

John Walker

Vol. V.]

[No. 4.]

BIBLICAL REPERTORY.

NEW SERIES.

Vol. I.]

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PRINCETON, NEW-JERSEY.

HUGH MADISON, PRINTER.

1829.



BIBLICAL REPERTORY.

A JOURNAL

OF

BIBLICAL LITERATURE

AND

THEOLOGICAL SCIENCE,

CONDUCTED BY AN ASSOCIATION OF
GENTLEMEN.



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ADVERTISEMENT.

At the beginning of the next year, this work will appear under the title of **BIBLICAL REPERTORY AND THEOLOGICAL REVIEW**, and may thenceforward be considered as embracing in its plan the whole range of theological and religious subjects. The work is now, and will continue under the direction of an association of gentlemen, who have received pledges of aid from distinguished writers in various parts of the Union. It will be published, as heretofore, at Princeton, quarterly; but on a new type, and will contain a greater amount of matter. It is expected that a permanent arrangement will be shortly made with a gentleman of high qualifications, who will devote his whole time to the superintendence of the work. The design of this Journal, and its claims upon public patronage, may be gathered from the following circular letter, issued at Philadelphia, during the sessions of the last General Assembly :

DEAR SIR,

The undersigned most earnestly ask your serious attention to the subject of the following communication.

The influence of the press has never yet been fully appreciated. It is the power which forms and controls public sentiment, and governs the government. This power, however, is chiefly attributable to the periodical press. It is felt in this form in every department of human life. Experience shows that it admits of as easy an application to religion, as to any of the affairs of this world. It is undeniable that a man's doctrinal opinions and his course of action are, in a great degree, regulated and determined by the periodical publications which he is accustomed to read.

It is, therefore, justly a matter both of surprize and regret, that while wealth and talent of high order are enlisted to establish and support political and literary periodicals, many of which are unfavourable to the cause of religion, the church should, to a great extent, neglect this instrumentality. Already have many important advantages been lost by this strange and inexcusable inattention. Greater evils will ensue—evils the magnitude of which no man can measure—unless the friends of true religion can be awakened from

their apathy, and brought to put forth efforts corresponding to the importance and urgency of the case.

It is true indeed, that at present, a number of respectable weekly and monthly publications are in limited circulation, and exert a valuable influence on the cause of Christian benevolence. They are, however, chiefly vehicles of intelligence, or repositories of brief, and therefore often unsatisfactory discussions of doctrinal and critical subjects. There is, then, a place, and an urgent call, for periodicals of a higher character and a wider range of subjects.

Several years ago, the Professor of Biblical Literature, in the Seminary at Princeton, undertook to publish a quarterly journal (the *Biblical Repertory*,) the exclusive object of which was to assist ministers and candidates in the criticism and interpretation of the Bible. Experience, however, has shown, that the time has not yet arrived, when a work of this kind can be adequately supported in our country. It was therefore thought expedient, at the beginning of the present year, to make a change in the character of this publication. It is intended hereafter, to conduct it according to the following plan.

1. The original design of the work, instead of being wholly laid aside, is to be so modified, as to adapt it to the use and benefit of all intelligent Christians. The Bible is the only source of authentic information on the doctrines and duties of Christianity. The Bible is about to be placed in every family in the nation. The right of private judgment, in this free country, is unequivocally admitted. It is therefore of the utmost importance to afford to the people, every possible facility for a right understanding of the divine oracles. To accomplish this is to be one of the primary objects of the *Biblical Repertory*, in its present form.

2. Philosophy and literature in every age have exerted a powerful influence on religious sentiment and doctrine. This will be the case until the Bible shall have established a complete and universal supremacy, and men shall have learned to submit without reserve to Scripture, fairly interpreted. This work, then in accomplishing its great purpose, of assisting in forming right opinions on the meaning of the Bible, must bring under strict and impartial review, the philosophy and literature of the time; and show their influence, whether for good or evil, on biblical interpretation, systematic theology, and practical religion. In doing this, it will

be necessary to detect and expose the error, common in every age, of founding religious doctrines on insulated passages, and partial views of bible-truth ; or forcing the Scriptures to a meaning which shall accord with philosophical theories.

3. The circumstances belonging to every age produce a tendency to some particular form of error, so as to make it the epidemic of the period. At one time men are disposed to be satisfied with a heartless and inactive orthodoxy. At another, religious action is represented as every thing, and its stimulus is substituted for those deep inward feelings which mark the character of thorough piety. It will be the business of this Journal carefully to notice, and faithfully to exhibit dangers of this kind.

