

WATCHMAN OF THE SOUTH.

DEVOTED TO THE PROMOTION OF PRACTICAL PIETY, THE DIFFUSION OF RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE, AND THE PROPAGATION OF THE DISTINCTIVE TENETS AND INSTITUTIONS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

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The substance of the following article has often been addressed to afflicted friends in the shape of a letter. It will soon appear as a Tract. It is now published in lieu of writing to some dear friends, who are in great affliction.

JOY IN SORROW.

OR COMFORT FOR THE BEREAVED.

My afflicted Friend,

I come not to deny that your grief is just. The cause of it is a sore and grievous wound. Nor do I wish to mock you by an affected gaiety of address. This would be cruel indeed. "As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to an heavy heart." (Ps. xiv. 20.) Nor shall I deride your sufferings, by presenting any consideration which mere worldly wisdom would devise. It can surely be no relief to your wounded heart to be told, what you know to be false, that there is no real suffering in this life. Nor can I pretend to comfort you, by saying that your grief will do no good. Its greatest aggravation is, that no tears will bring back the light of your eyes. Nor could I so far forget your woes as merely to say, that sorrow is the common lot of man. How can it but add to the grief of a benevolent mind to know that others endure the same ills? Nor dare I declare your present feelings unreasonable. There is, too, a sacredness in your sorrow, which I would not rudely touch. I therefore come not impudently to meddle with another's feelings, nor to torment you with vain words. Yet let me say a few things. They are for your good. They may prove inestimable blessings.

Your present affliction is from God, the good, the just, the wise, and the holy. Your bereavement came not by chance, nor from the power of wicked men or wicked angels. God has not consigned this world over to the uncontrollable way of a blind fortuity, nor to the reign of devils. Look not much at the mere instruments of your affliction. To lament that something else was not done, when you did all that at the time seemed proper, is to lament that you have not as much knowledge as the prophets of God or the God of prophets. Beware of spending time in reflection on second causes. One important end of God in this affliction is, to fix the thoughts on Him. Defeat not this design of love. Though the Sabaeans and Chaldeans took away Job's oxen and asses and camels, and murdered his servants, yet he said not a word of their wicked robbery, but declared—"The Lord hath taken away." Perhaps a message of deeper alarm never wrung a father's heart, than that which Samuel bore to Eli. With one thought the venerable man quieted himself—"It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good."

There are reasons for your afflictions. They are good and sufficient. They satisfied God. If known, they would satisfy you. In the absence of the Principal of a Grammar School, his pupils formed two societies for mutual improvement. Their meetings were held in the only commodious vacant house in the village. A letter informed the teacher of what had been done. He immediately wrote, positively forbidding all farther meetings. This order was strictly, though with pain, obeyed. It required all his good standing among his devoted young friends to restrain them from believing this act tyrannical. So painful was the state of their minds, that on his return, all preferred a respectful request for explanation of this mysterious conduct. Reminding them of his former and known kindness, he inquired if that, united with his declaration that he had good reasons, was not sufficient. They promptly expressed their confidence both in his kindness and veracity; but said it would relieve their minds to know his reasons. "Then," said he, "I have several. One is, that a few days before I left you, three men, having been secretly lodged in the house where your meetings were held, had died of the small-pox. Are you satisfied?" All assented. So, child of sorrow, God is trying you. He spoils your plans, he crosses your wishes, he takes away your delights; but he has good reasons for all He does. Yet he frequently conceals the cause of all these trials. He says—"What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." It is both folly and wickedness to doubt his love or his wisdom in the mysteries of providence.

"Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, But trust him for his grace; Behind a frowning providence, He hides a smiling face. His purposes will ripen fast, Unfolding every hour; The bud may have a bitter taste, But sweet will be the flower. Blind unbelief is sure to err, And scan his work in vain; God is his own interpreter, And He will make it plain."

Good may come out of this affliction. You should be far more desirous of obtaining that good than of getting rid of the evil under which you suffer. It is not necessary that your sorrow cease. It is necessary that it be sanctified. God has brought you into the house of mourning, that "by the sadness of the countenance the heart might be made better." See to it that you here gather some of the ripe clusters of "the peaceable fruits of righteousness." Nothing but dreadful unbelief and wickedness can hinder this affliction from being one of God's choice and rich blessings.

Take heed that you sin not. The least sin, an unworthy thought of God, is a far greater evil than all your sorrows. The kindest wish any can now have for you is, that in all your trials you may not sin, nor charge God foolishly. Sin is the greatest of all evils. Sin is your worst enemy. Hell is not so terrible. Sorrow may be a friend. The cup in Benjamin's sack was the forerunner of Benjamin's portion. They who suffer with Christ shall also reign with him.

"The path of sorrow and that path alone Leads to the land, where sorrows are unknown."

God has had on earth one Son without sin, but never one without affliction. The road to heaven is soaked with the blood of fifty millions of martyrs. Rivers of water ran down their eyes. Yet they all (even while on earth) regarded sin as the worst evil in the universe. O avoid the very appearance of evil. God has a right to expect that you will now honor him. Do it and He will honor you. But if you now sin against him, you shall be lightly esteemed.

Suffer not to pass unheeded the mercies which attend this affliction. Does your heart faint under the suddenness of the stroke. Perhaps nothing but a revelation from God, attested by miracles, or severe and protracted sufferings in the deceased, could have fully prepared your mind for the stroke. The former you could not expect. The latter you could not wish. Besides, God had told you to be always in readiness for any death. "All flesh is grass." He lent you your beloved only to remain with you at his will.

The following beautiful story is from the Mishnah of the Rabbins. During the absence of the Rabbi Meir from his house, his two sons died—both of them of uncommon beauty and enlightened by the law. His wife bore them to her chamber, and laid them upon her bed, and spread a white covering over their bodies. When Rabbi Meir returned, his first inquiry was for his sons. His wife reached him a goblet; he praised the Lord at the going out of the Sabbath, drank, and again asked, "Where are my sons, that they too may drink of the cup of blessing?" "They will not be far off," she said, placing food before him, that he might eat. He was in a glad and genial mood, and when he had said grace after meat, she thus addressed him:

"Rabbi, with thy permission, I would fain propose to thee one question."

"Ask it, then, my love," replied he.

"A few days ago, a person entrusted some jewels in my custody, and now he demands them, should I give them back to him?"

"This is a question," said the Rabbi Meir, "which my wife should have thought it necessary to ask. What wouldst thou hesitate or be reluctant to restore to every one his own?"

"No," she replied, "but yet I thought it best not to restore them, without acquainting thee therewith." She then led him to the chamber, and stepping to the bed, took the white covering from the dead bodies.

"Ah! my sons, my sons," loudly lamented their father, "my sons! the light of my eyes and the light of my understanding, I was your father—but ye were my teachers in the law."

The mother turned away and wept bitterly. At length, she took her husband by the hand and said, "Rabbi, didst thou not teach me that we must not be reluctant to restore that which was entrusted to our keeping? See, the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord!"

