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ART. I.—*The Matter of Prophecy.*

THE likeness of the prophets to Moses, and their position in the old economy, determine the task with which they were charged. This was to maintain in its integrity the covenant relation of the people to God, and so to conduct and superintend that relation that it might work out the grand end of its institution, a preparation for the coming of Christ. Hence every thing is viewed by them in its bearings upon that fundamental covenant. It is theirs to develope to the understanding of the people their obligations and privileges arising out of their special relation to God, the fatal consequences which would ensue from its abandonment or neglect, and the glorious issue which God designed to effect for them and for the world by means of it. As they were the authorized expounders of the purposes of God touching a plan still in progress, their communications largely concerned events which were yet future. It was given to them to anticipate the further unfoldings of the divine plan of grace, and to announce what the Most High had in store for Israel and for the world.

The predictions of the prophets are of course qualified and shaped by their grand aim as just exhibited. They are consequently not anticipations of future events selected at random,

ART. II.—*The Presbyterian Historical Society.*

THIS institution is capable of fulfilling a much needed and valuable office. Its usefulness cannot be confined to the Presbyterian portion of the Christian communion, but will extend to the whole church. The Presbyterian branch, with its clear and comprehensive Confession, its energy and enterprise, and its social influence, sustains, and must continue to sustain, a vital relation to the prosperity of the church at large; and her history cannot be truly and properly written without embracing the leading points of the church as a whole.

In the progress of human affairs, there arise many institutions and agencies which acquire little historical significance. They owe their origin mainly to superficial and transient causes, which are not a part of the life of the world, but only incidental to the circumstances of its progress. Others, on the contrary, though obscure and unimposing in their origin, and very imperfectly understood, as to their full import and value, even by their authors themselves, rise from the deeper motions of humanity, and mark an era of human advancement.

The former class reveal but little of the divine order of the world. Their chief use in history is to register some aberrations of human infirmity, and offer counsel and warning for the future. Some which really belong to this class, like sundry sects of the early ages of the church, have long periods of declining existence, amongst the lingering digressions in which human nature is allowed to indulge, while under the general influence of the redeeming power. They arise out of real progress in the world. They are in some sort indispensable to it, by a necessity of human infirmity. They may often claim a close connection with the truth, with the normal exercise of the human powers under the existing conditions, and even with the renewing work of the Holy Spirit; while yet they originate in a departure, already begun, from the true course of the church, embody more of evil than of good,

degenerate themselves, and become a hinderance to the progress of Christian civilization. They have their temporary use. They come of evil, indeed, and are mainly symptoms of the disease of sin; yet they have a utility, like some of the accommodating laws of Moses, which were given because best for the time. Still, humanity outgrows them, drops them for the more manly discipline, and repents of its childish contentment with that which was thus to be cast off.

The Greek church, in the great division, took a separate position, for reasons which indicated the beginning of a radical departure from the law of the Christian life; and from that point her course has been a decline, till it has proved that she took nothing with her from which she could contribute to the final glory of the church. The hideous accretions on the Papal church have become so large, that the whole system appears to be long outliving its usefulness, and to be only a huge obstruction to the progress of mankind. Many of the civil governments are good only for the present stress; and few of them have the qualities which will enter into the perfect civilization. They are therefore transient. Their end comes with the improvement of society, the growth of humanity in the world. They leave their record, and not much besides. Their record should be written. History is incomplete and unsatisfactory to posterity, unless it commemorates their existence, portrays their character, and shows how they came to be, to continue, and to serve their purpose. They are among the things that were; and so are the transient characteristics of the ages in which they stood. They even appear absurd, except in their living connection with those anomalous and evanescent conditions of society which produced and employed them, and finally left them to perish.

Whatever of human infirmity is implied in these facts, the church shares with the world. The church is in the world, and is joined with it under the general laws of the divine administration in relation to sin. The scene of conflict between sin and holiness is within her, and therefore she, above all, might be expected to present, in some most impressive ways, the contrast of these two opposite powers. Where else but in the church will there be endeavours to overcome sin? And there,

too, may we look for failures as well as successes. In her remaining infirmity, she will often renounce one error by adopting another; in attempting to correct one fault, will commit another;—all in the effort after improvement. The struggle is from the working of the Spirit of Christ in his body; and the eye of that Spirit in the church looks always as it did in Christ himself, towards the glory that is set before her. The eye of the mind, thus looking, does not always control the mind itself entirely. It does this progressively only, but always so that the changes as they occur, considering the church as a whole, are often, indirectly, indeed, yet really, towards the mark for the prize of her high calling.

