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FOR THE CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN. A VINDICATION OF THE ANNUAL REPORT ON SUSTENTATION.

BALTIMORE, September 17th, 1877.

Rev. John B. Adger, D. D.:

Dear Sir,—When I read your article in the July No. of the *Southern Presbyterian Review* on *The General Assembly at New Orleans*, I was glad to find that the portion of it which referred to Sustentation, was free from that personal tone which characterized your "Notes on the Assembly" signed "John Knox," and published in the *Central* and the *St. Louis Presbyterian* in the month of July. It was impossible for me to reply to the part of this latter communication which referred to me without adopting its method, which appeared on many accounts as undesirable as it would be likely to have proved unedifying; but now that you have adopted a different style, I feel that it is proper that I should correct some mistakes which have been made.

I regret that this letter has been somewhat delayed on account of my inability to secure, until to-day, a copy of the *Southern Presbyterian* which contained the Assembly discussions on Sustentation, and am glad that in addressing you I address one who while at present a complainant against the Executive Committee, was for many years one of its members, and who ought therefore to be able to appreciate whatever is alleged in the premises.

I would remark here that the italics found in quotations which I make are mine, and are introduced for the purpose of bringing the point of the quotations to your notice. Before proceeding to the merits of the question, it is proper that two or three inaccuracies in your statements shall be corrected.

(1.) On page 573 of the *Review*, you say, "The Standing Committee's report on the evening of the sixth day, commends the wisdom and fidelity of the Executive Committee and exhorts the Presbyteries," etc., and then on page 577, you say "the report was adopted." Now this statement is true and ordinarily would be esteemed sufficient, but in the present case, when a single point in the "wisdom" of the Executive Committee, to wit, the wording of the Annual Report, was called in question on the floor of the Assembly by two of its members, (Dr. Woodrow and Mr. Neil), and when you as the reviewer of the Assembly, thought it necessary, after having given your version of what was done and said, to remark, "It appears to us a duty to add our testimony as to the dissatisfaction with which portions of the Sustentation report were heard," it occurs to me, and doubtless it will to others, that if the Assembly itself said anything on this particular point it ought to have had the prior privilege of speaking for itself in a *Review* in which you are careful to produce what was said by those who spoke, and to add your own testimony, against the report. For while your "testimony" may be highly esteemed by some, it can hardly be doubted that the testimony of the Assembly itself and of its Standing Committee will carry more weight, and properly so throughout the Church. Did the Assembly then say anything about the Annual Report, to the "dissatisfaction" with which you felt it your "duty" to testify; and if so, what did it say? By referring to page 426 of the Minutes of the General Assembly, you will find the following record: "The Assembly met and the unfinished business was taken up, viz: the report of the Standing Committee on Sustentation. The report was adopted and is as follows: 'The Standing Committee on Sustentation respectfully submit to the General Assembly the following report: Having carefully examined the Report of the Secretaries of Sustentation, with the accompanying papers, including the Minutes of the Executive Committee, the accounts of the expenditures, etc., we have the pleasure to say, not only that we find them all correct but they evince the most commendable fidelity and discretion on the part of the Committee in the management of the important interests committed to their care.'"

Now I submit, whether, in a review written, not for the purpose of giving expression to individual views and feelings, but with the object (if it has any good object in view), of giving an exhibition of what was really done and said, fairness did not require you to say something of what the Assembly itself had to say about the Report, the objections of individuals to which you are so careful to emphasize. It seems to me that a more judicial temper of mind would have led you to perform this act of justice to the Executive Committee, as under the circumstances the statement of the whole truth demanded it.

(2.) On page 277 of the *Review* you say, "the Rev. Dr. Rutherford occurred in what Dr. Woodrow and Mr. Neil had said, and yet it was the Committee's duty to bring to the attention of the Church the action of the Presbyteries and especially when any of them withdrew from co-operation." This is all that you give Dr. Rutherford credit for saying, and when I read it I wondered whether it were my eyes or my memory which were deceiving me; but on inquiry I found that neither my vision nor my mind was at fault, but that you had made a most astonishing statement which conveys exactly the opposite impression from what Dr. Rutherford really did say.