"Blessed be the name of the Lord," echoed the holy man; "and blessed be his holy name forever." Besides, had you known all you now know, perhaps you could not have done your duty to the dear deceased.

Therefore, think of the mercies attending this whole affliction. Count them up. It is a work of an ignoble mind to pervert any conduct, especially that of our best friend.

Lastly, your present situation is not without its appropriate duties. "Is any afflicted, let him pray." Cast your care upon God, for he careth for you. Earnestly inquire why God has afflicted you. Be patient. Be quiet. Be gentle. Be tender-hearted. Weep with those who weep. Do your duty to those who still live. Labor for the salvation of souls. Especially rely on Jesus Christ and his rich grace, and even you shall soon say—"It is good for me that I have been afflicted. Blessed be the name of the Lord. My choicest blessings flow from my severest trials."

Therefore, lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees. Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Flee to the promises. Make God your refuge; and when you "pass through the waters, he shall be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you; when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you; for Jehovah is your God and your Saviour. Fear not, He will be with you." M. R.

LOVE TO GOD.

The distinctions which some make in love, need not be taken as importing different kinds, but different actings of the same love, by which we may try our so much pretended love of Christ, which in truth is so rarely found. There will then be in this love, if it be genuine, these three qualities, *good will, delight, and desire.*

1st, *good-will*, earnest wishing, and (as we can) promoting God's glory, and stirring up others so to do. They who seek more their own things than the things of Jesus Christ, more their own praise and esteem than his, are strangers to this divine love; for she seeks not her own things. The bitter root of self-love is most hard to pluck up; this strongest and sweetest love of Christ alone doth it actually though gradually. This love makes the soul like the lower Heaven, slow in its own motion, most swift in the motion of that first which wheels it about; so, the higher degree of love, the more swift. It loves the hardest tasks and greatest difficulties, where it may perform God service, either in doing or in suffering for him. *It is strong as death, and many waters cannot quench it.* Eccles. viii. 6, 7.

The greater the task is, the more real are the testimony and expression of love, and therefore the more acceptable to God.

2dly, There is in true love, a complacency and delight in God; a conformity to his will; a loving what he loves; it is studious of his will, ever seeking to know more clearly what it is that is most pleasing to him, contracting a likeness to God in all his actions, by conversing with him, by frequent contemplation of God, and looking on his beauty. As the eye lets in this affection, so it serves it constantly, and readily looks that way which love directs it. Thus the soul possessed with this love of Jesus Christ, the soul which hath its eye much upon him, often thinking on his former sufferings and present glory, the more it looks upon Christ, the more it loves; and still the more it loves, the more it delights to look upon him.

3dly, There is in true love a desire; for it is but small beginnings and tastes of his goodness which the soul hath here; therefore it is still looking out and longing for the day of marriage. The time is sad and wearisome, and seems much longer than it is, while it is detained here. *I desire to be dissolved* (saith St. Paul) *and to be with Christ.* Phil. i. 23.

"God is the sum of all things lovely. Thus excellently Gregory Nazianzen expresseth himself, Orat. 1. "If I have any possessions, health, credit, learning, this is all the contentment I have of them, that I have somewhat I may despise for Christ, who is *totus desiderabilis, et totum desiderabile*, (the all-desirable one, the everything

desirable.) And this love is the sum of all he requires of us; it is that which makes all our meanest services acceptable, and without which all we offer to him is distasteful. God doth desire our love not only by his matchless excellency and beauty, but by his matchless love to us, and that is the strongest loadstone of love. *He hath loved me*, saith the Apostle, Gal. ii. 20. *How appears that?* In no less than this, *He hath given himself for me.* Certainly then, there is no clearer character of our love than this, to give ourselves to him who hath so loved us, and given himself for us.

This affection must be bestowed somewhere; there is no man but hath some prime choice, somewhat that is the predominant delight of his soul; will it not then be our wisdom to make the worthiest choice? seeing it is offered us, it is extremely folly to reject it.

Grace doth not pluck up by the roots and wholly destroy the natural passions of the mind, because they are disordered by sin; that were an extreme remedy to cure by killing, and heal by cutting off; no, but it corrects the distemper in them; it dries not up this main stream of love, but purifies it from the mud which it is full of in its wrong course, or turns it into its right channel, by which it may run into happiness, and empty itself into the ocean of goodness. The Holy Spirit turns the love of the soul towards God in Christ, for in that way only can it apprehend His love; so then Jesus Christ is the first object of this Divine love; he is medium *unioinis* through whom God conveys the sense of his love to the soul, and receives back its love to Himself.

And if we will consider his incomparable beauty, we may look on it in the Holy Scriptures, particularly in that divine song of loves, wherein Solomon borrows all the beauties of the creatures, to set him forth unto us, who is the *chief of ten thousands*. There is an inseparable intermixture of love with belief and a pious affection, in receiving Divine truth; so that in effect, as we distinguish them, they are mutually strengthened, the one by the other, and so, though it seem a circle, it is a divine one, and falls not under censure of the school's pedantry. If you ask, How shall I do to love? I answer, *Believe*. If you ask, How shall I believe? I answer, *Love*. Although the expressions to a carnal mind are altogether unsavoury, by grossly mistaking them, yet, to a soul taught to read and hear them, by any measure of that same spirit of love wherewith they were penned, they are full of heavenly and unutterable sweetness.

Many directions as to the means of begetting and increasing this love of Christ, may be here offered, and they who delight in number, may multiply them; but surely this one will comprehend the greatest and best part, if not all of them; *believe, and you shall love; believe much, and you shall love much; labor for strong and deep persuasions of the glorious things which are spoken of Christ, and this will command love.* Certainly, did men indeed believe his worth, they would accordingly love him; for the reasonable creature cannot but be affected with most which it firmly believes to be worthiest of affection. Of this mysterious, unbelieved in, that which makes the heart cold and dead towards God. Seek then to believe Christ's excellency in himself, and his love to us, and our interest in him, and this will kindle such a fire in the heart, as will make it ascend in a sacrifice of love to him.

The signs likewise of this love may be multiplied, according to the many fruits and workings of it; but in them all, itself is its own most infallible evidence. When the soul finds that all its obedience and endeavor to keep the commands of Jesus Christ, which himself makes its character, do flow from love, then it is true and sincere; for do or suffer what you will, without love all passes for nothing; all are ciphers without it, they signify nothing. 1 Cor. xiii.

This is the message of the Gospel, and that which the ministry aims at; and therefore the ministers ought to be suitors, not for themselves, but for Christ, to espouse souls to him, and to bring in many hearts to love him. And certainly, this is the most commendable way to persuade to all other Christian duties, for this is to converse with Jesus Christ, and where his love is, no other incentive will be needful; for love delights in the presence and converse of the party loved. If we are to persuade to duties of the second table, the sum of those is, love to our brethren, resulting from the love of Christ, which diffuses such a sweetness into the soul, that it is all love, and meekness, and gentleness, and long-suffering.