It is freely to be acknowledged, that the divisions of the church, even those which are caused by the effort to uphold purer truth and more profitable service, are liable to be attended by a spirit as unworthy of the church as that which was professedly renounced. The remedy is often as bad as the disease. The apparent and transient benefits are frequently followed by evil in some respects as lamentable as the one it was proposed to remove. This has been one of the conditions of the progress of the church from the first. It is on this account that the history of the Christian church, even from the earliest period, is so much occupied with the formation of religious sects, and with their doctrines, their character, and their influence. It must be so. The life of every sect is a part of the life of the church. When a portion of the church, however corrupt in its faith or its practice, cuts itself off in form from the ecclesiastical body, or is cut off by the church authority, it does not leave the field of church history at once, nor indeed ever, so long as the traces of its existence are discernible in the world. The anti-Judaizing Gnostic sects, for example, with their principles and progress, considered as a part of the Christian phenomena of their time, must be traced by the historical pen of the church, not only where their influence can be recognised in the forms of Christian thought which were adopted in the Alexandrian schools of the time, and which thus became evanescent elements in the philosophical conceptions of Christian truth and culture; they must also be followed in their excommunicated, or extra-ecclesiastical course, till every Chris-

tian tint has faded from their countenance, and they have manifestly ceased to draw into themselves, as branches, any portion of the intellectual and moral life of the vine. Thus, also, even the Manichean imaginations, and all the Asiatic myths which were baptized with them into Christianity, must have their place in all true and complete church history, so long as the leading features of the Son of God can be fairly traced in their principal Aeon, and the idea of Christ crucified is discernible in their view of the experience of mankind. These religious phenomena are all effects of Christianity in the world. Their history is a part of the history of the church.

If the Presbyterian church, then, were only one of those incidental sects, destined to live and flourish for a time, and soon to be numbered among the things that were, there would yet be strong reasons why the members should feel a lively interest in preparing for a full and true record of its beginning, its progress, and its influence. Its establishment under its proper name, in connection with the great Reformation, was one of the most prominent features of the Reformation itself. Its firm and high standing, its power as one of the agencies that contributed to the results of that great work, and impressed its image on the subsequent era, are things which its friends would naturally love to commemorate. The instruction thus offered is due to the whole church. And the great and rapidly growing activity of our people in the work of general religious culture, in the cause of missions, and in the production of religious literature, together with their social influence, and the well known tendency of their character and principles towards the greatest freedom consistent with true social order, would give this branch of the church a claim to high rank in the history of all the branches of the church which grew out of the Reformation.

But in the origin of this Christian organization, which is now denominated a branch of the church, in its doctrine, its character, and its progress, there are many things which strongly resist the thought that presbyterianism is one of the transient and vanishing forms of Christianity in the world. We take it as the common expectation of Christendom, that the advance of the church towards her final glory in the earth

includes an advance towards uniformity in doctrine and in external order. It is impossible to associate the present distractions of the Christian body with that unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, which is finally to make the church the perfect man, in the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. The schismatic tendency which at present accompanies the religious progress of the Protestant world, and which, especially in this country, seems so little restrained by the calm consideration of the evil which produces and follows it, finds its only apology, even among those most under its sway, in those diversities of faith and knowledge which are to disappear. The unity of the Spirit must work uniformity. Now for any one of the Protestant sects of this day to assume with confidence, that its own peculiar doctrine and order are to be the form of the whole visible church in her final earthly glory, would seem a ludicrous presumption. Yet we need not argue that any one of these divisions is less imperfect than the rest, as to the infirmities common to men in their Christian life, while we may claim to discover, in some one more than in others, of those elements of faith, of order, and of action, which are foretold of the future church on earth.

The Papal and Protestant divisions of the western church are the only Christian powers now really felt and recognised as offering any contribution to the spiritual improvement of mankind. That the Roman Catholic church can be allowed, by the laws of human nature, when thoroughly subjected to the law of the Spirit of life in Christ, to share directly and prominently in working out the glory of the future church on earth, by means of her peculiar organization and method of religious culture, is what the most liberal and enlightened Protestant cannot easily believe. If she has recuperative power to bring her back to the simplicity of the gospel, and restore in her system the true functions of spiritual life, she may fall in with the progressive portions of the church, conform gradually with them to the laws of the Lord's great work, and take her place amongst his earthly agents. But her restored vitality will throw off the excrescences which have formed upon her in the course of ages, and give freedom to the principles of truth, of faith, and of order, which she holds in com-

mon with the rest of the church. And if this reformation were looked for, it would be through Protestant influence. Thus the Protestant portion of the church is reasonably expected to be the principal agent in forming the earthly future of the kingdom of Christ. The leading branches of the great Protestant communions should consider how much of that freedom they have which can be profitably used in such a work; how much of the popular intelligence, that may give direction to energy and enlarge their success; what ability to maintain advancing movements. These are our signs of the will of God, that the people thus qualified should consider the work as theirs.