I suppose that when you wrote your *Review* article, you had before you a file of the *Southern Presbyterian* containing the discussions in the General Assembly, and therefore it was, that I was so anxious to obtain a copy of that paper before addressing you this letter. Now if you will look into the issue of June 7th, you will find the following:

"Dr. Rutherford stated that he concurred in what Dr. Woodrow and Mr. Neil had said about the sacredness of the rights of Presby-

teries. But the Committee has positively avowed their unwillingness to censure the Presbyteries, but it was their duty to bring to the attention of the Church the action of the Presbyteries, and especially to notify the Church whenever any of the Presbyteries withdrew from active co-operation: it was their duty, too, to notify the Church of the effect of that withdrawal. There was no difference of opinion in the Standing Committee on this matter. They did not think that the Assembly's Executive Committee had used any too strong language on this subject. Let it be remembered that neither the Executive Committee, nor the Standing Committee doubted the rights of the Presbyteries, but there is some weight to be attached to the fact that this scheme is that of the combined wisdom of the Church; and has been tested and found successful, as was shown by brethren on this floor." Now if you will read these two statements of Dr. Rutherford's speech together, I think you will see that you made him say exactly the opposite of what he did say, his whole speech being a successful reply to Dr. Woodrow; agreeing with him only in one point, and averring that the Executive Committee was also of one mind on that point.

How it came to pass, that Dr. Rutherford's admirable remarks underwent such a remarkable transformation in being transferred from the *Southern Presbyterian* to the *Central*, I shall not stop to inquire; but I do aver that when an article of the dignity of that on which I am commenting, is deformed by such glaring inaccuracies as this, it is time for some one to protest, and to demand that a juster statement of facts shall be made.

(3.) But I must refer you to a sentence already quoted from page 577 of the *Review*, as not exactly fair in the sense which it conveys in its connection, viz.: "It appears to us a duty to add our testimony as to the dissatisfaction with which parts of the Sustentation Reports were heard."

Now it is not my purpose to deny that "dissatisfaction" did exist. That Dr. Woodrow and Mr. Neil were dissatisfied with parts of the report, they openly declared. You, too, have given evidence in your "John Knox" letter, in which you dignify the Annual Report by calling it "the long lecture of Mr. McIlwaine read to the Assembly and the Presbyteries," and also in the article which is now the subject of discussion, that your dissatisfaction is so great as to incapacitate you from presenting some of the facts of the case in the light in which they occurred.—(Whether the dissatisfaction of yourself and Dr. Woodrow was intelligent, will appear more clearly further on.) There were perhaps other members of the General Assembly who were dissatisfied. But this is evidently not what you mean. Your design clearly is to convey the impression that the dissatisfaction was either extensive or vehement, or both; and here I must take issue with you. It will be admitted, I think, by those who have read thus far, that I am perhaps as unprejudiced a witness on this question as you are, and I must say that up to the time of my leaving New Orleans, (a few hours before the Standing Committee's report was adopted) I had observed no such state of things as your language seems to imply. I might too refer to expressions of opinion made to me by a score or more of the members of the Assembly, and might quote from letters received from some of them after my return to Baltimore, in support of my own impression; but passing over these things, I triumphantly point you to the fact that the report of the Standing Committee which speaks of the Report of the Executive Committee and other documents as "all correct," and which says that "they evince the most commendable fidelity and discretion on the part of the Committee," was adopted unanimously. This latter fact was communicated to me by Dr. Rutherford, and if it was known to you when you wrote your *Review* it seems difficult to explain, on what account, in an article which ought rather to be characterized by the calm gravity of a judge, than by the warmth of an advocate, you felt it your "duty" to express dissatisfaction for the members of the Assembly, which they refused by their votes to express for themselves, and which, therefore, by all the rules of common sense and fairness they are to be presumed not to have entertained.