It times he for suffering, love will make the soul not only bear, but welcome the bitterest afflictions of life, and the hardest kinds of death for his sake. In a word, there is in love a sweet constraint, or tying of the heart to all obedience and duty.

The love of God is requisite in ministers for their preaching of the word; so our Saviour to St. Peter, John xxi. 15, *Peter, lovest thou me? then feed my lambs.* It is requisite for the people that they receive the truth in the love of it, and that Christ preached may be entertained in the soul, and embraced by faith and love.

You that have made choice of Christ for your love, let not your hearts slip out, to renew your wonted base familiarity with sin; for that will bring new bitterness to your souls, and at least for some time deprive you of the sensible favor of your beloved Jesus. Delight always in God, and give him your whole heart; for he deserves it all, and is a satisfying good to it. The largest heart is all of it too strait for the riches of consolation which he brings with him. Seek to increase in this love; and though it is at first weak, yet labor to find it daily rise higher, and burn hotter and clearer, and consume the dross of earthly desires.—Leighton.

ANTITHEISM.

To be able to say then that there is a God, we may have only to look abroad on some definite territory, and point to the vestiges that are given of His power and His presence somewhere. To be able to say that there is no God, we must walk the whole expanse of infinity, and ascertain by observation, that such vestiges are to be found nowhere. Grant that no trace of Him can be discerned in that quarter of contemplation, which our puny optics have explored—does it follow, that throughout all immensity, a Being with the essence and sovereignty of God is nowhere to be found? Because through our loopholes of communication with that small portion of external nature which is before us, we have not seen or ascertained a God—must we therefore conclude of every unknown and untrodden vastness in this illimitable universe, that no Divinity is there?—Or because, through the brief successions of our little day, these heavens have not once broken silence, is it therefore for us to speak to all the periods of that eternity which is behind us; and to say, that never hath a God come forth with the unequivocal tokens of His existence? Ere we can say that there is a God—we must have seen, on that portion of Nature to which we have access, the print of His footsteps; or have had direct intimation from Himself; or been satisfied by the authentic memorials of His converse with our species in other days. But ere we can say that there is no God—we must have roamed over all nature, and seen that no mark of a Divine footprint was there; and we must have gotten intimacy with every existent spirit in the universe, and learned from each, that never did a revelation of the Deity visit him; and we must have searched, not into the records of one solitary planet, but into the archives of all worlds, and thence gathered, that throughout the wide realms of immensity, not one exhibition of a reigning and living God ever has been made. Atheism might plead a lack of evidence within its own field of observation. But antitheism pronounces both upon the things which are, and the things which are not within that field. It breaks forth and beyond all those limits, that have been prescribed to man's excursive spirit, by the sound philosophy of experience; and by a presumption the most tremendous, even the usurpation of all space and of all time, it affirms that there is no God. To make this out, we should need to travel abroad over the surrounding universe till we had exhausted it, and to search backward through all the hidden recesses of eternity; to traverse in every direction the space of infinitude, and sweep the outskirts of that plain which is itself interminable; and then bring back to this little world of ours, the report of a universal blank, wherein we had not met with one manifestation or one movement of a presiding God. For man not to know of a God, he has only to sink beneath the level of our common nature. But to deny him, he must be a God himself. He must arrogate the ubiquity and omniscience of the Godhead. Chalmers.

The same idea was previously rendered by Foster, the Essayist, thus: "The wonder turns on the great process, by which a man could grow to the immense intelligence that can know there is no God. What ages and what lights are requisite for this attainment? This intelligence involves the very attributes of Divinity, while a God is denied. For unless this man is omnipresent, unless he is at this moment in every place in the universe, he cannot know but that there may be in some place manifestations of a Deity by which even he would be overpowered. If he does not absolutely know every agent in the Universe, the one that he does not know may be God. If he is not himself the chief agent in the universe, and does not know what is so, that which is so may be God. If he is not in absolute possession of all the propositions that constitute universal truth, that one which he wants may be that there is a God. If he cannot with certainty assign the cause of all that he perceives to exist, that cause may be a God. If he does not know every thing that has been done in the immeasurable ages that are past, some things may have been done by a God. Thus unless he knows all things, that is, precludes another Deity by being one himself, he cannot know that the Being whose existence he rejects, does not exist."

THEOLOGY.

Science of every kind is imperfect; and every succeeding age adds something to the accumulation of past ages. If they, who give themselves to the study of nature, look downward, there is an unexplored world; and if they look upward, there is a blazing universe, yet but very partially investigated, about which they can, at least, conjecture or fancy something new. But in morality and religion there is nothing new. The great subjects of human duty and human destiny, both as to matter, manner, and motive, have not, for centuries, received any addition from discovery. What man ought to do and to be; the reason why he ought so to do and to be; the duty in all its fulness; the manner of performing it, in all its plainness; and the motives, in all their strength and variety, are as old, to say no more, as the resurrection of Jesus Christ from death.

New discoveries in matters of revealed truth, I look not for, and must confess, that whatever is novel, I suspect as being false. Light, I have no doubt, is still to be shed on certain obscure passages of Holy Writ, especially in the fulfilment of prophecy; but that the science of Theology should advance, as other sciences do, every year almost, becoming more perfect and satisfactory, seems to me impossible. The reason is obvious. Theological truth is not come at as other truth is. It is not the result of any long and laborious induction. It is not built up by any experiment. It is a science of pure revelation; and therefore must have existed, in its perfection, from the date of the revelation. It cannot be affected, as other sciences, by the march of mind, for it is the human mind that marches, not the divine.—Now theological truth is the expression of this mind, to which there can be no accession of new ideas. If, eighteen hundred years ago, God had made a revelation on the subject of astronomy, the science of astronomy would have been as perfect a science then, as it is now. The astronomer of the first century, would have held in his hand a complete and unerring treatise on his favorite science; and what more could the astronomer of the nineteenth century have? And why should not the former be as likely to attain to the true meaning, as the latter? What I have supposed of the science of astronomy, is of theology, strictly and literally true; and in this respect, it is distinguished from all other sciences.—Dr. Nevins.

EXTRACT FROM JOHN BUNYAN.

So long as the English language and true piety remain, John Bunyan will be a favorite. Many of his most valuable pieces are but little known. The following is extracted from his "Jerusalem Sinner Saved"—a little work which we commend to our readers. Its spirituality towers above its quaintness: "One reason why Christ Jesus shows mercy to sinners, is, that he might obtain their love, that he may remove their base affections from base objects to himself." Now, if he loves to be loved a little, he loves to be loved much; but there is not any that are capable of loving much, save those that have much forgiven them. Hence it is said of Paul, that he laboured more than them all, to wit, with a labour of love, because he had been by sin more vile against Christ than they all. 1 Cor. xv. He it was that persecuted the church of God and wasted it. Gal. i. 13. He, of them all, was the only raving bedlam against the saints: 'And being exceeding mad,' says he, 'against them, I persecuted them, even to strange cities.' Acts xxvi. 11.