The more notable indications of the part in this work assigned by Providence to the presbyterian church it may be our duty to consider. If the simple form of church organization, government, and discipline, which first arose among the primitive Christians at the suggestion of the Holy Ghost, in them and in the apostles, was given as the model form, towards which the Spirit of Christ in his people may be supposed always to lean, we must presume that, as Christianity carries the people forward in the true civilization, it will enable and incline them all to use for their greatest edification, this primitive church constitution. If the form of doctrine delivered to the church by the apostles be the form which the one Spirit tends always to bring up to the thoughts of the Christian, then as increasing culture shall enable the people to understand and appreciate alike the statements of Scripture, and as the work of the Spirit shall remove prejudice, quicken spiritual discernment, and engage diligent and earnest inquiry, that form of doctrine will become more and more the uniform standard of the church. Now that the presbyterian church appears at present to be the main channel along which the apostolical ideas of Christian doctrine and order are taking their course of normal development, seems fairly suggested by the history of the presbyterian principles thus far. And we here refer to this fact for the valuable purpose, among others, of engaging interest in the proposed measures for securing a complete and trustworthy history of the system.

First, as to the primitive form of organization and govern-

ment. The word "presbyter" is the Greek term used in Scripture to denote a member of the board intrusted with the government of the Jewish church. The religious organization of the nation at large was repeated in the synagogue, on a smaller scale. The Sanhedrim, or church-court of the nation, would properly be called a Presbytery, being a body of presbyters; and so would also the presbyters of the synagogue. That the Christian presbyters at Jerusalem, Antioch, and the other churches, were copies of the Jewish presbyter, and were the first church rulers which appear in the gospel history, there is no dispute. And thus the first feature of government that appeared in the primitive church, is on all hands admitted to have been presbyterian. Whatever other titles came to be applied in the later years of the apostolic age, and long after, to such presbyters as held distinguished stations, or fulfilled special offices, they were still all presbyters; and the original and immediate governing body, whether for the particular church or the church collectively, was still the presbytery. Titles were changed, in process of time, while the office remained. And it is worthy of remark, how generally the church, in all its branches and in every age, has considered itself as having some office in its government answering to that of the primitive presbyter, either under that or some other name. A class of officers were still called presbyters long after a permanent distinction was fixed between the presbyters composing the body, and the one who presided over it. The latter, at length, became permanent president, and was currently distinguished by the title of bishop, though in the essential nature of his office he was still a presbyter. His presbyterial character was no more affected by his being called to preside, though permanently, and though having many other powers *ex officio*, than that of another member would be, when called to act as permanent clerk. Thus it was that the presbyterian principle entered into the church as a property of her primitive life. By degrees the title fell into disuse. The manner of appointment to the office was changed. The duties of course varied with varying circumstances; and yet the term presbyter has never gone into entire disuse in any portion of

the church. The mediæval period was that in which the title was most obscure and doubtful in its application.

After the long obscurity of the middle ages, during which the name and the form of the office of presbyter had so nearly disappeared from among the features of the church, what could be more certain than that the presbyterian principle, so eminent in her primitive constitution, and only repressed by the force of unfavourable connections with the world, should reappear with the revival of the apostolic spirit. Accordingly in the Waldensian secession, the chief forerunner of the Reformation, it came forth as the natural offspring of the original and pure mind of the Spirit, and as one of the first fruits of ecclesiastical repentance. But no sooner did the opening reformation emancipate an enlightened and earnest portion of the church, and leave it free to follow the teachings of Scripture and the motions of the Spirit, than this same form of church order reappears in all the prominence, simplicity, and vigour of the apostolic age. Wherever the church relieved itself most effectually from the petrifications of Romanism, there the lineaments of presbytery stood forth in their greatest simplicity and purity. From the Reformation down, the most prominent form of Protestant ecclesiastical organization, which lays any claim to a historical origin, except the church of England and its offspring in this country, has been, in all lands, substantially presbyterian. And in the other branches of the Protestant family the rudiments of the form exist in a disturbed development, and in some cases without the name. The Anglican deacon, presbyter, and bishop, may be construed, as above stated, into apostolic presbytery with these deviations, that the bishop is viewed not as a presiding presbyter, but as a superior church ruler; the diaconate, as an order of the teaching ministry, and the presbyter, as but one of the orders on the graduated scale both for government and instruction. In other Protestant communions the term elder, answering to presbyter, is familiarly used of ministers, and, in most cases, with part of the sense it bears with us. Congregationalism, with its committees in particular churches, when convenience requires, has an incipient development of the eldership, though without the name, and with only temporary and limited

