisfaction of impartial men, that the work of revolution is actually commenced; and has for some time been going on before our eyes. By revolutionizing a church, we must mean some material change in its creed or form of government. To change the creed of a church is to touch its most vital interests, and every church which forms a creed, will resist such an attempt, if it has any tenderness of conscience, or regard to the authority of heaven. The addresses of our Saviour to the seven churches of Asia, will convince any man who believes the Bible, that the indulgence of error and lukewarmness are the two most fatal causes of destruction to any church. And can any church witness the change of its creed, so as to introduce what it believes to be dangerous error, without a serious effort to counteract that change? Can they believe that the head of the church, who bestowed such severe denunciations on the indulgence of error in the second and third chapters of the revelation, will hold them guiltless, if they do not oppose such innovations as fall directly under his denunciation? The authors of the innovation may say they are reforming; but this will not satisfy those who believe they are corrupting the oracles of truth.

Now the question presents itself—what is the revolutionizing of a church? Should a party enter a church and propagate doctrines which that church had always considered as heresy, and should that party successfully combine to protect those doctrines from the discipline and censure of the church, would not this be revolution?—would it not, to all practical purposes, change the creed of the church?—and would not every man who read with reverence our Saviour's declaration against the errors of the seven churches, feel himself bound to resist such innovations?

If any person will look back twenty-five or thirty years, and read the trial of H. Balek, of Davis of South Carolina, or of the Cumberland Presbyterians, or even of the New Lights and Stonites of Kentucky, he will certainly perceive that what was condemned as heresy then, is protected and justified, and that in a systematic manner, by the new school party at present.—This will certainly justify us in saying, that a change of our system is attempted, and it will justify the orthodox in resisting that change.

The new school, indeed, raise the outcry about bigotry when we defend our doctrines; they call it persecution, when we resist their innovations; but this only shews the perversion of views which has entered into this subject. In every other case, when men assail important rights, they expect resistance. If a robber should attempt to break his neighbour's house, he would expect opposition; and should he even receive a severe blow,—should his head be broken, or were he knocked down in the contest, I should hardly expect him to go into the yard and raise a yell about persecution. And yet I would much rather my house should be robbed, than that the Presbyterian Church should be despoiled of its doctrinal purity. "Truth is in order to holiness"—take away the purity of a church and you destroy its efficacy.

Another revolutionary point consists in the attempt to introduce abolition. When our constitution was formed, there was perhaps not a Presbytery within the whole church, which was not in a slave-holding district. This fact is sufficient to shew that our government does not allow any man to be impeached on the ground of slavery; and yet the attempt has been made, and by the same party too, to introduce abolition into our judicatories, and embroil our churches. A great deal has been said of late, with very little proof or evidence, to produce a belief that abolition prevails as much among the orthodox, as among the new school. In the beginning of this dis-

ussion, it was fully admitted that the old school Presbytery of Chillicothe, was a hot-bed of abolition; in all the late declamation on the subject, they have only been able, on any plausible evidence, to add one more orthodox clergyman to that class; all this does not shew that we are very likely to be troubled with abolition, if the action of the General Assembly be sustained.

I suppose, upon this question, the new school men, and especially the new school editors, have a right to speak for themselves. The Alton Observer, who has been long engaged in the abolition war, and not destitute of skill in estimating its forces, speaks of the act of the Assembly, as a blow aimed almost exclusively at abolition, and says, if the small Synods of Michigan and Illinois, had been included among the disowned Synods, almost the whole of abolition would have been removed from the Presbyterian Church.

The Cincinnati Journal, certainly a high authority in the new school, says that as the orthodox united to exclude abolition from the floor of the Assembly, the question between the parties may now be considered as entirely changed;—it is now a controversy between slavery and anti-slavery; and if the "slavery at the South can only be supported by such means, let it come to an end, whatever may be the consequences"—"a warning voice shall go forth." And again, "not a word is suffered to be spoken on the subject of slavery without rebuke." All this rage is got up because the majority of the Assembly did not suffer abolition to be introduced with all its malignity and abuse, and because the Southern people (slavery having been fixed upon them without their consent) are determined to treat the subject, as our Saviour and his apostles directed in similar circumstances; therefore, "slavery must come to an end, let consequences be what they may,"—"a warning voice must go forth." Such threats do not alarm us, because these people are not able to effect their purposes—but if their power equalled their will, the Southern country would be wrapped in flames and drenched in blood, before the lapse of a single year. The "warning voice" would soon "go forth." In contemplating the action of some of the new school and some of the abolitionists, I am surprised at nothing; but I am really surprised that Presbyterians in the South, are for taking such men to their bosom.