This raving bedlam, that once was so, is he that now says, I labored more than them all, more for Christ than them all.

But Paul, what moved thee thus to do? The quickening Spirit of God convinces us of sin; and the belief of God's pardoning and accepting grace in Christ is a necessary means to bring us to an ingenious confession of it. If you would freely forgive your sins, believe first, that God is faithful and just to forgive your sins, through Christ. 1 John i. 9.

love of Christ, says he. It was not I, but the grace of God that was with me. As tho' he should say, O grace! It was such grace to save me! It was such marvellous grace for God to look down from heaven upon me, and that secured me from the wrath to come, that I am captivated with the riches of it. Hence I act, hence I labour; for how can I therefore do, since God not only separated me from my sins and companions, but separated all the powers of my soul and body to his service? I am therefore prompted on by this exceeding love to labour as I have done; yet not I, but the grace of God with me.

Oh! I shall never forget his love nor the circumstances under which I was, when his love laid hold upon me. I was going to Damascus with letters from the high priest, to make havoc of God's people there; as I had made havoc of them in other places. These bloody letters were not imposed upon me. I went to the high priest, and desired him of him, Acts ix. 1, 2, and yet he saved me! I was one of the men, of the chief men, that had a hand in the blood of his martyr Stephen; yet he had mercy on me! When I was at Ananias, I became a terror to all thereabout. Yea, Ananias, good man, made intercession to my Lord against me; yet he would have mercy upon me! Yea, joined me to me, until he had made me a monument of grace. He made a saint of me, and persuaded me that my transgressions were forgiven me.

When I began to preach, those that had heard me were amazed, and said, 'Is not this he that destroyed them that called on this name in Jerusalem, and come hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound to the high priest?' Hell doth know that I was a sinner; heaven doth know that I was a sinner, the world also knows that I was a sinner, a sinner of the greatest size; but I obtained mercy.* Acts ix. 20, 21.

Shall not this lay obligation upon me? Is not love of the greatest force to oblige? Is it not strong as death? cruel as the grave? and hotter than the coals of juniper? Hath it not a most vehement flame? can the waters quench it? can the floods drown it? I am under the force of it, and this is my continual cry, What shall I render to the Lord for all the benefits which he has bestowed upon me?

AY, Paul! this is something; thou speakest like a man, like a man affected, and carried away with the love and grace of God. Now, this sense, and this affection, and this labour, giveth to Christ the love that he looks for. But he might have converted twenty little sinners, and yet not found, for grace bestowed, so much love in them all.

I wonder how far a man might go among the converted sinners of the smaller size, before one could find one that so much as look any thing this wayward. Where is he that is thus under pangs of love for the grace bestowed upon him by Jesus Christ? Excepting only some few, you may walk to the world's end, and find none. But, as I said, some there are, and so there has been in every age of the church, great sinners, that have had much forgiven them; and they love much upon this account.

Jesus Christ therefore knows what he doth, when he lays hold on the hearts of sinners of the biggest size. He knows that such an one will love more than many that have not sinned half their sins.

I will tell you a story that I have heard of Martha and Mary: the name of the book I have forgot; I mean of the book in which I found the relation; but the thing was thus:

Martha, saith my author, was a very holy woman, much like Lazarus her brother; but Mary was a loose and wanton creature; Martha did seldom miss good sermons and lectures, when she could come at them in Jerusalem; but Mary would frequent the houses of sports, and the company of the vilest men for lust: And though Martha had often desired that her sister would go with her to hear her preachers, yet, had often entreated her with tears to do it, yet she could never prevail; for still Mary would make her excuse, or reject her with disdain for her zeal and preciseness in religion.

After Martha had waited long, tried many ways to bring her sister to good, and all proved ineffectual, at last she comes upon her thus: Sister, quoth she, I pray thee go with me to the temple to-day, to hear one preach a sermon. What kind of preacher is he? said she. Martha replied, it is one Jesus of Nazareth; he is the handsomest man you ever saw with your eyes. Oh! he shines in beauty, and is a most excellent preacher.

Now, what does Mary, after a little pause, but go up into her chamber, and decks up herself as fine as her fingers could make her. This done, away she goes, not with her sister Martha, but as much unobserved as she could, to the sermon, or rather to see the preacher.

The hour and preacher being come, and she having observed where about the preacher would stand, goes and sets herself so in the temple, that she might be sure to have the full view of this excellent person. So he comes in, and she looks, and the first glimpse of his person pleased her. Well, Jesus addresseth himself to his sermon, and she looks earnestly on him.

Now, at that time, saith my author, Jesus preached about the lost sheep, the lost goat, and the prodigal child. And when he came to shew what care the shepherd took for one lost sheep, and how the woman swept to find her piece which was lost, and what joy there was at their finding; she began to be taken by the ears, and forgot what she came about, musing what the preacher would make of it. But when he came to the application, and shewed, that by the lost sheep was meant a great sinner; by the shepherd's care, was meant God's love for great sinners; and that by the joy of the neighbours, was shewed what joy there was among the angels in heaven over one great sinner that repenteth, she began to be taken by the heart. And as he spoke these last words, she thought he pitched his innocent eyes just upon her, and looked as if he spoke what was now said, to her: Wherefore her heart began to tremble, being shaken with affection and fear; then her eyes run down with tears apace; wherefore she was forced to hide her face with her handkerchief, and so sat sobbing and crying all the rest of the sermon.

Sermon being done, up she gets, and away she goes, and withal inquired where this Jesus the preacher dined that day? and one told her at the house of Simon the Pharisee. So away goes she, first to her chamber, and there strips herself of her wanton attire; then falls upon her knees to ask God forgiveness of all her wicked life. This done, in a modest dress, she goes to Simon's house, where she finds Jesus sat at dinner. So

* You may as well kill a carnal man, as to confine him to prayer and preaching—he knows not what it is to take real pleasure in spiritual and heavenly work; then how could he love heaven itself? they could not delight in heaven any more than a sow in a palace, or a profane debauchee in a company that are praying to and praising God spiritually.

† There is, not a stream, not a drop of grace, to be had, but from Jesus Christ; he, as God-man, has it all in himself; he communicates a fulness of light and life, sense and understanding, love and joy, yea, every spiritual blessing to his members, who must depend on him at all times.

she gets behind him and weeps, and drops her tears upon his feet like rain, and washes them, and wipes them with the hair of her head. She also kissed his feet with her lips, and anointed them with ointment. When Simon the Pharisee perceived what the woman did, and being ignorant of what it was to be forgiven much (for he never was forgiven more than fifty pence), he began to think within himself, that he had been mistaken about Jesus Christ, because he suffered such a sinner as this woman was, to touch him. Surely, quoth he, this man, if he were a prophet, would not let this woman come near him, for she is a town sinner, (so ignorant are all self-righteous men of the way of Christ with sinners.) But lest Mary should be discouraged with some clownish carriage of this Pharisee, and so desert her good beginnings, and her new steps which she now had begun to take towards eternal life, Jesus began thus with Simon: "Simon," saith he, "I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was, saith Jesus, a certain creditor had two debtors; the one owed him five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, seest thou this woman? I entered into thy house, thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she has washed my feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss; but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint, but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto her, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven." Luke vii. 36, 50.