powers; while in large societies, where much service is required, the office tends towards permanency and increasing power; but for collective churches, Congregationalism applies its powers by a presbytery whose members, lay and clerical, are created *pro re nata*. All these have the principle of presbytery imperfectly developed, though they claim to hold it in the primitive form. And in all, there is an evident tendency towards the simple, definite, and complete standard of the apostolic presbyterianism, without intentionally changing their principles, but professedly carrying out the spirit of their own system. As ecclesiastical duties multiply, the officers charged with them tend to permanency, from the very convenience of the permanency itself, and from the benefit of the better service of those who have learned to serve well. And thus, where no prejudice disturbs the process, there rises naturally, as from the life of the institution, some settled form of representative authority.

What we here suggest is, that all these obvious and valuable tendencies of the human and divine, united in the church of Christ, have their natural and free operation in the constitution of the presbyterian church; and so far as her organization and her form of government are concerned, it would seem a reasonable presumption that this branch of the church, with her present resources and influence, and with her apostolical form of government so firmly established and in so extensive and effectual use, will have a prominent part in the future course of the kingdom of Christ, unless her spirit is unworthy of her institutions.

Secondly, as to her doctrine. Those portions of the church distinguished by the tenets currently known as Calvinistic, may find great pleasure and profit in considering how their rich inheritance of speculative doctrine has been prepared for them. The course of doctrinal preparation has been even more remarkable than that of preparing and transmitting the principles and form of her government and discipline.

The doctrines of the gospel become the possession of the church, not by treasuring up a form of words, but by the propagation of the thoughts and affections by which they were represented in the inspired writers, and made the furniture of their

mind and heart. Hence it became an early part of the work of the church to conceive and express its doctrines in thoughts and words of its own. The doctrines thus become her spiritual treasure, and can be profitable for correction and for instruction in righteousness, in all the circumstances and all the duties of her progressive life. And this work is repeated, in a measure, amongst the growing Christians of every age.

It was truly a noble and useful intellectual service performed for the church by those fathers, who by the aid, as well as under the stimulating antagonism of the Gnostic speculations, were able to discern and establish for us the true and valuable distinction between knowledge and faith; the knowledge which puffeth up, and which will vanish away, and the knowledge which is the gracious work of the Spirit in the soul. This service is the better understood and more highly prized, the farther the church advances in the enlightened apprehension of the divine mysteries. However much of the earlier patristic speculation has long since passed out of the mind of the church, this distinction is a fixed result of intellectual labour, and has ever since been retained wherever the work of the Spirit in redemption has been thoroughly treated.

After defining and vindicating, according to the Christian ideas, the doctrine of the one true God against all forms of polytheism, it was natural that the first great doctrine concerning God, of which the church should feel itself called upon to determine and define her connection, should be the doctrine of the Person of Christ, and, in connection with that, the doctrine of the Trinity. The conception of the true and proper humanity of Christ was thus clearly brought forth against Docetism, and settled in the mind of the church for all time. His divinity had not yet, within the church, been called in question. At that early period it was, that the church came into possession of the full and well-defined speculative form of the doctrine that Christ, the Son of God, became man by taking to himself a true body and a reasonable soul, and so was, and continued to be, God and man, in two distinct natures and one person for ever. And there followed shortly an equally definite statement of the doctrine of the three persons in one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory. The

statements then framed, and the ideas expressed by them on these great doctrines of the gospel, seemed destined to satisfy the mind of the church without modification, to the latest generation. And all these statements, with the exact conceptions associated with them, are preserved, as to their substance, in the Calvinistic confessions of every land to this day. Their past history is a prophecy of their future.

The age of Augustine is especially illustrious for the ineffaceable speculative views it furnished of the scriptural doctrines of sin, of regeneration, with other redeeming operations of the Spirit, of atonement, with its application, and of the work of redemption in general. These gracious fruits of sanctified intellect, matured in the air and the sunlight of Christian faith, were inherited in full by our reformers of the sixteenth century and their successors, and by them bequeathed, with large usury, to the lineal heirs of the reformed estate. It is the full and clear views held forth on some of these points, with unwavering decision, and with the demonstration of the Spirit and of power, which have conferred an eminent distinction on the presbyterian portion of the church. The wonderful inspiration of intellectual energy which accompanied and followed the Reformation, alighted remarkably upon the presbyterian fathers. At the same time, the theological necessities of the church were urgent, from the wholesale rejection of the corruption and formality of the middle ages; and thus the mental power and activity which rose to grasp and appropriate the intellectual bequest of the Augustinean age, gave unfading glory to Christianity for human eyes. It was a glorious testimony for the doctrines themselves, and for the minds which saw their value, and laid hold upon them, that these pearls of truth, after lying buried so long and deep in the alluvion of the Romanizing ages, were recovered, recognised by their native purity, and commended to the world as the faith of the saints. This fact merits all the historical commemoration it can receive from the glowing annals of the presbyterian church. A church with such an inheritance may write glorious annals. Her history is itself a power in the kingdom of Christ. The Lord make her worthy of her gifts by the due improvement of them, that her path into the predicted future of his kingdom in

