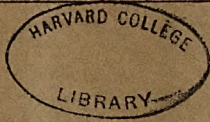


CP30.35

Vol. I.

October, 1845.

No. 3.



THE

COVENANTER.

DEVOTED TO THE PRINCIPLES OF

THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

EDITED BY

JAMES M. WILLSON.

"The Law of the Lord is perfect."—PSALM XIX. 7.

"Where to we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing."—PHIL. III. 16.



Philadelphia:

DAVID SMITH, PROPRIETOR, 26 PERRY STREET.

1845.

This Number does not weigh over one and a half ounces. Postage, 2½ cents.

WILLIAM S. YOUNG, PRINTER.

THE COVENANTER.

OCTOBER, 1845.

HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND from the Introduction of Christianity to the period of the Disruption, in 1843. By the Rev. W. M. HETHERINGTON, A.M., Torpichen. 8vo. pp. 500. New York: Robert Carter. 1844.

WE have long wished to see a true, comprehensive, and yet brief history of the Church of Scotland. Such a work has been greatly needed as a family book: a book that would interest the young, and that might safely be put into their hands; and, at the same time, contain a summary of facts extensive enough to edify the adult reader. We have, indeed, many histories of the Scottish Church: Knox, Spottiswood, Calderwood, Stephenson, Crookshank, and Wodrow, with Buchanan, and Aikman, Brown's Apologetical Relation, and Mc'Crie's Lives, the Scots' Worthies, and Cloud of Witnesses, besides many smaller works, such as biographies, traditions, &c.* In these are embodied all the facts in the eventful career of that most eminent of the reformed churches, with which we can hope now to become acquainted. The greater part of them are invaluable to the private Christian, and to the professed student of history. They cannot be, and they ought not to be, superseded. Many of them are accessible to the general reader, and the most voluminous and rare will ever be sought after by such as have leisure and opportunities and taste for thorough historical investigation. No compendious history can take their place. But the most valuable of them are limited to particular periods. They do not embrace, as a family book ought, the whole range of Scottish ecclesiastical history, and nothing else.

As to its plan, the history before us meets our wishes. It is intended to present, as far as possible, in an unbroken chain, the series of events from the earliest to the present times. As to the execution, it has been, in the main, successful. The author has comprised within moderate, readable bounds, all the most important facts, with an ample proportion of appropriate and useful reflections. The style is, generally, excellent: sometimes highly polished and elegant. The narrative is clear, the incidents well combined, so as to present them to the best advantage by reflected lights. The spirit of the work is, upon the whole, unusually favourable to the interests of true religion and faithful testimony-bearing. The unity of the narrative is well preserved by presenting all the

* A History of the Covenanters, written by a Secession minister in Scotland, and republished in two small volumes by the Presbyterian Board of Publication in this country, is worthy of special mention. We take this method of drawing the attention of our readers to it as a very valuable compend—well suited to be put into the hands of youth.

seller and guide in the discharge of every duty, whether to his family, his country, or his God. Its laws are as binding upon rulers and governors in church and state, as upon the heads of congregational or domestic circles. Public functionaries are as much amenable to the behests of the Omnipotent as private individuals. And whatever the mushroom wisdom of this superficial age may venture to assert to the contrary, religion is indissolubly connected with politics: and politics without religion would be a species of carcass without animation, a fabric without foundation, an arch without its key-stone, and a planetary system without its centre of gravitation and laws of attraction. The infidel illumination of the nineteenth century may flash her unsubstantial rays across our path, and deny the stability of the principles of eternal rectitude and truth which are to be found in the revelation of the Almighty; but we will still retain our solemn impressions, still maintain the supreme and unerring authority of the Bible, in opposition to that and every other notion that is "earthly, sensual, and devilish."