Reference has been made to an act of the General Assembly of 1818, as furnishing proof that the Presbyterians of the non-slave-holding States were always tainted with abolition. The act in question was not thought at that time to contain abolition;—it laments the evils of slavery;—it bestows censure on the act by which it originated—that is, the slave trade;—and it recommends to masters within our church, clemency and the religious instruction of slaves. Such doctrines as these the southern people are always willing to hear;—indeed, one of our greatest objections to abolition is, that it prevents the religious instruction and consequent improvement of the slave's condition.

But there is one fact which will completely dissipate all the sophistry raised about this act of the Assembly of 1818. Something more than twenty years ago, the Presbytery of Lexington, Va., deposed a member who had somehow got into its connexion, because he broke forth into that abusive abolition which characterizes the present day; the abolitionist appealed to the Assembly—and it was by this very Assembly of 1818 that an appeal was tried—and the Assembly, by an overwhelming majority, confirmed the sentence of the Lexington Presbytery deposing George Bourne. Now, when the attempt is made to prove by acts of this Assembly, that the Presbyterian Church has always been full of abolition, let this fact go along with the other statements. There was, indeed, in that Assembly a small party of between twenty and thirty men, principally from the region of the disowned Synods, who were willing to make a noise about abolition; but the majority against them was so strong, that they were able to give no disturbance; and if the action of the last Assembly be sustained, as I have no doubt it will, we shall have as little trouble about abolition hereafter, as we had in former times.

Here then a revolution has been attempted at two points; an attempt to change our creed, and to pour a flood of abolition into the bosom of the Presbyterian church. The men however who support this course, profess to be the friends of our present system; they even come forward with a furious zeal to defend our constitution. But in their exposition they shew what kind of a constitution they mean to give us. Some of them say that standing committee are as good as sessions; that if a committee man can only get into the place and power of an elder, he must, to all intents and purposes, be considered as a regularly ordained elder. Now here would be an important change of our system; our sessions, an important part of our church, would not only be swept away, but our bonds of confidence destroyed; our judicatories would be filled with men who had never received our creed, or given evidence of their Presbyterian principles. If our civil courts and legislatures were filled with men who had never taken the oath of office, nor submitted to the forms of naturalization, this would resemble the order of things to which these defenders of our constitution would reduce our church.

These men also tell us that the pastor of a Congregational church is as good a member of our judicatories as any other minister. But the churches of this order have great power over their pastors; they cannot indeed prevent his preaching without their bounds, but they can excommunicate him from the privileges of their church; and one of those churches within the disowned Synods, lately expelled a Presbyterian pastor, because he would not ordain a man as an elder, who refused to receive our Confession of Faith. These sentiments shew us what kind of government such furious defenders of our constitution would leave us; they would give us a constitution which might be any thing or nothing; the toy or play-thing of the party in power. Indeed these men only care for some of the abstract forms of the constitution, which might tie up the hands of the General Assembly, and prevent resistance to that glorious revolution which they mean to accomplish.

The constitutional question seems to be an endless subject in this discussion, and I must make a few remarks upon it. Some of our opponents tell us that if the Act of Union was not constitutional at first it has become so by a lapse of time. But if the Act of Union has become a constitutional law, what has become of the old constitutional of the Presbyterian church? The very nature of an unconstitutional law is to destroy the constitution which it violates—the law and the constitution cannot stand together. Sometimes an unconstitutional law makes but a slight alteration in the government, and its effects are hardly perceptible; but the Act of Union changes almost the whole Presbyterian system; it removes our sessions; modifies and almost destroys the right of appeal; places discipline in the hands of new tribunals; and in some cases, makes the male members of the church the court of the last resort. This Act of Union and our old constitution cannot stand on the same platform; if this law has become constitutional, and is in force, our former constitution must be given up; a little attention to these things might convince us that an unconstitutional law never can become valid. To make this law valid, we either make the old constitution invalid, or else we have two constitutions, one for the four Synods, and one for the rest of the Presbyterian church; and in that case we have two churches.