It seems to me that brethren throughout the Church will concur in thinking that Dr. Rutherford is both more correct and kind, when in a letter written to me, and which I am permitted to use in referring to the final vote of the Assembly on his report he says, "It was a great gratification to find that the brethren who had taken some exceptions to the Report of the Assembly's committee had so far modified their views, as it seemed, that when the vote was taken on our Report, there was not one dissenting voice."

(4.) But, my dear sir, I must ask your attention to the remainder of the paragraph which begins with the last sentence upon which I have just been commenting. After having performed what you considered to be your "duty" in expressing dissatisfaction with the *Annual Report*, you add, "It was too much in the style and manner of a lecture from the higher powers to their subordinates. It brought to our recollection those old times when Dr. Musgrave and his Board of Missions used to come down annually to the General Assembly to tell it all about its duty, and to oblige the Presbyteries for not having done theirs. The Boards, in those days, too, made common cause, if any body ventured to criticize either of them, and uniting their forces to crush all opposition, well nigh made themselves the masters

of the Assembly. This of course would be a very odious comparison for us to make, but we do not make it. All that is designed is simply to state why the portions of the Report criticised were so disagreeable, as reminding us of a state of things, which we trust never to witness in this Church."

It is in the first sentence of this quotation that I wish to address myself particularly; but before passing to its consideration, I can not help remarking that while your *conscious "design"* in introducing this thundering allusion to the Boards of the old Church, may be as you state it, I think that most of your readers will agree with me in supposing that the natural effect of its introduction is to distract the minds of your readers from the facts of the case, and to fire them with jealousy lest, ere they are aware, the "successors of Dr. Musgrave and his Board of Missions" shall appear on the floor of our General Assembly and do their terrible work. Indeed, you seem to be perfectly aware of this effect of your statements yourself; for after having made them with all possible plainness, you draw back, and with rhetorical skill say, "this, of course, would be a very odious comparison for us to make, but we do not make it." But the impression has already been produced, and your little sentence of retraction will hardly efface it from some minds, and I therefore suppose that your intelligent readers will deem your comparison none the less "odious" because, after having made it, you draw back and say, "we do not make it." But if I am not greatly mistaken in my estimate of the sense of justice and candor prevailing throughout the Church, the *odium* will rest, where it properly belongs, upon yourself and not, as was intended, upon the Executive Committee.

II. But I now come to the chief point at issue in regard to the Annual Report, which you present strongly from your point of view, thus, "It was too much in the style and manner of a lecture from the higher powers to their subordinates." In proof of this assertion, you do not give a single quotation, and while further on in the same paragraph, you speak of certain portions of the Report as "disagreeable," you do not specify what those portions are. Indeed the only criticisms you give are those contained in Dr. Woodrow's speech, and the simple remark of Mr. Neil that the Report was guilty of "preaching to the Assembly." I presume, therefore, that the criticisms to which you refer, are those made by Dr. Woodrow; that you adopt them as your own; and that you rest the justice of your otherwise unsupported assertions upon them, and that you are willing that the value of your expressed opinions upon this subject, shall be measured by the validity, or invalidity of Dr. Woodrow's objections. In this view then I feel compelled to examine Dr. Woodrow's speech as you have reported it in the *Review*, and in those portions of it which bear directly upon the point at issue. I thus keep myself strictly within the limits of defence marked out for myself, and do not think that I can be properly charged with going out of my way to reply in the public papers, to a speech of a member of the General Assembly. If instead of adopting Dr. Woodrow's criticisms, you had given some of your own in support of your assertions, you would have saved me from the dilemma, of either seeming causelessly to reply to the arguments of a member, delivered on the floor of the Assembly; or of being willing for your harmful assertions to remain uncontradicted. Please note, then, that you are responsible, and not I, for this part of my letter. In proceeding with this distasteful portion of my task, permit me to remind you that you and Dr. Woodrow were both members of the Executive Committee of Sustentation from the year 1866 to 1872.