4. The history of religious doctrine and opinion will be given in the progress of the work as far as the nature of the case will admit ; the revival of old and exploded doctrines will be noticed ; and their effects on vital religion as clearly as possible exhibited.

5. The influence of different principles of ecclesiastical polity on piety, morals, literature, and civil institutions will form a subject for careful consideration.

6. It will be left for the monthly and weekly publications to communicate religious intelligence : but at the same time, the various enterprizes of Christian benevolence will be observed with the deepest attention and interest, and sustained with all the zeal and talent which can be brought to aid the mighty cause. Especially the vast and growing importance of Sabbath Schools will be duly appreciated. The books employed in them will be strictly examined ; and it will be reckoned a more valuable service to lend efficient aid in securing to these publications a suitable character, than to control, if that were possible, the literature and philosophy of the whole nation.

7. Such attention, however, as the limits of the work will permit, will be bestowed on the important interests of general knowledge ; and select literary information will be given with every number.

8. The work is not designed to be controversial in its character, but to state temperately and mildly, yet firmly and fearlessly, Bible truth in its whole extent.

9. As soon as circumstances will admit, a suitable editor will be procured, who will give his entire time, labour and

talents to the work. In the meanwhile it will be conducted by the present editors, with the assistance of a number of able writers, who are pledged to contribute regularly to its pages.

Along with this letter you will receive a Prospectus; and this detail of particulars is given for your own private use; that you may be enabled to explain fully the nature and design of the publication.

And now, dear sir, will you not look through the country in the length and breadth thereof—will you not consider the power of that instrumentality which the press affords—and resolve to do your *very best* in promoting the circulation of this Journal? As a patriot, will you not endeavour, by diffusing principles of sound knowledge and true virtue, to preserve the institutions of our country, and render them perpetual? And, as a Christian, will you not favour a plan, the design of which is to exhibit the truths, and enforce the precepts of the Bible; to assist in putting down error; and promoting that charity which delights to save a soul from death?

It is certain that an enterprize, such as that here proposed, cannot be supported unless the members, and especially the ministers of the church, will resolve at once to sustain and bear it onward.

ASHBEL GREEN,
SAMUEL MILLER,
ARCHIBALD ALEXANDER,
JOHN H. RICE,
EZRA FISK,
EZRA STILES ELY,
FRANCIS HERRON,
THOMAS CLELAND,
SAMUEL H. COX,

THOMAS H. SKINNER,
JAMES HOGE,
HENRY R. WEED,
WILLIAM NEVINS,
JOSEPH SANFORD,
THOMAS I. BIGGS,
SAMUEL L. GRAHAM,
LUTHER HALSEY.

Philadelphia, May, 21st, 1829.

TERMS.

The Biblical Repertory & Theological Review is published quarterly, at Three Dollars per annum, if paid within the first six months; or Four Dollars if the payment be longer deferred. Each number will contain at least 150 pages.

All communications to be addressed to "the Editors of the Biblical Repertory and Theological Review," Princeton New-Jersey.

CORRESPONDENCE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

WITH

FOREIGN CHURCHES.

WE acknowledge ourselves to be under many obligations to the stated Clerk of the General Assembly, for the manner in which he has prepared and published the Minutes of that body, for the present year as well as for several that are past. Although it does not fall within our immediate purpose, yet we cannot help giving him our thanks for his statistical tables. They now approximate to the truth; and it is no fault of his, that they are not entirely full and accurate. We had no adequate idea of the rapid growth of the Church to which we belong, until it was presented by the pamphlet annually published under his direction. The Presbyterian Church in the United States, stands before the country and the world as an important body of Christians. This remark is not made with a view to awaken sectarian confidence. Should we become *proud* of our numbers and strength, He who giveth grace to the humble, will know well enough how to bring us down, for He "resisteth the proud." We hint at the influence which Presbyterians may exert, to give some view of their responsibility, and of the extent of their obligations.

According to the Gospel, the ability of a man to do good is the exact measure of his duty. The same rule applies to societies. They are bound to do all the good in their power. How great then are the obligations of a Church consisting of One Hundred and Sixty Thousand communicants, com-

binning much intelligence and wealth, with a form of ecclesiastical polity in itself admirably adapted to produce the strength of united exertion and the energy of free action! The country and the world ought to feel her influence, and rejoice in her labours of love. Her missionaries ought to be found in every destitute portion of the land, and in every dark corner of the world, bearing "the unsearchable riches of Christ," and proclaiming the messages of redeeming love.