the world may be a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

This glance at the historical aspect of the presbyterian organization and doctrine suggests the deep seat of the principles among the reigning forces of redeemed humanity, and their *very* sure continuance and progressive ascendancy with the advance of the church towards her destined earthly glory. If the Jewish constitution, with its elective presbytery, (elders of the people,) supreme in authority under God, was appointed as the normal government for a people in whom God was to dwell, who were to be wholly subject to his Spirit, in whose heart his law was to be written, and who were thus to have the root and ground of all government in themselves, and if the people's incapacity and indisposition to maintain that constitution was such an offence to their divine Sovereign that he changed the government only to punish them, and gave them a king in his wrath, then must it follow, that as the people of God become free from their sin, maintain their perfect allegiance to his Spirit reigning within them, and fully escape the corruption of the world through lust, the church, to say nothing of the state, will feel her divine constitution restoring itself from the sanctified depths of her being, and assuming that blessed dominion which is ensured to the saints of the Most High.

In government, as in mechanics, perfection is marked by the extreme of simplicity consistent with the greatest efficiency. The problem is, to expend the minimum of force in overcoming the friction of the parts, while all the ends desired shall be attained. The simplicity must be, of course, inversely as the unfitness of the material in the organs, and of the material to be wrought upon. A government of men led entirely by the Spirit of God, and a people led entirely by the same Spirit, will bear the utmost simplicity in their organization. The ruling spirit in every member will seek its own perfect development in personal character, and in the character of the body as a whole. The government that would arise over such a body, and out of itself, would be a presbytery. The governing members will be many, and not one, for the due and convenient execution of many services, by persons of finite abilities; they will be coördinate; the principles of each securing his fidelity

without the watch of a superior; they will be men of years, with capacities developed and approved; many, equals, elders; *i. e.*, a Presbytery. But the church, in subduing the world to the Spirit of Christ in her, takes in, all the time, more of the world than she assimilates; and hence, as in the memorable times of the Emperor Constantine, and Pope Gregory VII., in swallowing the world by states, she overburdens the infirmity of her spiritual organs; and then, with a sagacity, commended by the stress, and chiefly the wisdom of her sin, resorts to the worldly and temporal medicaments. But these are temporal only. As the church gains, by her divine Spirit, upon the spirit of the world in her bosom, she instinctively betrays her innate presentiment for the simplest government that can effectually govern. The Reformation of the sixteenth century, and the religious movements immediately subsequent, consisted of the return of the entire Protestant body towards the primitive standard of church government; part, as in the Anglican church, and much more in the Gallican, stopping short in a modulated prelacy; part, in excessive revolt against the appearance of earthly authority, going beyond, to a radical, disintegrated independency. The true middle path, where freedom and authority advance together, appears to be that of the presbyterian system. Towards this, the Protestant motions on both sides appear convergent. The tendency of the prelatical organizations to narrow down the prelatical distinction, both as to matters of official power, and of social rank, becomes obvious by comparing American prelacy with English; and by observing, also, how the manners and the sentiments of dignity, in both America and England, shade off from rigid formalism towards the less restrained freedom of spiritual life, through the Low-church assimilations. On the other hand, Congregationalism, in its recoil from the ghost of despotism suspected to lurk in the standing eldership, improvises essential presbyterianism for its occasions, and does not formally deny even the title of bishop to its ministers, but excludes the name of elder or presbyter from its constitution. Between these converging tendencies, which are retarded in their action only by special forces against the general law, the presbyterian system holds its onward course, with no feeling of organic inconvenience or

imperfection, and only wanting more of the Spirit of Christ, that she may use her divine form of government and culture for greater edification.