PRESIDENT VAN BUREN'S INAUGURAL ADDRESS.

The last, perhaps the greatest, of the prominent sources of discord and disaster supposed to lurk in our political condition, was the institution of domestic slavery. Our forefathers were deeply impressed with the delicacy of this subject, and they treated it with a forbearance so evidently wise, that, in spite of every sinister foreboding, it never, until the present period, disturbed the tranquillity of our common country. Such a result is sufficient evidence of the justice and patriotism of their course, it is evidence not to be mistaken, that an adherence to it can prevent all embarrassment from this, as well as from every other anticipated cause of difficulty or danger. Have not recent events made it obvious to the slightest reflection, that the least deviation from this spirit of forbearance is injurious to every interest, that of humanity included? Amidst the violence of excited passions, this generous and paternal feeling has been sometimes disregarded; and standing as I now do before my countrymen in this high place of honor and of trust, I cannot refrain from anxiously invoking my fellow citizens never to be deaf to its dictates. Perceiving, before my election, the deep interest this subject was beginning to excite, I believed it a solemn duty fully to make known my sentiments in regard to it; and now, when every motive for misrepresentation has passed away, I trust that they will be candidly weighed and understood. At least, they will be my standard of conduct in the path before me. I then declared that, if the desire of those of my countrymen who were favorable to my election was gratified, "I must go into the presidential chair the inflexible and uncompromising opponent of every attempt, on the part of Congress, to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, against the wishes of the slaveholding states; and also with determination equally decided to resist the slightest interference with it in the states where it exists." I submitted also to my fellow-citizens, with fulness and frankness, the reasons which led me to this determination. The result authorized me to believe that they have been approved, and are confided in, by a majority of the people of the United States, including those whom they most immediately affect. It now only remains to add, that no bill conflicting with these views can ever receive my constitutional sanction. These opinions have been adopted in the firm belief that they are in accordance with the spirit that actuated the venerated fathers of the republic, and that succeeding experience has proved them to be humane, patriotic, expedient, honorable, and just.

COMMUNICATIONS.

For the Watchman of the South.

Fredericksburg, August 30th, 1837.

TO THE REV. JOHN B. DAVIES, CHESTER DISTRICT, S. C.

Rev. and Dear Sir:—As the doings of our late Assembly have become a subject of much discussion, you may wish to know the views and feelings of the brethren in Virginia, on the points in controversy.

That the Plan of Union adopted in 1801 was unconstitutional, appears now to be conceded by all parties. But, as all intelligent and candid men admit that every unconstitutional act is null and void; some attempt to show, that an act originally unconstitutional may by silent acquiescence for a number of years, become constitutional and obligatory; and in this way they would induce us to believe, that the Plan of Union of 1801 has become as binding on our judicatories, as if it were a part of our constitution. On this argument some seem almost solely to rely.

It is, however, most unfortunate for them that our constitution contains an article, providing for the only way in which it can be altered or amended, in these words—(See Form Gov. Chap. 12, Sec. 6.)—"Before any ordinance or regulations, proposed by the Assembly, to be established as constitutional rules, shall be obligatory on the churches, it shall be necessary to transmit them to all the Presbyteries, and to receive the returns of at least a majority of them, in writing, approving thereof."

This article meets the case so precisely, that no ingenuity can distort it. A child must see that the Presbyteries, the sovereign power in our church, have decided, in fundamental laws, that nothing shall become a constitutional rule, obligatory on the churches, unless it be sent down first for the purpose to all the Presbyteries, and approved in writing by a majority of them. It is vain then to tell sound Presbyteries, that silent acquiescence for a certain number of years, can change our constitution.

Some have contended, that the Plan of Union of 1801 was of the nature of a compact, and that it did confer rights and privileges on the ministers and churches it embraced, of which they cannot be deprived without moral wrong.

But it is obvious, if the Plan of Union was intended to be a compact, (which I deny,) the parties had no authority to act in the case, and the stipulations being unconstitutional, the compact was void, and could confer no rights or privileges. Our constitution prescribes the qualifications for membership and office in our church, and no one of our judicatories has power to alter them. The Legislature of Virginia might as well attempt, by law, to place foreigners in our legislative hall, or in our courts of justice, as our Assembly to admit members of another denomination into our legislative and judicial courts. The constitution alike in both cases prohibits it; and an attempt to assert rights and privileges acquired by such unconstitutional legislation, must provoke the smile of every intelligent man.

This "Plan of Union," besides being unconstitutional and void from the first, is an evil, very alarming now, and growing more and more so every year. In one Synod alone, it allows 109 churches, confessedly not Presbyterians, to send up their commissioners to sit and vote in our highest judicatory. It has also prostrated the defence which our pious fathers, by our constitution, wisely placed around our church to secure among us a sound faith, and a gospel discipline. By this plan, men and ministers are allowed to hold office in our judicatories, who have never adopted our Confession or Form of Government. What security can we have for their sound faith and Godly practice?

The late Assembly have been charged with unkindness and injustice, in declaring the four Synods no longer a part of our body. This charge is surely unjust and untrue. The action of the Assembly does not affect the christian or ministerial standing of any man in the four Synods. The ministers and churches in these Synods are Presbyterians or they are not. If they are Presbyterians, the Assembly says to them, come out from your connection with other denominations, which disqualifies you for office in our church, but as soon as you choose, unite with us in a constitutional way. To those who are not Presbyterians, it says, choose the denomination and mode of worship you prefer, but you cannot sit and vote in our judicatories while you are not Presbyterians. Is this unjust, or unkind?

The cry has been raised in our Southern churches, and strong appeals have been made to the noble feelings of our people, on the weighty subject of the invasion of our religious liberties. Let us guard these, I say, with untiring vigilance; but do not let us be deceived in this matter.

It is the right and privilege of every religious denomination to adopt its own Confession and Form of Government. When this Confession and Form of Government are published, every man has a perfect right in his religious profession to adopt them or prefer some other. All is voluntary, there is no compulsion in our happy country. But when any man or body of men attempt to prevent any denomination from worshipping God and managing their discipline according to their chosen Confession and Form of Government, then is their religious liberties invaded.

Such being my views of the weighty matters, that were discussed in the late Assembly, and since in our religious papers, you will be prepared to hear that I heartily approve of the declaration by the Assembly, that the Plan of Union was unconstitutional, and that the whole of the Synods which grew up under the plan were not, and by our constitution could not be, judicatories of our church. In these views I am not alone. Letters from many brethren in different parts of our Synod, induce me to believe that the number who differ with me is small, and when all the facts in the case shall be fully understood, there will be great unanimity among us.