It appears from the Minutes of the last General Assembly that Providence is opening a new door of usefulness to the Presbyterian Church in this country. In the year 1828, the General Assembly resolved to open a correspondence with the Protestant Churches in France. A letter was accordingly sent to that body of Christians, in the name of this Judicatory. This letter, addressed to the *Consistory of Paris*, was translated into French, and published in the *Archives of Christianity*, a monthly periodical devoted to the cause of Christ. Since the revocation of the Edict of Nantz, the French Protestants have had no national Synod. Correspondence with them, can therefore, be conducted only through their Consistories, or through individuals and voluntary associations.

The publication of the letter of the General Assembly, excited considerable attention. Accordingly, answers were returned by the Editors of the *Archives of Christianity*, by St. Pilet Joly, pastor of the French Walloon Church of Francfort on the Maine, by the Consistory of the Consistorial Church of Mens, and by the pastor of the Third Ecclesiastical Division of the Reformed Consistorial Church of the Departments of Aisne, and of Seine and Maine.

The effect of this correspondence was not confined to France. On the 10th of March in the present year, a letter was written by the *Congregational Board of Ministers in London*, addressed to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, in which it is

proposed, that there should be a correspondence between those two bodies of Christians.

The reception of these letters may be justly regarded as a remarkable event in the history of the General Assembly. And it does appear to us, as intimated before, that Providence has, in this way, prepared new facilities for the extension of the Redeemer's Kingdom among men. But that our readers may enter into our views and feelings on this subject, we present the following cursory statement of facts.

The Reformed Church in France was once an object of veneration and sympathy with all Protestants. Pure in doctrine, strict in discipline, full of holy zeal, and furnished with pastors not more distinguished for the fervour of their piety, than for profound and various learning; it was regarded with glorying and joy, by all who loved the Reformation. At the same time, its members, subjected to the tyranny of priest-ridden princes, and to the remorseless hatred of an intolerant hierarchy, endured through a series of years, sufferings too dreadful for minuter description. At length by the repeal of the Edict of Nantz, the cause of Protestantism in France appeared to be totally ruined, and that church, which had furnished an army of more than 200,000 martyrs, and many of the greatest scholars of the age in which they lived; which had more than 2000 congregations, and 2,000,000 of communicants sunk under the fierce fanaticism of Louis, misnamed *the great*, and his *hooded* ministers. A great number of learned and pious pastors, and vast multitudes of the most valuable subjects of the French monarch, escaped from the country. But two millions of people cannot emigrate. Of those who remained, the timid and flexible, yielded to force, and were *converted* to Popery; the firm and conscientious maintained their principles, and worshipped in their own way, in "caves and dens of the earth." This remnant of a better age suffered innumerable vexations, and often horrible per-

secution, from the year 1685, until 1787, when, principally through the exertions of La Fayette, "a civil existence" was granted to them.

None need be surprised that men oppressed as the French Protestants were, should rejoice in the change effected by the revolution. Napoleon, with all his faults, was a friend of religious liberty, and under his reign, the persecuted found favour. But on the restoration of the Bourbons, scenes of former violence were renewed, and the true spirit of Popery showed itself with its customary violence and cruelty. During a considerable period the Protestants were unprotected, and suffered all that the rage of their enemies could inflict. It was not until these disgraceful events had attracted the attention, and excited the indignation of the world, that any effectual measures were adopted, to prevent their recurrence.

It will not be thought extraordinary, that in a state of things such as we have very briefly described, religion should greatly decline. But there was another reason. The Protestants every where found the Catholics their bitterest enemies. In the mean while it served the purpose of the philosophists of France, in their warfare against all religion, to hold up the mummeries of Popery to ridicule, and its cruelty to detestation. In this they would have performed a good service, had they not identified true religion with its corruptions. It was, however, to be expected, that the Protestants, driven from their temples, denied the privileges of subjects, and often hunted by their enemies as wild beasts,—it was to be expected, that they would feel some obligation to the men, whatever might be their motives, who turned the indignation of mankind against those bloody-minded persecutors. Accordingly, it has been found, that among many of the Reformed Churches, there is that approximation to infidelity, which goes under the name of Liberal Christianity.