Looking forward now from the point of view afforded by such facts as we have above presented, we do not think it presumptuous to hope that, through the continued grace of God, the destined progress of the church is to be attended by the growing prevalence of the presbyterian form of government and doctrine; that this will be realized, on the part of the existing presbyterian body, by the progressive development and application of the capabilities of the system for promoting the effectual use of the means of grace, for raising the standard of religious culture, aiding the symmetrical and healthy growth of the people of God who employ it, and bringing forth the fruits of righteousness in the ever-improving forms of Christian civilization; and that it will be realized in the other portions of the church, by the continued and accelerated approximation already noticed in them towards the primitive simplicity and order, as all the people advance in knowledge and in grace. We therefore see from this point substantial reasons for wishing that the history of this system, through the whole course of its development and operations, may be accurately and fully written. There would hardly seem to be any valid objection against employing suitable measures, under ecclesiastical authority and supervision, for that purpose. At least, it will certainly consist with the entire spirit and interest of the church, and with every Christian sentiment of its members, that the Society formed for this object, and representing all the presbyterian communions in this country, should be aided in doing whatever in that valuable service its hands find to do.

We therefore first remark, that in encouraging such an institution, the highly favoured members of our communion are worthily engaged. The history of the presbyterian government and doctrine is worthy to be written. The conception of the system of order in the mind of apostolic inspiration, is one of the profitable themes of meditation for all who love to observe how the Lord provides good for his people. Its long and obscure existence in the womb of the ages, awaiting the fulness of its time, is one of the instructive facts connected with the

work of the Lord for his people. By such means, the idea was fully preserved in the church, amidst the fierce and turbulent conflicts which were to be waged with the kingdom of darkness, where its simple outward form was so corrupted from its simplicity, and where its spirit retired till the darkness was overpast. And such a preservation the church does well to commemorate. But from the Reformation down, when it returned to its central place in the expanding theatre of Christian life, its history solicits a corresponding position in the ecclesiastical annals. In the conceptions and the spirit of Calvin it recovers its primitive outline in full. From that time its history becomes more distinct, more copious, and more instructive, than in the ages before. From that time its principles of combined freedom and authority have been steadily unfolding themselves in the progress of the kingdom of Christ, and even in the movements of civil society. The history of the presbyterian institution will continue to be written. It will not be ignored. It will not be neglected. The traffickers in literature will covet it. But it is for the church to use her best care that it may be properly written; that her story may be told as she understands it, and that the record may include such good and useful things concerning her course and aims, as she only can so well know. It is thus a worthy object that we may propose in patronizing the Society referred to, because the things themselves will always be accounted worthy of faithful record.

In such a service, there is, secondly, a great benefit for the church at large. The greater the cause and the influence of the presbyterian church in the kingdom of Christ, the more valuable will her history be for the whole church. It will contribute to most of the purposes which the advancing state of society may originate. It will afford some desirable illustrations of the work of the Spirit for the edification of the church, and especially as to matters of discipline and culture. It will exhibit favourably the mutual relation of the diverse labours of the ministry, and the more natural methods of uniting the various gifts of the one Spirit, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. The type of religious character presented under the influence of the Calvinistic faith, and the presby-

terian mode of culture, has in some circumstances been truly remarkable; showing, in cases where the peculiar religious training has been almost alone in its operation, what the specific tendencies of the system were; how it brought forth the sterner, more resolute and energetic traits of human nature, and prepared the disciples of Christ for action and endurance in his service. The church at large has an interest in the historical exhibition of these tendencies, and of their fruits; and especially in their history in time to come, when the influences of all truly Christian methods will be blended together in forming the symmetry of the perfect man. The history of such a system of doctrine as that of Calvinism. is an argument for the truth, of great value to the entire church. The materials for such a history must be various and extensive, such as many hands and long time must be employed to collect, and such as a Society devoted to the work will require considerable resources to obtain.

The object here suggested, moreover, is congenial to the whole genius and spirit of the Presbyterian Church. Her own membership is enlightened, and cultivated, and active, above the average standard of the country; and taking all the products of intellectual, moral, and social culture into the account, our people are not behind the foremost. They will feel it to be agreeable to their enlightened character and social position, that the annals of the church in which they are born and bred should be in their hands, and in the most perfect form in which they can be made. It will be so in growing measure, we trust, with the coming generations. Our educated ministry can appreciate such labour, and contribute to its success. Still more can they employ its products usefully, in preparing instruction for their people. But there are certain characteristics of our church, quite peculiar to herself, to which these historical labours have some special fitness. We refer to her notable predestinarian texture of doctrine and practice. It is her doctrine concerning the existence of the divine decrees, that they are God's eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his own will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass. Concerning the fulfilment of these decrees, her doctrine is, that God executeth his decrees in the works of