I take the liberty of sending you this letter in the columns of the "Watchman of the South," a paper commenced for the purpose of presenting fairly before the public, and defending firmly, the doctrines and government of the Presbyterian church. It is the purpose of its friends to establish a religious periodical, which shall exhibit clearly and fully the truths of our holy religion, and defend them with ability and dignity. Its communications, original and selected, we wish to be such as shall increase useful knowledge, refine the taste, and elevate the tone of piety. We earnestly desire it to be a weekly visitor to the Pastors and their flocks, that shall promote revivals of pure religion, excite christians to works of enlarged benevolence, and cement in holy affection, all who love the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. In this enterprise, so much needed, and so greatly to be desired, we doubt not we shall receive the liberal patronage of the Christian community, and prayer shall be offered daily for our success.

Yours, with respect and affection,

SAML. B. WILSON.

For the Watchman of the South.

The recent acts of the General Assembly, disowning the four Synods of the Western Reserve, Ulster, Geneva, and Genesee, have excited much inquiry in the church. It is important that these acts should be rightly understood; and to this end, they should be fully discussed. It may be proper that persons, entertaining decided opinions on the questions agitated in relation to these acts, should present them, for the consideration of inquirers after truth. With this view, I propose to submit my views of these acts.

The acts of the General Assembly have been assailed on several grounds. I propose to consider them, first, as they affect the disowned Synods. The act of the General Assembly, as to them, is often represented as an unjust and violent invasion of their rights. These acts, in relation to the rights of those Synods, may be viewed in four aspects. 1. As they affect the religious liberty of those Synods. 2. As they affect the religious character of those Synods. 3. As they may affect the church property in those Synods. 4. As they may affect their power over other portions of the church. These four views cover the whole ground. For if these acts of the General Assembly do not affect the religious liberty, or the religious character, or the church property, or those four Synods, or do not deprive them of any constitutional or rightful power over other branches of the church, it is clear that no injustice has been done them.

1. How do these acts of the General Assembly affect the religious liberty of the four Synods? It is not perceived that their religious liberty is in any degree affected by them. Religious liberty consists in the freedom of religious opinion and practice. It is the right to believe and do that which our consciences approve, without restraint from others. Now, the acts of the General Assembly declare, that these four Synods are not organized on the principles of the constitution of the Presbyterian church; that their claim to be in that church rested on the Union of 1801; that that is rescinded, as unconstitutional, and their right to constitute a portion of the church has gone with it. This, surely, cannot affect the religious liberty of those Synods. There is no power claimed to control their consciences or practice. The declaration is distinctly made, that they are not a part of us. We have no power over them. They are free to do as they please. This is not an invasion of their liberty. It denies no right of thought or action.

2. Their religious character is not affected by these acts. The standing of the ministers, as christian ministers—the standing of the churches, as branches of the church of Christ, are not, in the slightest degree impeached. The declaration of the Assembly is, these four Synods are not organized as Presbyterian Synods. How it impeaches the character of a church, to say it is not a Presbyterian, or a Congregational church, is not very obvious. When we call a man a Methodist or a Congregationalist, we do not impeach his standing as a minister or member of Christ's church. We merely say, he is of another branch of that church. The division of the church into branches results from the difference of creeds and forms of government. Some christians prefer one form of church government to another. It is self-evident, that where two distinct and inconsistent forms of government are united in the same government, disorder and confusion must follow. Such, the General Assembly say, has been the fact, in relation to the effort to unite these Synods in the Presbyterian church. They say that the Synods are organized on principles of government, inconsistent with the Presbyterian government, as laid down in its constitution; and that, therefore, they are not portions of the church

governed by that constitution. This cannot affect their standing as christians. It only affects their right to remain in the General Assembly, and exercise power over the other Synods of that Assembly.

3. As to their church property. This matter has been stated thus: There are 1000 churches, worth \$3000 each, held by these congregations, or conveyed to trustees for them, as Presbyterian congregations connected with the General Assembly. Does this property go to the General Assembly? or if there be a minority of these congregations, who remain with the General Assembly, shall they, under the deed, take the property? To settle this question, it must be borne in mind, that the General Assembly cannot take or hold any title to this property. The General Assembly, as such, is not incorporated. There is an act of the Pennsylvania legislature incorporating trustees, to hold certain funds, for specified purposes, for the General Assembly. This act I have not seen, and cannot state its provisions. But it is obvious that it cannot affect the church property of the disowned Synods. Those Synods are in New York and Ohio. No state legislature can incorporate the citizens of other states to hold property in those states. The General Assembly, then, cannot take this property in its associated capacity. Nothing passes to it as a body. It can hold no title in this property, and can maintain no action for it. The conveyance to trustees for a congregation, as a Presbyterian congregation, connected with the Assembly, can operate only as a description of the persons who are to take it. The effect of this description will more fully appear, by reference to the principles on which this church property is held.

In New York congregations hold their property under the acts passed to provide for the incorporation of religious societies. The leading act, on this subject, will be found in the 3rd volume of the Revised Statutes of New-York, page 292. As its provisions are little known at the South, a brief statement of them may be acceptable to the reader. The first section provides for the incorporation of Episcopal churches; the second section provides for the incorporation of reformed Protestant Dutch churches; the third section provides for the incorporation of other religious societies, in the following mode. The male persons of full age, belonging to any church, congregation, or religious society, are to assemble at the place where they steadily attend for divine worship, and to elect any number of persons of their church, congregation or society, not less than three, nor exceeding nine in number, as trustees, to take the charge of the estate and property belonging thereto, and to transact all affairs relative to the temporalities thereof. At such election, every male person of full age, who has steadily worshipped with such church, congregation or society, and has formerly been considered as belonging thereto, shall be entitled to vote. The election is to be conducted as follows:—The minister, or in his absence one of the elders or deacons, church wardens or vestrymen, and for want of such officers, any member or stated hearer, in such church, congregation, or society, shall give fifteen days' public notice of the time and place of the election, and this notice shall be given for two successive Sabbaths preceding the day of the election. On the day of the election, two of the elders or church wardens, or if there be no such officers, then two members, nominated by a majority of the members present, shall preside at the election, judge the qualifications of electors, and certify the names of the persons elected to serve as trustees for the said church, congregation or society, to the clerk of the court to be recorded. In this certificate, the name and title by which the said trustees and their successors shall forever thereafter be called and known, shall be particularly mentioned and described; and when this certificate is recorded, such trustees and their successors shall be a body corporate, by the name or title expressed in such certificate.