It is also a notorious fact, that wherever great reliance is placed on external observances, they are made a substitute for vital religion. And generally, not to say universally, the consequence is a deplorable corruption of morals. *Penance* is made to take the place of *repentance*; license to sin is purchased by strict compliance with the ritual; and men go from confession and the mass, to the theatre and the gaming table, to masked balls, and brothels. The influence of an established religion, and of the majority of a nation's population on the dissenting minority is great.

Hence we find with much that is true, and valuable, and worthy of all praise, among Protestants in France, much that we ought deeply to deplore, and endeavour by all means in our power to remove or remedy.

The Congregational Churches in England may be regarded as the offspring of that mighty religious ferment in England, which, beginning with the Reformation, became more and more violent, until it heaved the throne of the first Charles from its fastenings, and destroyed him in its ruins. The History of this denomination is so fully detailed in the well known work of Neal, that a bare reference to this author is sufficient for our present purpose. Their writings are familiarly known to Christians in this country, and in many instances highly esteemed by them.

In regard to *doctrine*, both the congregational Churches in England, and the Protestants in France, embraced originally the system of Theology, which, since the Reformation, has gone under the name of Calvinism. The Congregationalists still adhere to this system, although in general, they prefer being called *moderate* Calvinists. Judging from the extraordinary *run* of Dwight's Theology in England, it may be presumed that their system differs very little, if at all, from his. The Confession of Faith of the Reformed in France, was drawn up by Calvin himself; and of course, it may well be denominated by that illustrious reformer. In

its fundamental articles it harmonizes with other confessions framed by Protestants, during the period of the Reformation. How far the French Calvinists, as a body, have departed from the faith of their fathers, we cannot precisely state.

In the principles of Church government, they are genuine Presbyterians. The official equality of all ministers of the Gospel was, and is now, strenuously maintained by them: but yet is not considered as essential to the being of the Churches. Their Consistory answers to our Church Session; their Colloque to our Presbytery; their Provincial Synod to ours; and their National Synod to our General Assembly.

The ecclesiastical polity of the Congregationalists is too well known to require a particular statement. It may however be observed that they are staunch friends of religious liberty; and so have been from the beginning. It is reasonable to believe, that the persecuted Protestants of France cherish the same sentiments.

After this cursory view of these Christian denominations, we proceed to present our views of the general benefit, which may result, from a proper use of the opportunities afforded by this *inchoate* correspondence.

We beg leave however, first to notice a particular circumstance which perhaps deserves some attention. Several years ago, a proposition was entertained by the General Assembly to open a correspondence with several denominations of Christians in Europe, and a committee was appointed for that purpose. The measure however, at that time, proved abortive. One established Church, at least, came within the *purview* of this proposition. And the failure of the whole plan arose, it has been conjectured, from an ascertained indisposition on the part of that Church, to have any correspondence with us. Whether this was owing to the Prince of *the establishment*; or to an apprehension that the powers which he, would frown on patronised

ecclesiastics, for holding communication with stern republicans, we pretend not to determine. It seems, however, pretty certain, that we shall never have it in our power to do good *directly* to any but Dissenting Christians in Europe.

It is equally certain that Dissenters have done much to keep alive piety in established Churches. Had it not been for English non-conformists, there would now, in all probability, be no British and Foreign Bible Society to bless the world; no Church Missionary Society to send faithful preachers to the heathen; no religious Tract Society; no Jews Society; no Continental Society, aiding in the extension of the Redeemer's Kingdom.

For although established Churches regard Dissenters with perpetual jealousy; yet they are often, in self-defence, obliged to imitate their zeal and activity; lest the majority of the people should be drawn away to the cause of non-conformity. It is equally true, that the extensive knowledge, and elaborate writings of men supported in "learned leisure" by the wealth of the nation, have been greatly useful to Dissenters.