creation and providence. So far as she adorns her doctrine, and is reconciled to God, she joins faith and works inseparably together, as eternal purpose and providential work are joined together in God. Her faith falls in with the decrees, her works with the providence. In her study, therefore, of the ways of God, she does not solicit the opening of any inscrutable mystery which the Father hath kept in his own power; but following and watching, with diligent and enlightened observation, the course of providence, first, as delineated in the Scriptures, and then as witnessed in all history, and in the field of her own observation, she would learn, for her self-guidance, what predestined things, taking place in the course of providence, are joined together in the eternal decree. Especially does she ask what things are thus joined together, with which her own free and responsible activity, and her welfare are connected. And this is emphatically her way of asking, What must I do to be saved? Here she finds herself inquiring for the conditions of the sovereign divine operation in executing particular saving decrees. She deems it a part of her office to ascertain and declare the providential laws by which electing grace saves the individual believer, and sanctifies and glorifies the church. Having discovered the established laws of this gracious work, she makes the diligent observance of them the practical application of her theology. Her universal maxim is, that the decree which foreordains the effect, foreordains also the cause; that ends and means are predetermined together; that the decree of any individual's destiny is fulfilled under conditions which are alike ordained, and alike immutable; and that these conditions of fulfilment are the proper study of the church, and constitute the commands of Christ for men to obey. Here, for instance, the church meets with her covenant which begins with the family; having promises for faith, and laws for obedience; a systematic and established appointment of the conditions under which grace, being given in fulfilment of promise to parental faith in every case where faith really exists, becomes effectual unto the children's salvation. The maxim above stated is used as entirely universal; so that the actual execution of electing purposes, even in bestowing covenant blessings on the Jacobs and withholding them from the

Esau, comes to pass in inseparable connection with sales of birthrights, in some form, and with inborn predispositions and discipline, in unbroken continuity back to Adam. We assume no unconditional destiny of any man; but say, without reserve, *if* the birthright had not been sold, *if* the Esau had been born a different man, *if* the parents had been different persons, and so on back to the beginning, the last effect would have been reversed. But so, also, would have been the decree. To suppose the conditions reversed, reverses the purpose. The eternal universal decree of God, in which all events are included, is absolute, unconditional. The particulars included are conditional, one upon another; so that without one, the other would not be. These particulars are connected by absolute ordination, and their connection is unchangeable. The things themselves thus connected, and the order of their occurrence in the course of providence, are to be learned by the church from revelation, history, and observation. What Christian labour, then, can be more noble, more profitable, more congenial with the doctrine and spirit of a thoroughly predestinarian church, than that of observing and recording the established connection of facts in the kingdom of grace, as our preparation for answering, with all the details of instruction in religious duty, these great questions—What must I do to be saved? What must parents do for the salvation of their children? What must the church do to build up her members in faith and love, to honour her calling, and perfect her glory? Such labour as this, so worthy of the highest intellects and the purest hearts, is largely historical. It is recording the order of particular events under the government of Christ. It is to observe and register the eclipses, transits, conjunctions, oppositions, and equinoctial precessions of our spiritual firmament, in preparation for an ever-lengthening induction concerning the laws by which we revolve around the Sun of Righteousness, and receive and enjoy its living light and heat.

We should add, as a fourth consideration, that as this rational occupation is agreeable to her doctrine and spirit, it is equally favourable to her progress. Such are the habits of thought, and the entire mental tendencies of our ministers and membership, that nothing else promises to those of the

earnest Christian spirit so much entertainment and edification as that kind of historical teaching which most elucidates the laws of grace. This is preëminently our method of inquiry for the path of practical righteousness. The rubrics of our ritual are the dictates of Scripture and of reason. We have only to notice the extent of speculative study among the more intelligent and reflecting Calvinistic Christians, on such subjects as the Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul, the Work of the Spirit, the Plan of Salvation, the Method of the Divine government, the Way of Life, the Idea of the Church, and other kindred subjects, to see how much the Calvinistic type of piety seeks nourishment in the field of rational exercise on religious duty and experience, and in clear and consistent views of the work of God in redemption. It would hardly be expected that, under the circumstances in which the church in this country is permitted to pursue her rational investigations of the work of grace, this valuable tendency should not sometimes be indulged to excess; and that too great reliance should be placed on inductions from facts imperfectly understood in their nature and relations, as well as from facts not sufficiently established by observation. By mistakes in this respect, the church has, in some of its important branches, and in some matters of serious concern relating to means of religious culture, been widely misled. Some of the habits of our people, and those of other portions of the church, to a far greater extent, as to thought and practice, have been greatly changed within the last half-century, with reference to the method of promoting vital religion, recruiting the sacramental communion, and quickening and purifying the religious sentiments of the communicants. But in relation to all these matters, it has been the constant and praiseworthy tendency of our reflecting people to analyze the methods by the scriptural and rational tests, and to settle the manner in which they can be made most effectual in improving the permanent condition of the church. For a people so commendably given to the diligent and thorough analysis of the methods of divine grace, the historical department of theological training is peculiarly appropriate. Perhaps it even inclines, under the name of the History of Doctrines, towards some infringement on the department of Dogmatics. But for

the practical work of the ministry, in the edifying of the body of Christ, it would be easy to make increasing and valuable use of the instructive facts of presbyterian history with the present tastes and tendencies of our people.