I beg also to remind you that immediately after having listened to Dr. Woodrow's criticisms on the floor of the Assembly, (being then just on the point of departure from New Orleans, which was enforced by official and domestic obligations,) I stated to the Assembly very briefly, and in substance, that after having heard Dr. Woodrow's criticisms, I would not attempt to defend every word in the Report, etc., that the report had been prepared on the theory of the functions of the Executive Committee, which I found prevalent in Columbia when I took charge of my office, and which had prevailed ever since; and that the Constitution furnished the Executive Committee by the General Assembly defined and limited its powers, and that this constitution—portions of which I read—did not coincide with the views of Dr. Woodrow. I appealed from the criticisms and reasoning of Dr. Woodrow to the Annual Reports and the Constitution, and in doing this I believed that I had made a good and sufficient reply. And I still think so, for neither you, nor Dr. Woodrow, nor any other member called in question the positions which I assumed; and when a few hours afterwards the vote of the Assembly was taken on the Standing Committee's Report, (Dr. Rutherford and Rev. Messrs. Daniel and Isler having in the meantime made their telling speeches) it was adopted "without a dissenting voice." Now, my dear sir, if I can make good the position not only that the Report to which you object so strenuously and inveterately, was indeed prepared as I have intimated above, and specially that the words and phrases in it, which have been criticised, can all be duplicated, triplicated or quadrupled and some of them intensified, in Annual Reports which you and Dr. Woodrow, had the honor of aiding in forming, and forwarding to the General Assembly, then I hope that however others may still see something in the Report in question, of which they may disapprove, you will at length agree with me that there is nothing in said Report to which you and

Dr. Woodrow ought in candor and fairness to have objected. The question is simply this, whether "the higher powers" are more to be dreaded in Baltimore under the present management of Sustentation, than they were in Columbia when you and Dr. Woodrow sat at the helm. You seem to think that they are—we shall see. Happily the material upon which the settlement of this question depends, is all in print, and is easily accessible. I deem it best to give Dr. Woodrow's complaint in full in the very words that you state it on page 374 of the *Review*. It is as follows:

"We are told on page 7, 'that one or two Presbyteries have done admirably, but that some of the Presbyteries are lamentably behind.' Moderator, I did not listen with pleasure to language of this kind, when it was uttered by an agent. The agency was not constituted for that purpose. The report proceeds: 'How this painful dereliction—of which you my brethren have been guilty—may be remedied, is a question to which the Assembly may properly apply its wisdom.' I am not willing to listen to such language as this. I cannot but remember that as a member of the Presbytery of Augusta, and I find that the Presbytery of Augusta has not pleased, at all, but friends of the matter of Sustentation. They are 'sorry' to inform us that the Presbytery of Augusta has terminated its connection with the Assembly's work. 'The unavoidable tendency' of which action is we are told, to narrow the sympathies and contract the benevolence of those who are subjected to it. I plead not guilty for my Presbytery. We have not shown any lack of sympathy in the work of Sustentation. I may say, sir, that I was opposed to this action of my Presbytery. I have always been in favor of co-operating with the Assembly's Committee; but it never occurred to me when pleading with my brethren of the Presbytery not to sever their connection, to use as an argument the sorrow of the Sustentation Committee. I thought that the matter was entirely in our hands. Such rebukes, however, will alienate one after another our friends of the cause. I do not forget, Moderator, that we are told that it is not intended to censure the Presbytery whose action is being considered, but only to have a 'statement of facts as they exist.' But this action of Presbytery is spoken of as being 'unwise,' which prompts the Committee to bring the matter to the intelligent consideration of the Church before irreparable damage has been suffered. I will not speak ironically and say that we are much obliged to the Executive Committee for not censuring us; but their statement certainly implies that they think they have a right to censure."