In times of excitement, however, mutual benefits are forgotten, and the strong oppress the weak. It was in *the 19th century*, since the overthrow of Napoleon, that the Protestants of *France* endured the horrible persecutions before adverted to. And even now it is found necessary for the *Three Denominations of Dissenters* in England to keep up a *Society for the preservation of religious liberty*. Even in this age of the world, after all that has been said about "the march of mind," and the progress of liberal opinions, there is very little religious liberty, or genuine liberality. There are but two countries in the world, where religion is perfectly free; the *United States*—and the *Sandwich Islands*, since the success of the American Missionaries! It may appear surprising, but we believe it to be true, that since the year 1815, the spirit of liberality has

rather declined, than risen in Christendom. Popery has certainly become bolder—Jesuitism has been revived—High Church principles have become higher and fiercer—and in our country the various denominations of Christians have, after a little trial, refused, as far as they dared, to co-operate in general enterprises of Christian charity. High Church-men have strongly opposed the American Bible Society. The General Conference of the Methodist Church has, by a formal vote, determined to have a Bible Society *exclusively their own*. So also of the Tract Society, and the American Sabbath School Union. Many things indicate in the Church Universal, an increase of sectarian spirit. There is a rousing up too, of the spirit of infidelity. There is a disposition in all the enemies of vital religion to unite. Universalists approximate to Unitarians, and Unitarians to Deists. Whither do all these things tend ?

We know that many, on reading these pages, will dissent from our opinions ; and probably will appeal to the recent acts of the British Government ; to the tranquillity at present enjoyed by the French Protestants ; and to events in the religious history of this country, to disprove our positions. But Catholic disabilities were not removed until the English ministry were convinced of the absolute necessity of the measure, to preserve the peace of the country, and maintain the influence of England on the continent of Europe. Mr. Peel, in the British House of Commons, acknowledged this necessity, and confessed that he consented to the repeal of the law of exclusion, because *he could do no better*. So that the measure rather proves the growth of Popery, than the increase of liberality. And in France, the persecutions which ensued on the restoration of the Bourbons, were continued until the Dissenting denominations in England procured a notice of the subject in the British Parliament.

We have not time for a particular consideration of this subject at present. It deserves, however, to be remarked,

that *zeal for religious liberty* may proceed from two causes—*infidelity*, which utterly casts off the moral influence of religion, and aims to get rid of it altogether, and *genuine piety*, which makes a man feel the value of freedom to worship his Maker according to his conviction of duty. The first of these causes, drives men, as with the force of a tornado, to the opposite extreme. It is the second only, which secures rational liberty. And if there is an increase of piety in the present age, there is also an increase of infidelity, as well as of Popery.

Still, however, there is an immense advantage possessed by this “age of the press,” and of “extending intercourse,” over all past ages. And in the struggle which is now going on in the world, it is in the highest degree important that there should be correspondence, cordial co-operation, and a thorough understanding between the sincere friends of genuine religious liberty, in all parts of the world. In any particular case of oppression, such, for instance, as that endured by the French Protestants, the strong decided expression of displeasure by millions in the United States, and millions in England, will be heard and regarded. And in the present growing power of public opinion, certainly it is important that all throughout the world, who own no authority over conscience but that of the Deity, should be prepared to speak out, and to speak all together, whenever a sufficiently important occasion demands it. This, then, is one of the reasons why, in our opinion, the correspondence so happily begun, ought to be carried on with spirit and cordiality. It will unite the friends of religious liberty in this country and in Europe.

But again; immeasurable injury has been done to Christianity, by building systems of religion on other foundations, than that of the sound interpretation of the Bible. When philosophy is employed to prove theology, the Scriptures are stripped of their honours, and the study of them is

greatly neglected. When Christians of different nations, however, write to each other on their common religion, they must refer to the Bible, as the only authentic source of information; and see to it, that their opinions are founded, not on the ever changing systems of men, but on the oracles of eternal truth. This is the more important, because the philosophy of different nations, even in the same age, is widely different. English and American, differs from French philosophy; and both, from the German. An equal difference is discernible in the theological systems of these different nations. Indeed it is quite curious to trace the changes which have taken place in theology, under the influence of philosophical systems, in different ages and countries. But we cannot now pursue this subject. Of all the expedients devised by human wisdom to prevent these mutations, the most efficacious have been well constructed *Confessions of Faith*. But, inasmuch as these do not claim authority to bind the conscience, they have always, at length, given way before the force of public opinion. The Lutherans have their confession of Augsburg; the English Church their Thirty-Nine Articles; the Scotch and the French Calvinists have a confession still more extended, and minute:—but the Lutherans are Neologists; the English are Arminians; the Scotch have their *moderate men*, which is but another name for Arminians; and the French, as a Church, have now, if we are rightly informed, no creed at all. Philosophy, as it is called, has produced these changes. And it is not in human wisdom effectually to guard against them. We see corresponding changes taking place, even in the best constituted Churches in this country. Our own denomination affords a very striking instance of this kind. We advert not to others, for that might be invidious. We are persuaded too, that these changes, whatever may be thought of their value, have not been produced by a study of the Bible. Look only at the polemical essays with which the press now teems;

and observe how little Scripture, and how much *reasoning* is to be found in them. Be the subject what it may, the case is all the same. The great questions, for instance, concerning *Predestination, Election, Original Sin, the Atonement*, and even in some instances, *the Divinity of Christ*, are attempted to be settled, not by the plain decisions of the holy Scriptures, soundly interpreted, but by *philosophy!*