In the course of remark pursued in these pages, we are not unmindful of the mutual relation of the different branches of the church. No church has anything to boast of. There are diversities of service in which all the servants have equal honour. With the best endowments in some respects, a Christian body may have grievous infirmity in others. While we lay claim to some excellence peculiar to our form of government, form of doctrine, or mode of administration, as we here humbly do, we might confess to faults, which, though not the legitimate fruit of our constitution, are still peculiar to ourselves, and may both spring from the abuse of our gifts, and lead to it. For the correction of these we may accept the admonition of sister churches. The design of Providence in permitting church divisions is undoubtedly compensatory; that what one branch may want, another may supply. While one runs its orderly observances too far towards dead formality, another may combat that tendency from the opposite position of extreme disrespect and aversion for those forms which are really required in our present state, for the proper development and vigorous exercise of the spiritual life. The one maintains the formalities of reverence, which would not appear in excess if filled with the Spirit, and which are really living organs of religion, as leaves on the tree; the other indulges in irregular excitement, which would be tempered and adjusted to higher utility by a due regard for forms. Each of the living branches must contribute to the common stock of Christian culture, until mutual assimilation, by the imperceptible process of giving and receiving, shall bring them to their unity. In the mean time, the records of the respective bodies, prepared with faithfulness and sound judgment, will help the church in choosing her course in the future.

We cannot here enumerate all the offices which such a Society as the one before us might perform, as well for the cause of knowledge in general, as for the improvement of the church in particular. Nor is it necessary. Many of its

services will be suggested by the progress of the institution itself. The occasions for them, and their value, will depend very much on its activity and wisdom, but also not a little on its resources, the cordial and liberal patronage it may receive, and the zeal of the church for that department of useful labour. That the Society has a wide and fruitful field, will be admitted by all who consider the state and prospects of the church. Its labours will have a specific direction, it is true; but they will have an intimate connection with all the interests of the kingdom of Christ. An extensive list of the matters which naturally come under its charge has already been given. The subjects there suggested will all be found worthy of its attention, and will doubtless receive it, as far as the means it may obtain from the friends of the object will permit.

The list of matters we refer to, is that given by the Rev. Dr. Davidson, in his Discourse before the Society in 1853. He mentions first, "Collections of pamphlets, tractates, controversial and other essays, bearing on the history of the Presbyterian Church in this country, especially touching the schism of 1741." Connected with this last item, the schism of 1741, there are some points, of great practical interest to the church at the present time, relative to the measures for promoting religion, and the views concerning the religious character, relations, and duties, of a large class of those who attend habitually on the worship and instruction of the church.

The list above referred to mentions, as a great desideratum, a History of Doctrines, which "should note the progressive modifications which have deformed and obscured the leading truths of Christianity, under the pretence of improvements and new light, down to the present day, both in the Old World and the New." The materials for such a work would naturally be very largely collected, in process of time, by the Presbyterian Historical Society. A great part of the preparation for such a history, would be the arrangement and preservation of controversial publications, in all forms, and at the time of their appearance, when their occasions and value are known. The purposes of Doctrine History are promoted by recording the

shades of popular sentiment indicated at the time, and by many signs which do not go down to posterity in the chief controversial documents of the day, but which reveal the types of religious or spiritual sentiment with which the doctrines in question are associated.

The duties of this Society cannot be performed, and its objects attained, without some special accommodations. The larger part of its books and other documents cannot be obtained without expense. It should be able, also, to offer inducements to such as have ability to promote its cause. With the literary and scientific endowments and dignity which an institution for such a purpose may possess, it could render its attentions honorary. It could command the respectful estimation and generous support of those who have leisure to bestow gratuitous service, means to enlarge its resources, and talents to contribute to its literary stores. It is worthy of a local habitation of its own, where it can deposit its accumulating treasure of historical material, in safe-keeping as a public possession. It needs open and accessible conveniences for its members and its friends, and the means of offering facilities to such as may desire to use them, for the promotion of its objects. An object so distinctively Christian and presbyterian would be in no way or measure unsuitable to receive the countenance and imprimatur of the church as such, and to be commended to its affluent and liberal members for encouragement and endowment. It is one of those subjects which can hardly be out of season at any time, and which can receive an honourable token of respect even while the leading concern of our people is so loudly demanded for the welfare of the state.