

THE
BIBLICAL REPERTORY.

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Archibald Alexander

ART. I.—*The Established Church of Scotland, with an account of the secession from the same.*

By a statistical table of the established Church of Scotland, published in 1720, the number of ordained ministers is 948; by a similar table of 1833, the number of pastors is 967; and the number of parishes 957. The increase of the clergy, therefore, in a space exceeding a century, does not amount to twenty; although, in that period, the population of the country must have been nearly doubled. It must be remembered, however, that the secession, which now includes one-fourth of the population, has occurred in this period; and other dissenters have also multiplied their numbers. These tables also, it is believed, do not include the ministers of the chapels of ease, and such as are without pastoral charge; such as professors in colleges, and tutors in private families; for we observe, that in the table of 1833, no minister is entered on the list, who is not the pastor of a parish. The reason, therefore, why the clergy are more numerous than the parishes, is that some parishes have more ministers than one.

In the former table, the number of synods is thirteen and the number of presbyteries sixty-seven; in the latter

may be used amiss; or that the distinctions of sect are incompatible with a popular system of education. But we dissent from him when he hints, that catechisms are in their very nature injurious; that natural religion must be deliberately inculcated prior to revelation, and independently of its modifications by revealed truth, and without Scriptural illustrations; that worldly ethics shall be the basis of Bible precept; that theology is to be reserved for some undefined future epoch; and that preaching is not a mighty engine in the formation of the national mind. As to the last assertion, the history of his own unparalleled church is a standing refutation.

In conclusion, we believe that no man can read Mr. Simpson's volume without feeling obliged to him for the syllabus of important pertinent facts which he has afforded, and for the noble, warming influences which he has made to bear on the subject of popular illumination. It is a book, of which the faults are superficial, and the excellency inwrought. We wish it might be extensively perused. The matter of education is, in this country, becoming more and more nearly allied to the grand action of governments; it would be dreadful, indeed, if our worthy legislators were to go to work after a wrong fashion. Our author is immeasurably far from supposing that the mere increase of intellectual culture will prevent crime. He admits all we ask as to the need of religious sentiment; while he takes a ground as to the methods and order of training, against which we have protested. But the book is a worthy book, and will set many readers upon trains of thought which may yet issue in great good.

Archibald Alexander or Prof. S. Miller

ART. III.—*The present State and Prospects of the Presbyterian Church.*

IN the last number of our Journal, we made some remarks on the document, styled the "Act and Testimony." This was not done without serious consideration, and a deep and invincible sense of duty. Nor was it done without counting the cost. We had no doubt that, in taking this step, we should greatly offend and alienate some of

those whose piety and orthodoxy we highly esteem, and whose past services in the Presbyterian Church none appreciate more highly than ourselves. Little as we know of human nature and of history, we know enough to be aware that moderate men have always fared badly between ultra partisans; and that the *odium ecclesiasticum* is never more unrelenting than between those who approach nearest to each other, without being able entirely to coalesce. This we regret; but we cannot regret the course we have taken. We have acted under conscientious conviction; and we are well assured that even those revered brethren, from whose course we have felt constrained to dissent, would be among the last to deny to others, what they prize so highly for themselves—the privilege of obeying the dictates of an honest conscience.

In regard to the convictions expressed, and the positions taken, in our last number, we have nothing either to retract or modify. Our deep and unwavering persuasion is, that the course we have marked out for ourselves, is the course best adapted to promote, not merely the present peace, but also the eventual purity and order of the Presbyterian Church. Our only object, in the present article, is to exhibit a little more at large some of those views which were hinted at, rather than explained, in our former paper, and which we have no doubt have been misapprehended by some of those brethren whose censure we have been so unfortunate as to incur. We intend also, before we close, to suggest what we think, in present circumstances, ought to be done. We owe it, perhaps, to our censurers, to the church with which we are connected, and to ourselves, to be more explicit on some points heretofore imperfectly developed.

In one respect, we acknowledge, that some late publications have somewhat surprised us. The course of remark adopted in our review of the "Act and Testimony," in our last number, seems to be considered, by some of the friends of that document, as a *new* and *unexpected* movement on our part, of which they have a right to complaint. Now, we had supposed the spirit of that review to be in perfect accordance with the course which, as conductors of a theological journal, we have been pursuing for several years past. It ought to be known that the editors of this work, as such, cannot be identified with any public institution, or its officers. We protest against any such attempt. We

choose to be known simply by the spirit and character of our own pages. These, we took for granted, had sufficiently disclosed, that our opinions and feelings did not entirely coincide with EITHER CLASS of the ultra partisans who have, for several years past, divided and agitated our church.

On the one hand, we wished it to be understood, that we were the determined opponents of all those in our communion who manifested a leaning toward Arminian or Pelagian opinions in theology; or who discovered a disposition to invade the principles of Presbyterian church government, or to exchange them for those of the congregational system. We did believe that there were some such individuals who had "crept in unawares" into our church, and were exerting an injurious influence. Against these, and against all who manifested a desire to favour them, we have lifted our voice from time to time—feebly, we acknowledge, but, according to our ideas of propriety, as distinctly and decisively as we were able. We have also taken the part of our beloved church in opposition to various forms of what we deemed adverse policy. We have, again and again, warned our churches, that *preferring* irresponsible associations, especially those intended for training up a sound and able *ministry*, to boards formed and superintended by our own ecclesiastical bodies, was adapted to exert a most unfriendly influence on the Presbyterian Church. We have proclaimed, from time to time, as faithfully as we knew how, that invigorating and building up the former, to the *neglect*, or at the expense of a *reluctant* and *sparing* support, of the latter, is directly adapted to produce the most injurious effects. We have warned them that this course, however well intended by many who pursued it, was really adapted to divide, weaken, and depress our portion of the American Church; to destroy its homogeneous and peaceful character; and eventually to bring about revolutions as painful as disreputable; and, above all, consequences deeply injurious to its spiritual interests, and fatal to the efficiency and enlargement of its benevolent efforts. We have entreated every well-wisher to our church not to pursue such plans or policy as *must*, without a miracle, issue in bringing into our ministry, and sending forth as our rulers and guides, not merely a "diversity of gifts" and graces, which is desirable, but inflamed and fierce partisans of opposite systems; men who, instead of bending their whole force,