Now all these changes would never have taken place, had the teachers of religion adhered to the Bible, and to the common-sense method of interpreting the sacred volume. Two reasons convince us of the truth of this remark.

1st. The Bible contains the whole of the Christian religion. Its gracious author gave this book to man, for the very purpose of letting him know what he must believe and do, in order to salvation. The same things are *now* to be believed and practised, which the apostles received from the Lord Jesus. There is no change here. There can be none. But from the very nature of the case, the meaning of the Bible is ascertainable. Otherwise it would be no revelation at all. Let this meaning then, be discovered, and we know the whole of the Christian religion. But it is not learned from the philosophy of Locke, Reed and Brown; of Malebranche and Buffier; of Leibnitz, Kant and Fichte; but from the careful study of Hebrew and Greek; in other words, from the cultivation of sound philology.

2d. The Maker of man, is the author of the Bible. The religion of the Bible, then, is adapted to human nature in all ages, and in all climes. It applies itself to all the faculties of man as a religious being; brings them to the highest state of improvement; and gives them the best possible direction. There is no danger of error, or excess, if only the whole of Bible truth is brought to bear on man's heart and conscience. But so "fearfully and wonderfully are we made," that much of human nature lies beyond the ken of philosophy; and it is not at all to be wondered at, if, when men undertake to

mould theological truth by the partial and imperfect discoveries of human science, they fall into error. Nor is it at all more surprising that one system of theology thus framed, should give place to another, in almost perpetual change, when every new philosophical theory, displaces that which went before. It would be tedious to give even a catalogue of the *new* and *improved* systems of divinity, which have been produced since the era of the Reformation. But who can tell what injury has been done to the cause of Christ, by all these changes? And who shall answer the sneering question of the unbeliever? "After all, what do Christians believe?"

We do not pretend, indeed, that the annual letters, which will pass between our General Assembly and different Christian denominations in Europe, will directly produce the effects anticipated. It would be extravagant to make the supposition. But, as we hope, the case will be thus. One very important benefit to be expected from the noble institutions growing up among us, is, *a body of native theological literature*. Now our authors will write, either for their own countrymen *only*; or, for others in different parts of the world *also*. Should the former be the case, our systems and commentaries will, in all probability, be moulded by American notions, and American philosophy; and bear throughout the stamp of local feeling. But in the latter case, all these trammels will be cast off, and American theology will sustain that character of universal adaptation, which constitutes one of the most distinguishing features of the religion of the Bible. In this, it would happily differ from every thing almost, which has yet come under our observation. In the title pages of many modern systems of divinity, we see the very significant phrase *his temporibus accommodata*. And no one is at a loss to know its meaning. It is theology adapted to the philosophy of the times; it is Scripture truth *detorted* to suit the views of Neologists.

An intelligent and accute general reader need not look at the title, and the author's name, but only at a chapter or two in any part of a new work, to ascertain at once, where it originated. He can say, this came from Germany; this from England; and this from New England, &c., without the least hesitation.

We would now inquire, is it chimerical to suppose that a cordial affectionate intercourse between Christians in other countries, would produce such effects as we have mentioned above? We think not. Many circumstances are attracting the attention of the Christian world to America; our rapid increase—our perfect religious liberty—our revivals of religion—the activity and energy of our religious charities, &c. Even our theological literature, meagre as it yet is; and the sermons of our distinguished preachers, already excite considerable notice. Our great men, if indeed we have them, will become more known. It may easily be brought about, that when an American divine sits down to write a book, he will do his work in the expectation that it will be reprinted in England; will be translated into French, and Dutch, and German, and circulated wherever there are Christians who speak these languages. A commentator, or systematic writer, with expectations such as these, and with the feelings which they would awaken, could scarcely construct a work, limited in its adaptation to the meridian of Boston or New-Haven, New-York or Philadelphia. He would be obliged to bring it up as near as possible to that "word," which is "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the hearts;" which, in all that it teaches of religious doctrine, of guilt and repentance, of faith and pardon, and hope; of fears and sorrows, and joys, shows a most consummate knowledge of every thing that is in man. In a word, he would be obliged to teach that religion, which takes hold of the whole of human nature, which goes into the inner parts of every man's soul, and makes him feel that He who made man, is the author of this religion also.