I have not quoted this complaint *verbatim* for the purpose of replying to it, which has already been sufficiently done, as far as is needed, in Dr. Rutherford's speech quoted for another purpose above, but merely to correct one or two errors which occur in it, and then to show that the language complained of is not only matched, but is in some cases over-topped in Reports which Dr. Woodrow himself had a part in framing.—The first mistake which Dr. Woodrow has made is in not noticing that in his first quotation, there is the ellipsis of the words "the churches of" before the words "some of the Presbyteries," so that if the sentence had been fully expressed, it should have been, "On the other hand, the churches of some of the Presbyteries are lamentably behind hand in contribution." This is clearly the sense which the sentence bears in its connection, and it is only when taken out of its connection that the meaning attributed to it can be forced upon it. So too it is with the second item of complaint; "How this painful dereliction is to be remedied," &c., &c. It is only by the violent sundering of this sentence from its connection, and by putting a meaning upon it which in its proper place cannot be tortured out of it, that it can be made to have the remotest reference to Presbyteries. The head under which these remarks occur is that of *collections*—that is, the collections of the churches. Presbyteries are referred to merely for the purpose of grouping the churches together, and giving the Assembly an accurate idea of the portions of her territory in which the churches have made the greatest advance in regularly contributing to Sustentation. There is not in this whole section of the Report the most remote reflection upon the action of any Presbytery; and when Dr. Woodrow applies this language to the Presbytery of Augusta or any other Presbytery, he does so gratuitously, and is himself alone worthy of the *odium* which he wishes to fasten upon the Annual Report.—No document in the world—not even the Holy Bible itself—can stand before such hostile criticism as this, and when Dr. Woodrow shall examine Page 7 of the Annual Report again calmly, I hope he will be willing to acknowledge the injustice which he has done the Executive Committee, by imposing upon their Report a meaning which it does not contain.

Having now corrected these two glaring errors in the indictment against the Executive Committee, which indeed constitute its backbone, and being taken away, leave it rather a nervous affair. I pass on to show that you and Dr. Woodrow, when among "the higher powers" were accustomed to use language, the altitude of which the Committee in Baltimore has not yet reached, and to which they will hardly aspire. And I may say here that on looking to the Minutes of the Executive Committee, I find that you were both present at the meetings when the Annual Reports were read, and approved before being sent to the General Assembly, and therefore it is fair to hold you both responsible for your proper share of any language which according to your latest expressed views you now object to.

Take then the following extract from the Annual Report of 1867—the first of the Reports on Sustentation sent to the Assembly:

"But, whilst great encouragement is to be

drawn from the marked progress made in this good and great work, it is *painful and humiliating* in the extreme to remember that so large a proportion of our churches have contributed nothing at all to the general fund. A goodly number have no doubt contributed to local and presbyterial operations; but when the largest abatement is made on this score, it will still be found true, perhaps, that more than one-half of our 1,300 churches have contributed nothing at all to this, or any of the general schemes of benevolence. This is a *painful and humiliating* fact, and calls for the serious consideration not only of the General Assembly, but of all the inferior Church courts. It is not for the Committee to point out the causes of this sad delinquency. They would not refrain, however, from expressing the *strong and decided conviction*—a conviction founded upon the general and concurrent testimony of all the Presbyterial Committees throughout the Church—that the *fault lies mainly* at the door of *ministers and church sessions*, who, for one reason or another, fail to bring these claims to the attention of the congregations under their care. It may be well for the Assembly to consider the propriety of addressing a special communication to ministers and church sessions on this particular subject."