The 4th section enacts, that the trustees of every church, &c. &c., above mentioned, and their successors shall have and use a common seal—and are empowered to take possession of all the temporalities belonging to such church, &c. &c., whether the same consist of real or personal estate, and whether the same shall have been granted, given or devised, to the said church and trustees, or any other person, for their use; and also by their corporate name, sue and be sued, &c., recover and hold all debts, demands, rights, and privileges, and all churches, meeting-houses, parsonages, and burying-places, with the appurtenances, and all estates, belonging to such church, congregation or society, in whatsoever manner the same may have been acquired, or in whose name soever the same may be held, as fully and amply, as if the right or title thereto had originally been vested in the said trustees; and also to purchase and hold other real and personal estate, and to demise, lease, and improve the same, for the use of such church, congregation, or society, or for other pious uses. Then follows a clause limiting the amount of the annual income of the several churches. The trustees have power to make rules for managing the temporal affairs of the church, regulate the pews, &c., and appoint a treasurer and clerk.

The 5th section provides that any two trustees may call a meeting of the trustees, and that a majority of the trustees, lawfully convened, may act.

The 5th section enacts, that the trustees shall be divided into three classes—numbered one, two and three—that the first class shall go out of office at the end of one year, the second at the end of two years, the third at the end of three years, so that one-third of the whole number may be chosen annually.

In the 7th section, it is provided, that no person shall vote, at any election, after the first, unless he shall have been a stated attendant at divine worship, in the said congregation, &c., at least one year before such election, and shall have contributed to the support of the church, &c. The clerk of the trustees is to register the name of such persons as desire to become stated hearers in said church, and note the time when the request was made.

The 8th section provides that the trustees of any church and congregation shall not fix the salary of the minister, but the salary shall be ascertained by a majority of persons entitled to elect trustees; and when fixed, shall be ratified by the trustees or a majority of them.

The 16th section of the act provides that if any religious corporation be dissolved by non-user, or neglect to exercise any of the powers necessary for its preservation, it shall be lawful for such corporation to reincorporate itself, and then the property held by them shall be sold for the benefit of the society.

These are all the provisions of this act connected with the subject in view. It will be apparent to the reader that the words church, congregation or society, are used in this act to denote the same thing, viz: the association of people who worship steadily at a particular place. The trustees are the trustees of that congregation. This act incorporates only the churches of which they are component parts. Congregations may be incorporated and hold property under it. There is nothing in the act from which it can be inferred that the Presbyteries, Synods or Assembly, with which they are connected, can take any rights under the act. Again, the congregation are incorporated without reference to their religious connexions. They take and hold their property in their own right, not as branches of any church. The power

to control the property is in trustees, the election of trustees, and the power to control the minister's salary, is in the stated male attendants of full age, who have been members of the congregation one year. There can be no doubt that a congregation thus incorporated may, under the act of incorporation, dissolve its connection with the church to which it was attached, without any forfeiture of its property. If the church with which the congregation was connected, choose to disown them, the apprehension that they thereby lose their property, is idle. The corporation still exists, the stated hearers still have full power to elect trustees, and it is still the duty of the trustees to preserve and improve the property for the use of the congregation.

In Ohio, I understand, the rights of the congregations to their property, rest on an equally secure basis.

I conclude, then, that the acts of the Assembly cannot affect the rights of church property.

In another number, I propose to consider how the acts of the Assembly affect the disowned Synods as to their power over the other portions of the church.

WESTERN VIRGINIA.

For the Watchman of the South.

MR. EDITOR:—I rejoice to see that in the establishment of the Watchman of the South, you are about to display a banner in the cause of Truth; and I trust that a gallant host will soon rally around it. *Justum bellum*, says Livy, *quibus necessarium*, &c. that is, in English, "war is just to those to whom it is necessary, and arms are pious to those who have no hope left but in the use of them." Yet "the weapons of warfare," I trust, will not be "carnal," but "spiritual," and "mighty through God." Indeed I write chiefly at this time to express my earnest hope that, in the management of your paper, you will abstain most carefully from all that is calculated to wound the cause of Christian charity. This caution, I think, is due to our religion, and to the honor of our church. And it is the more necessary on our part, because we have seen already that, on the other side at least, the controversy is not to be waged in the pure spirit of the gospel; but somewhat after the manner of the world.

It is true, indeed, I acknowledge with great pleasure, that some of our opponents appear disposed to carry on their hostilities against the late measures of our General Assembly, with something like a proper and decent moderation. But there are others of them, I observe with pain, who are evidently bent upon taking a different course. Thus, I see with great regret, that a worthy brother, who is a leader of the opposition, and whom I have heretofore regarded as a most gentle and amiable man, has lately formally and expressly discarded the virtue of *meekness*, (*quod* this subject only, I hope,) which he seems indeed to have found very troublesome to him; saying in so many words: "We have long been in contact with party spirit in our church; and have studied its nature; and tried the efficacy of *meekness* to soothe it; but in vain. Our experience has taught us that we may as well hope to stop the progress of a tornado by entreating it to stop, as to divert our strong party men from their purposes by meekness and entreaties"—and, therefore, he says: "we must be allowed, after using mild words and gentle means, to try what virtue there is in stones, as the old man did; or rather we must have leave to use spiritual weapons of such edge, point, and temper, that those hardened in polemics shall not be insensible to their blows." So, then, we are to have it hard and hot; and all in capital style.

Now it would be quite natural for some of us to pay off this worthy brother in his own coin; and resolve to return all our adversaries as good, or as bad, as they send. But I do earnestly hope that we shall determine to do no such thing; but rather arm and adorn ourselves with all the meekness which they discard, and so have a double portion of that lovely virtue on our side. At any rate, I hope we shall never forget that "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God," and that it is obviously more particularly proper to wage a holy war with special regard to all the civilities and courtesies of a common strife.

But whilst we are thus duly cautious to abstain from imitating the violence of our opponents, I hope also that we shall be equally careful to avoid resorting to those arts which they seem to use, in order to swell their ranks. In particular, I trust we shall carefully avoid all those *politic* appeals to the *passions* and *prejudices* of the people of the world, which are either *intended* or *calculated* to enlist partisans without regard to principle. Our adversaries, indeed, I am told, have already displayed, in another part of the field, no small skill in this species of *tactics*, (on which they probably pride themselves, as a proof of *cleverness* and *management*.) And I think I have myself caught some of them trying to play the same part nearer home. Thus I observe that some of them are particularly fond of representing themselves as "constitutional Presbyterians," men who are contending for the constitution of our church—evidently to catch the politicians of our state, and perhaps the political press. But this *ruse de guerre*, I should think, is too gross and bungling to deceive any but the poorest simpletons in our land. For with what propriety, indeed I may ask with what face, can they pretend to pass themselves off for constitutional Presbyterians, when the whole act of the General Assembly of which they complain, was, in substance, a mere declaration that a previous act of the body, which the complainants themselves are constrained to admit was *unconstitutional*, was so indeed? Was this an act to destroy the constitution of our church, or to preserve it? Surely the mere surrender of assumed power, by whatever consequences it may be followed, can never be regarded as hostile to our rights, or dangerous to our liberties; and it may be *art*, if not *fraud*, (or egregious folly at least,) to attempt to put it in that false and odious light. So it is evidently, not our opponents, who are justly entitled to take the honorable name of "constitutional Presbyterians," which they are vainly trying to assume. We need not, however, I think, be so anxious to wear the name, however honorable, as to be conscious that we deserve it; and we should satisfy ourselves with exposing the *art* of our adversaries, without following their example.