The mere politician, who pays no regard to the repeated and multiplied aggressions of popery and only exclaims, in listless indifference, when he hears of its advances, or sees its progressive march, "Oh, I have nothing to do with theology!" is either an egregious simpleton, an empty coxcomb, or a thorough-paced and determined traitor. Popery, as the history sketched by the author before us amply testifies, in her entire ecclesiastical structure is eminently political: her assumption of supreme power and authority, and the unavoidable and uniform fruits produced by so arrogant and haughty a position, entertained in political equally with religious matters of jurisprudence, give an abundant and undeviating testimony to the accuracy of the solemn truth, that national security and independence are incompatible with the exercise and enjoyment of political power by papists in a protestant country. We are quite ready to prove to those who look simply at secondary causes, and the work of natural principles, that what is wrong in Christian principle, must be dangerous in political practice; that what is wrong on religious grounds, must be so, even on the lower ground of political expediency.

A NEW SCHOOL PRESBYTERIAN AND THE CONFESSION OF FAITH. *

We insert, with *some* satisfaction, the following extract from an article in the Christian Observer, of Philadelphia, August 15th. The more men study and become acquainted with the attainments of the reformation, the more will they be ready to say "the old is better." We apply this remark not only to what relates to the doctrines of grace, and to church order, but to the attainments of our fathers regarding the duty of reformed nations to countenance and support the church of God.

"We highly prized our standards before the great schism of 1837—but we did not fully know their worth. We have since studied them more attentively, and they have risen in our estimation. We do not exalt them as infallible—but we do consider them incomparable, as symbols of our faith, and worship, and order. We regard them as decidedly superior to any and every other manual, confession, and form of government known in any portion of the Christian church. The doctrines which they state and define with remarkable clearness, and the great principles of right and liberty which they affirm and defend, are scriptural and excellent. We esteem them as a sacred and precious birthright. We esteem them too highly to submit them to the restless-innovating spirit of reform for emendation. As a church, we stand pledged before God and the world, as the guardians of the doctrines and of the principles of order which they teach."

The drawbacks to our satisfaction in this extract are, 1. Pretty strong disbelief of the assertion contained in the first clause of the first sen-

tence. 2. Some doubts whether, to any extent, similar views are intelligently held in that body. 3. A shade of suspicion of the sincerity of the writer himself. And, 4, The recollection that it is a mutilated Confession, from which all that relates to national religion has been expunged. Still we are glad to find in that body expressions so strong employed in regard to the general excellence of the Confession of Faith as a summary of doctrine, and of the Presbyterian system of church order.

THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

As the time approaches for the opening of another session of this institution, we take the opportunity of calling attention to the subject of the funds for its support. This involves two things, 1. The liquidation of the debt already contracted. And, 2. The raising of sufficient funds to defray the current expenses. In the arrangement adopted by Synod this year, and which will be found on the last page of the printed minutes, these are kept distinct, and special collections are directed to be taken up on account of the debt: each congregation being left to adopt its own plan for lifting these collections. The debt amounts to \$1207,13: probably twenty-five cents a-piece for each member of the church. Hence, it can be paid without any difficulty. One-half of the members of the church, by contributing, on an average, fifty cents each, could themselves pay it all. We are aware that in these calculations there are many who must be left out of view. A few are unable to contribute any thing—some are thoughtless, and forget or make no account of these small demands—while others again are unwilling to do any thing: they are willing to enjoy all the privileges and advantages of the church, but cannot open their hearts to aid in bearing her burdens. But, leaving all these out of the question, there still remains enough to meet the whole demand, and to do it at once. We ought to add, that nearly, if not quite, all this debt was contracted previously to the year 1843, when Synod adopted a plan for raising funds for the support of the seminary. Since then, the expenses have been nearly met. The debt is of old standing, and, hence, its speedy liquidation is still more imperative.

As to the current expenses, a few cents from every member of the church would be ample for all purposes. But here again, we must calculate upon a large reduction, when we come to speak of paying members. Still a few cents, twenty-five or thirty, say, from half the church, would raise a fund large enough to meet, liberally and seasonably, all the expenses. Many will give far more, some will give less. The highest average mentioned can be—will be—reached. The plan of Synod, to lift these collections every six months, has been found to work well in some places, and is, perhaps, as well calculated to accomplish the object easily, and in proper season, as any that could be devised. It will be found on page 277 of printed minutes of 1843. We are glad to learn that the prospects of the seminary, for the ensuing winter, as to the number of students who will attend its sessions, appear to be highly encouraging.