Here it will be noted (1) that Dr. Woodrow, who now objects to the Committee in Baltimore expressing their feelings by saying that they are "sorry," himself deemed the words "painful and humiliating" as the appropriate language in which such emotions ought to be clothed. Doubtless he believed that the use of such agonizing terms would move some hard-hearted churches, which would prove obdurate to a subdued "sorrow." His strong and reduplicated adjectives, twice repeated in the course of seven lines in the Report, would doubtless work powerfully on the minds for which they were intended. Note (2) that Dr. Woodrow did not think it wrong to say that this "painful and humiliating fact" "calls for the serious consideration not only of the General Assembly, but of all the inferior church courts." He, an agent, thus attempts to direct the General Assembly and the other courts of the Church as to what they shall do. Note (3) that while Dr. Woodrow objects seriously to the use of the expression, "painful dereliction," he seems very fond of the phrase "sad delinquency." It must also be observed that according to the usage given in the dictionaries, whatever disagreeable sense the words may convey, "delinquency" is the stronger of the two, and that is the word which you and Dr. Woodrow's committee uses over and over again in their Annual Reports. Note (4) that while you and Dr. Woodrow are now of the opinion that the Assembly's "agents" should deal with facts, and only tell the Assembly what they have done, when you were "agents" yourselves you did not hesitate to express your "strong and decided conviction," and even to impute "fault" to "ministers and church sessions." And then you do not fail to address the General Assembly to address "a special communication," &c., &c., which, according to your present view, is very bad. Those familiar with the constitution of the Executive Committee will think that you were formerly much nearer right than at present.

And now, my dear sir, although I had marked for your special delection some twelve or fifteen other paragraphs (in Reports which you and Dr. Woodrow had a hand in making), in some of which unstinted advice (which might not inaptly be styled "preaching") is given to the Assembly, the Presbyteries and the churches—advice sound and judicious in itself, and which was drawn from valuable experience and large knowledge of the work, but which according to your late view is altogether improper and middle-aged—and in others of which as strong, or stronger terms than any used in the last Annual Report are found, I will only quote two or three brief sentences further, deeming these, together with what has been given above, sufficient for my present purpose, and quite as many as you will care to see. In the Annual Report of 1870, you will find the following language: "This is an important rule, and ought never to be set aside, except, as has already been stated, in very extraordinary cases. Presbyteries have *undoubtedly erred very seriously* in authorizing the organization of churches, where there was no reasonable prospect of their becoming self-supporting." Now I beg you to ponder this language. You and Dr. Woodrow have been greatly scandalized because the present Executive Committee spoke of "the unwise action of Presbyteries," (not of the Presbytery of Augusta as Dr. Woodrow puts it), but in the Annual Report quoted from, you do not hesitate to tell the Assembly that the Presbyteries have "erred,"—that they have "undoubtedly erred"—"very seriously." Who could have believed it? It is said to be a bad thing for some men to have a record. Is not this an illustration in point?

And now, it will not be surprising if you and others shall say, these are small matters with which I am dealing. And so they are; but you will be good enough to remember that it is yourself and Dr. Woodrow—(both of you eminent men, and so entitled to a conclusive answer)—who dictated the method and the matter of this discussion. You chose the ground, and I have been content to meet you on it. I think too that I may claim to have proved what I started out to show, that what ever complaint may be alleged against the Annual Report, you and Dr. Woodrow have no occasion to complain; and having done this, I must decline to enter upon the Board question, which appears to have arisen from your minds alone, and for the discussion of which there appears no present reason. I had intended to say something about the functions of the Executive Committee and the duties of the Secretaries, but this letter has become so long, and the Constitution of

the Committee is so explicit, and the General Assembly and the Presbyteries have, for at least five years, been so universally and entirely satisfied with the action of the Committee, that I cannot believe it necessary to protract this discussion. I will only call your attention to the following two paragraphs of our Constitution from which you will see that the Committee was from the beginning (Dr. Woodrow and yourself to the contrary notwithstanding) clothed by the General Assembly with "advisory powers:"

"In the exercise of its advisory powers, it shall report to the General Assembly every year the condition and wants of the whole field, and shall annually present to the Assembly an account of its receipts and expenditures, together with its minutes, for examination."