If after all, however, we are over sanguine in our expectations of the good which *may be educaed* from this correspondence, we are very confident that our readers will agree with us in our views of the value of this result; and in our most earnest wishes, that if not in this way, in some other, it may be produced.

And, we would take this opportunity of remarking, that already, religious intelligence from America is sought for with great avidity, in many distant parts of the world. And we cannot but wish that the brethren, who write for our periodicals, who give accounts of revivals, who draw up narratives of the state of religion, prepare reports, make speeches at our anniversaries, and communications from executive committees, would take the trouble to consider how such papers as they prepare, will appear to the various bodies of Christians, with whom we have proposed to hold correspondence.

But there is another view of this subject which we wish to present.

America, for some years past, has been the *land of revivals*. We know that this subject has excited a deep interest in the minds of many Christians abroad, and many inquiries have been made respecting these remarkable events. Now, considering the nature of the intercourse between this country and Europe, we know of scarcely any subject, respecting which it is more difficult to procure accurate information. All sorts of people have correspondence with Europe—men who call any excitement a revival—sober and wise men—friends and foes, write on this theme. And inquirers at a distance, we doubt not, find it extremely difficult to form a clear opinion of the real character of American revivals. In one case a statement is made of facts, which would lead a sober thinker to suppose, that in these occurrences, there is nothing but a wild and frantic fanaticism. And we should not be surprised to see, at any time, a long induction of particulars, made by some Euro-

pean philosopher, going to show that the Americans, with their boasted religious liberty, are rapidly degenerating into a nation of fanatics. It would not be difficult to find in that mass of crudities, which in past times has gone under the general name of Religious Intelligence, hundreds of statements, which would seem to justify such a conclusion. Men of real abilities, prudence, and skill, have so seldom thought the periodical press, a subject worthy of their attention ;—this mighty engine of good and evil, has so often been left to the management of unexperienced, and often half educated men ; that a large part of its records might easily be made to subserve any purpose, which the enemies of evangelical piety might wish to effect.

Yet we do believe that revivals of religion are the joy and glory of the Church, and the hope of the world. The polemic fires which were kindled at the Reformation, continued to rage until vital religion in the Church had been nearly burnt out. There seemed to be nothing to prevent the universal prevalence of a heartless formality, but such visitations of mercy as we now speak of. The circumstances of the American Churches were, in many respects, favourable to the occurrence of these events. Christians in the United States were placed in a situation to look only to the grace of their Lord, and the power of their religion. In this case, there is naturally a more direct and vigorous application of religion to the conscience, than we ordinarily find in different circumstances. And there is no control of the ministers of the Gospel, by “the powers that be.” Every one is at full liberty to try the **utmost** force of his religion, in the way which appears to **him best**.—*America is, and it long will be, the land of revivals.*

But in this country, “**who will may preach, and what he will.**” And it is not to be denied, that among numbers of our fellow-citizens, noisy declamation is preferred to sound exposition of the Bible. Powerful excitements are pro-

duced by addresses to the imagination and the senses ; and we have a pretty full experience of the disastrous and desolating effects of *false revivals*. Men of experience, of sound discrimination, and careful observation among us, can afford on this subject, information of the highest value to the world ; and utter warning voices, which, if duly regarded, will save the Church from much reproach and sorrow, and prevent the occurrence of many a scene of desolation.

It is a matter for everlasting praise, too, that we have in this country a number of men, of adequate information, of fervent piety, and habits of careful observation, whose labours have been greatly blessed. *Genuine revivals* of religion have taken place under their ministry. They have brought forth fruit, and their *fruit hath remained*. They who were afar off have been brought nigh ;—Christians have made advances in holiness ;—and the whole effect of one revival has been a preparation for another, of equal, or perhaps greater power. These instances afford opportunities for statements of particulars of the most instructive character. The wonder is, that they have not already been made. A thorough conviction of the paramount value of *revealed truth*, united with deep piety, a large portion of common sense, and some considerable knowledge of human nature, have prompted these most excellent ministers of Christ, to pursue the course of true wisdom, but they have not yet, as far as we know, preserved registers of facts ; have not made and recorded numerous, minute, and careful observations, so as to afford ample instruction to others, of less wisdom and experience than their own.