But enough for the present. I do not myself propose to defend the measures of the General Assembly; but only write, as I have said, to express my hope, that those who do, will be duly careful to display all that christian kindness and courtesy which become their cause, and which may serve to give their argument more weight, and more effect.

For the Watchman of the South.

NORFOLK, August 24th, 1837.

MY DEAR SIR:—I have received your letter, and am truly glad to hear that you are about to begin the publication of your paper; that it will be devoted to the maintenance of the doctrine and discipline of our Presbyterian Church, with more immediate reference to the defence of the late measures of our General Assembly. In my opinion, those measures deserve the cordial and considerate support of all the friends of our Zion. It is true, I confess, the act of disowning the four Synods, looks at first sight like a harsh proceeding; and I am not surprised that it has excited a warm and lively opposition from all our friends of the New School party, and even from some of the Old. To discontinue our connection, how-

ever gently, with so many churches which appeared to be part of our system, is certainly a little startling, and may very properly raise the inquiry, was the measure just?—was it expedient?—and different answers will of course be given to these questions by different persons, according to their views and lights; but I am persuaded that a calm investigation of all the circumstances of the case must lead a large majority of our members to settle down in a decided approbation of the proceeding. Such at least, I say, has been the result of my own examination of the subject; and I think I have made it with a due degree of caution and candor.

I have not time just now to give you my thoughts upon the case, at large, as I may perhaps do hereafter; but I may say that the perfect constitutionality of the Assembly's act, does not, in my mind, admit the shadow of a doubt; and I am greatly surprised that any lawyer at least should have questioned it for a moment. And though I had some doubt at first of the expediency of the measure, I became entirely satisfied that it was the best, and probably the only course that could have been taken with any hope of benefit. At any rate, I can see or imagine none that would not have involved greater difficulties, and threatened far worse results.

I may add, that although I have been deeply grieved and mortified that such a measure should have been found necessary and proper, I console myself with the hope that its ultimate effect will be altogether happy for our church. It is true we have parted company with large bodies of persons who were sometime *with us*, but never exactly *of us*; but the loss of mere numbers will be more than compensated by the gain of real peace. And if we shall have to fight a little at first to maintain the ground which we have taken, I trust the war will be short, and the peace lasting. Such at least, is my prayer and hope.

I am, dear Sir,

With great esteem,

Your friend and serv't,

WM. MAXWELL.

REV. W. S. PLUMER.

Princeton, Aug 28, 1837.

Rev. and dear Sir,

I cannot felicitate you upon entering on your new career, as likely to derive from it much personal comfort or undisturbed tranquillity. The office of an editor of a public paper in times of so much excitement and controversy, is, perhaps as little enviable as any other which can be pursued with a good conscience. The man who does not suffer from lacerated feelings, while occupying such a post, must be "fenced with iron," or should have the capacity of the salamander, to endure the continual operation of fire. But although the office is on personal accounts undesirable, yet it is one of high importance and great responsibility, and as self-denial is the first step in our religious cause, so it is required in every succeeding part of our pilgrimage. We must not only *take up* the cross, but *bear it daily*—we must be willing to follow the *lamb*, not only through "good report," but "evil report." I cannot, therefore, refrain from giving you a word of encouragement, in your new enterprise. The crisis in the affairs of the southern churches requires such an organ for the free and unrestricted communications of the brethren who agree in sentiment with the last General Assembly, and from all I hear, your proposal meets with a warm response from many pious hearts, who love the doctrines and the order of the Presbyterian church.

I know not how I can promote the success of your enterprise more effectually, than by putting you on your guard against those dangers which will beset your course. The fabled dangers of the passage between Scylla and Charybdis were not greater than those which you, as the conductor of a religious paper, will be obliged to encounter. And, perhaps, the first and greatest is very near to you. It will be found in the difficulty of regulating your own spirit. Remember the words of the wise man: "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city." But in respect to this, no man can or should promise to be his own keeper. From the same authority we learn, that, "he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." And again, "A man's heart deviseth his way; but the Lord directeth his steps." There are few situations in which a Christian man needs more grace than as an editor of a Religious Journal, in times like these in which our lot is cast. Let your eye then be single. Keep steadily in view the glory of your divine Master; and do not forget to imbibing his spirit and walk in his footsteps. If others, forgetting what spirit they are of, call for fire from heaven, let it be your unwavering purpose to sit at the feet of Jesus and learn of Him, who is meek and lowly in heart. And remember, "when he was reviled, he reviled not again."

There are none on whom the command of God presses with more binding obligation than on christian Editors, "let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Be not contented with the mere affectation of moderation and meekness. An angry man cannot conceal his true temper, however stoutly he may deny that he is excited. Your true spirit, whatever it is, will become manifest to the public, and the less you have to say about yourself, the better. Do not mistake me, as though I considered all warmth, or earnestness in discussion, to be an evil. No; 'tis good to be zealously affected in a good thing; and *zeal*, you know, is *heat*. But see to it that there be no mixture of a malignant spirit in your honest zeal for truth and righteousness. I have wished much to see an impartial review of the morality of the periodical press; especially, as it relates to truth in the statement of facts, candour in exhibiting opinions, whether those of the editor or others, meekness under harsh and injurious treatment, and justice and generosity even towards adversaries. I have, for some time, been of opinion, that there is less of genuine christianity in our so-called religious papers, than there is of *honor* in our political prints. This is certainly exhibiting our holy religion to the world under a very unfavorable aspect. And I have been led seriously to doubt, whether the man who first suggested this species of publication, was not misguided in his views. But the sluice has been opened, and cannot be closed, let us therefore endeavor to prevent evils which surely are not *essential*, but only *incidental* to this mode of communication. And how can this be so effectually accomplished, as by getting men of a right spirit to be editors of these periodicals; and to admonish them frequently of their solemn responsibility, and to exhort them to act *conscientiously under the influence of the fear and love of God*? One evil I hope you will cautiously avoid, which is a perpetual squabbling with brother editors—explaining—denying—fending and proving—retaliating, &c. To all readers, except to a few of morbid appetite, these disputes are odious; and they answer no one good purpose. I mention this danger to you, because situated as you are, there will be a strong and almost constant temptation to fall into altercation. I believe the old rules of courtesy required, that editors of periodicals should never directly notice any thing in the columns of contemporary Journals; but the days of chivalry are long since gone by. Now the present conflict is of the personal kind, in which most readers take no manner of interest. The editorial column is not unfrequently surrear-