"It shall also communicate to the churches and Presbyteries, from time to time, such information with reference to the necessities and the progress of the work, as will tend to incite them to greater liberality and more earnest efforts for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ."

And now, having taken up my pen with reluctance, I lay it down with alacrity. During five years of service no such burden has been laid upon me, and at the beginning of that period I could not have believed that you would have imposed this task. But "times change and we change in them," and so it has come to pass. If it could be so, I should be glad to spend the remainder of my official life in work and in absolute freedom from controversy; but if I am called upon to contend for the truth, and the removal of harmful imputations, and for the interests of the great work entrusted to my care, then I should be unworthy of the confidence reposed in me by the Church if I did not prefer duty to quietude, and show myself as ready to contend, as to labor, for the cause.

Respectfully yours,
RICHARD MCILWAIN.

FOR THE CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN. DIVISION OF SYNOD.

In the *Central* of September 5th, "Partitio" concludes his ingenious and plausible article in favor of the division of Synod by saying: "It is now incumbent upon our good brethren who oppose division to show cause why the grand old Synod shall not part in three."

Now there are some of his brethren who are not so sure that he was entitled to assume so much of a Q. E. D. air in closing his argument. For even if much of what he has written be admitted, there remain reasons, many and cogent, which have been and may still be given why "the grand old Synod" shall not "part in three" nor in any other number. And we propose, without exclusive reference to "Partitio's" article, to restate a few of these reasons.

At the outset, it is not pertinent to ask, why this revival and persistent pressing of a question which has met so recently and so emphatically, under all the forms in which it was presented by its able and zealous advocates, the disapproval of the Synod? It is not satisfactory to say that the circumstances surrounding the question have changed so much as to call for its re-opening. While, indeed, some of the causes which contributed to the rejection of the measure at Harrisonburg and Fredericksburg may be cited as much strength as then; still the principal grounds of opposition remain, and in some respects, are stronger than they have ever been.

Is it brought forward again because the great body of our people ask for it? We cannot recall a single dissent, at the time, among our church members, from the action at Fredericksburg; nor have we heard since the whisper of a desire to re-open it.

Can it be that the class of members who have evoked so much sympathy from the advocates of division—the men of "smaller gifts or modesty"—who now have no proper field nor encouragement for developing their gifts—can it be that they are clamoring for relief? If both our memory and observation are not at fault, among the most zealous advocates (if not leaders) of the change will be found some to whom years and opportunity have already brought deserved and clustering honors.

If the agitation of this subject be the result of an unconscious falling in with one of the tendencies of day, to break up and reorganize, to reduce and divide States and counties, churches and creeds, until there shall be little more than the names left, then more than ever should it be opposed. And for one, we lift the earnest prayer that the venerable Synod may still stand in its glorious conservatism, a break-water against a tide so fraught with evil to Church and State.

Just here may we not put another question? If, with an average of only 30 per cent. of the members actually present at the meetings, and under all the disadvantages claimed for the "men of smaller gifts or modesty," the past record of the Synod is such—the results achieved so great as to unite both friends and foes of division in devout thanksgiving to the great Head of the Church, and in unstinted laudation of the "grand old Synod," is it wise to change its composition upon the bare possibility, or, if you please, probability, that the change will be for the better? Remember we are asked to give up a plan thoroughly tested, and which has accomplished splendid results, for one which has yet to be tried, and tried only when the old has been irretrievably broken down. We prefer the old bridge which has safely borne so many and so much, to the three new ones to be constructed from its materials, however skillful and sanguine the engineers and architects of the new ones may be. This may be called "sentiment," but

some how it is a power which takes so strong a hold of the hearts of many as to control their thoughts and actions.