Now the organization of the Presbyterian Church affords very peculiar advantages, for collecting information respecting the progress of religion ; the particular measures employed to promote it ; and the results as they are varied by different plans, or by the same plans, conducted in different

circumstances. We can scarcely conceive of a situation in which more practical wisdom might be acquired than in our General Assemblies, if only the members would come together, with hearts all alive, and attention all awake to this great object. They who compose this venerable body, are for the most part members of all the inferior judicatories of the Church. As pastors and elders, they belong to Church Sessions, where all the measures adopted to promote the conversion of sinners, and the holiness of Christians, in their particular congregations, are of course, subject to their personal inspection. Then there are Presbyteries and Synods, where the state of religion, and the means used to build up the kingdom of the Redeemer, are matters of particular inquiry, and of formal report. And finally, there is the General Assembly, in which are gathered representatives of the Churches, from the Presbytery of Londonderry to that of Missouri. These great councils, too, are held every year. The order of the Assembly requires an annual report of the state of religion. It is possible, then, to bring together the knowledge and experience of more than a thousand men, and afford the whole to each member of the Assembly. We have wished with inexpressible earnestness, that the protracted, and often warm discussions of matters of mere personal and local interest, which so often occur, might give place to the careful consideration of other, and we hope to be forgiven for saying, more important business. And it occurs to us, that a close union and free correspondence with foreign Churches may help to produce this change. For let our former remarks be recollected; that Christians abroad are beginning to waken up, and look at the events which are taking place in our country. The report of what the Lord has done for us, has travelled into distant lands. And our brethren from afar, are inquiring with much solicitude on this subject. The Minutes of the General Assembly are sent abroad; and they will be read with

great eagerness. When it is seen that twenty or thirty thousand are added to the Churches in a year; and there is great glorying in the wonderful achievements of redeeming mercy, these authentic records of our Church will be studied with much care, that it may be known what are the measures thus signally blessed by the great Lord of all.

In a word, our General Assembly might be made to feel that they are acting on a wide theatre; and not for themselves and for petty interests at home:—that they are “encompassed with a great cloud of witnesses;” and that they ought to lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset them, that in a word, they ought to constitute the centre of an influence which shall be felt through the whole world. And why may not such things be? Why may not the third Thursday in May constitute an epoch in the history of our Church? And the future historian in tracing the progress of religion, ought to be able to see in the measures adopted by each General Assembly, a new impulse given to the great enterprise of making this land the land of Immanuel; and this world his kingdom.

It is most admirably taught in the constitution of our Church, that “truth is in order to goodness;” and that “the great touchstone of truth, is its tendency to promote holiness.” According to this doctrine, if our Church is, as we maintain, the purest, so it ought to be, the holiest in the world. And if our system of ecclesiastical polity is nearest to the great principles laid down in the New Testament, then in its administration, it ought to produce the best results.

The strongest argument that possibly can be produced in these times of contention and division, would be the superior zeal, liberality, kindness, self-denial, humility—or to say all in one word, the superior holiness of Presbyterians. Let the country and the world, feel that we are a blessing to them, and they will *receive us*: let them feel that we are

a *greater* blessing than any other people, and they will admit our greater purity both in doctrine and discipline. Any measures which have a tendency to produce a result like this, shall always have our warm approbation, and decided support. Indeed, one prime object of our labours, in conducting this journal, is to raise the standard of piety in our Churches, and especially among our ministers. And whatever else we may be able to accomplish, we shall feel all the mortification produced by failure, if we are favoured with no success, in this our leading purpose. None, we trust, can question our zeal for sound Presbyterian orthodoxy. But we value our doctrine and discipline for this very reason, because we believe, that, when fully received and carried out into practice, they are entirely adapted to make men more active, benevolent, liberal, and pious, than any other system of which we have any knowledge. When convinced of the contrary, we shall be ready to change our plans. We are especially desirous that the General Assembly may be the instrument of doing *all* that good, which, by its constitution, it is adapted to do; that it may diffuse blessings, in every direction, to the greatest possible extent; and divine benefits from every source opened by the great Head of the Church.