Most of the arguments for division seem to be founded upon the size of the body as at present constituted. Some allege that it has too much weight in the General Assembly; another says it cannot meet save in a few large towns and cities; others, again, that it is unwieldy, unsuited to the prompt, wise and safe decision of important questions; that modest men of merit must be necessarily kept to a large extent in the background, &c., &c. The paradox is exultingly stated that "that the meetings are not half as large as they ought to be, and yet are really twice as large as they should be."—Now is there not more sought to be made out of the failure of so many to attend the meetings than there should be? Is not the same thing relatively true of the smaller bodies of Presbyteries and even sessions? However central and accessible the point at which they meet, are there not always many who cannot, or will not attend? The matters of time, distance and expense alone, are very far from determining the question of attendance. And we apprehend that even Presbyterian human nature is not yet so perfect as not to feel and be swayed by some inducements to attend the meetings of the larger body, which, in the very nature of the case, can never operate in respect of the smaller.

"But the Synod is too large to meet, save in a few towns or cities." Very well: Still these few places seem eager to have the Synod meet in them. Witness the lively competition for the next place of meeting, at all our annual meetings.

But is it necessary that the Synod should meet at so many different points in its territory? For a long time after the organization of the old Assembly in the United States, it met year after year in one and the same place. And even now the Scotch Assemblies are confined, if not to one, certainly to a very few places.

"But thus to confine the meetings to one place would deprive many parts of the Church of that strong and precious influence for good exerted by the Synod upon the locality in which it meets." Precisely so. That influence is invaluable, and should not be frittered away or lost. And if under the proposed changes we could secure the influence of the Synod of Virginia, for more places than now enjoy it, we would not so strongly oppose those changes. But alas! with the change will depart much of the influence. Is it not better every way for the Church to feel the moral influence of such a body as the present Synod of Virginia, even if brought to bear at a few points, than to have it broken up into fragments and distributed throughout our borders? Is it true here, that old Hesiod's paradox—"the half is more than the whole," applies?

As to the size of the body in its effect upon the dispatch of business, there seems to be a strange over-looking of some of the most potent facts in the world. Has not experience demonstrated that large bodies can be as readily managed as small ones, by competent presiding officers rigidly enforcing rules adopted to the larger bodies? Look at the English Parliament, the Assemblies of the Scotch Church, and, notably, at the late Presbyterian Council in Edinburgh. The size of those bodies has not yet so impeded the progress of business as to demand a change. When we learn to bestow the Moderatorship of our courts upon grounds of fitness, and not as a compliment to a person; and when our ministers and elders acquaint themselves more thoroughly with the rules already in force, we shall see that our courts will be better and more easily handled.

"But, are the conclusions reached in such large bodies as well-considered and as sound as in a smaller body?" We unhesitatingly answer, "Yes: as far." For we believe it can be demonstrated that the larger body will be more conservative than the smaller; and for the simple reason that there will not be so much room for mere personal influence. Does any one doubt that important questions coming before the Synod of Virginia, as now constituted of such varied elements and of such diverse experience, would be more likely to be settled upon their merits, than if the same questions came before a smaller body without such varied elements and experience?

If the influence of the Synod of Virginia in the General Assembly be as great as is alleged, it is either a wholesome influence, or it is not. If wholesome, surely it should be perpetuated. If hurtful the Assembly has the remedy in its own hands. If mere numbers is to determine that influence, then remember that the Synod of Virginia, even with the Presbytery of Sao Paulo, is only a fraction over one-fifth of the General Assembly, in the fullest meeting possible. But if the influence is wielded by men whom the Lord Christ has given us, of such wisdom, attainments and experience as to command the ear of the Church, certainly no effort should be made to hinder them in their work for the Master.

Once more. It is urged that the Synod is so large as to prevent that close scrutiny of the work of the churches, and that development of the sense of individual responsibility which are so desirable, and will be gained by the proposed division. This and the kindred idea that modest men have no opportunity to develop their gifts, seems to us to grow out of a confounding of the spheres of the Synod and the Presbytery.

In our view, one of the strangest reasons for retaining the present composition of the Synod is its size. For thus it is all the better fitted to do its appropriate work, that mainly of review and control. The details of the work, the cultivation of the sense of