with fraternal harmony, to the enlargement of Zion, and to the conversion of the world, would feel conscientiously bound to exhaust a large portion of their time and strength in fighting with one another. We have besought them to consider how much more honourable to Christian feeling, and conducive to Christian edification, it would be, to employ every practical method of harmonizing our ministers and churches, and to guard against every plan or agency which might tend to perplex the minds of our people with the appearance of hostile claims, and unhallowed rivalships, in the great work of "holding forth the word of life," and extending the Redeemer's kingdom. We say deliberately, and with more unwavering confidence, the more we reflect upon it, that we see in the Assembly's Board of Education, under God, a firmer pledge of the future union, harmony, and strength of the Presbyterian Church, than in any other human institution connected with it. If that radical institution shall be efficiently sustained, upon its present simple and wise plan, we may cherish the hope that the merciful King of Zion will not permit us to be riven asunder. And, to mention but one topic more; we have uniformly endeavoured to warn the churches against that system of novel and exciting "MEASURES" for promoting revivals of religion, which has made so great a figure in some sections of our church, and in the hands of some ministers of high claims. We have deemed it a solemn duty to cast our influence, such as it is, decisively, into the scale of opposition to these measures; because we cannot doubt that, however *apparently* useful, in some cases, all experience has shown them to be rather adapted to promote animal excitement, and the temporary reign of a spurious sympathy, than the power of genuine religion.

Such are the principles which we have always endeavoured to sustain and disseminate with the utmost of our ability. We appeal to our pages for proof, that our course, as to all these points, has been neither temporizing nor equivocal. They are the principles which have guided us hitherto, and they, with unimpaired force, guide us still. Nay, it is because we cordially adhere to them, as both true and important, and desire to secure for them universal currency, that we take the course which some are pleased to consider as a departure from our wonted path. It is, however, no departure. Of the same sentiments our readers will ever find us the undeviating advocates. On the other

hand, we have felt unable, for several years past, to accord with all the views and movements of what has been sometimes called the *ultra* old-school party, composed of a portion of the Synod of Philadelphia, and a few brethren in other judicatories of the church. We have, indeed, venerated their piety, and honoured their ardent zeal in pursuing a course which we doubt not they have honestly considered as adapted to promote the best interests of truth and ecclesiastical order. Our unfeigned desire has always been to act with them, knowing the elevation of their character, and the general soundness of their opinions; and feeling that their principles and ours are, in all important respects, one. But, within the last four or five years, they have repeatedly advanced principles, and pursued a course, which it was impossible for us to contemplate without regret. We have seen them, as we thought, on several important occasions, for the purpose of carrying their points, advancing doctrines which we were verily persuaded genuine Presbyterianism did not warrant. And we have seen, with no less regret, that, when they did bring before the highest judicatory of the church, matters of just complaint, in regard to which sound principle was on their side, and redress ought to have been obtained, and, under proper management, would have been obtained;—these matters were so unhappily involved with questionable theories, or inadmissible or offensive demands, as almost to insure their rejection. On one occasion, indeed, (we refer to the famous *memorial* from the west, presented to the last General Assembly,) we deliberately thought, long before the meeting of the Assembly, that the result must be what it proved. That some of the requests contained in that document were rejected, was with us matter of sincere regret. That it was not, in a mass, treated with more respect, we also lamented. But had we been members of that Assembly, and had a vote been pressed on the whole, as it stood, our vote must have been given decisively in the negative.

Such have been, for some time, our views and feelings. Of these we made no secret; and we supposed that by the readers of the *Repertory* they were distinctly understood. True, we forbore publicly to assume an attitude hostile to those excellent brethren. We forbore to lift a standard round which to attempt to rally a counteracting party;—because we loved them; because we saw that they were conscientiously fighting the battles of the general cause

which we wished to promote; because we thought it was not our province to attempt to be leaders; and because we feared that we might, by such an attempt, increase the morbid agitation, and still more reduce the strength, of our already bleeding church. We had no doubt, indeed, that *our* views and feelings were those of a large majority of the church; and, of course, could have had no apprehension that, in raising a standard somewhat different from that of our respected brethren, we should be found siding with the weaker party. But a sacred regard to the feelings of those brethren; a fear of the consequences which might result from dividing the old-school ranks; and a conscientious doubt as to the safest and best means of offering our counsel, in the trying circumstances in which we were placed, prevented our formally attempting to interfere. We abstained from this decisive step as long as we could with a good conscience. And it was not until the appearance of the "Act and Testimony" completely satisfied us that a crisis had come, which threatened incalculable evils, that we felt it our duty no longer to be silent. As guardians of a periodical publication, consecrated to the best interests of the Presbyterian Church, we have thought it our duty to speak a language for which we expect to give account at a tribunal higher than that of the most venerated of men. This deep sense of obligation led to our review of the "Act and Testimony." If ever an act was extorted from us by an overpowering sense of duty, it was that act. We asked ourselves—"Shall we calmly sit by, and see our beloved church torn in pieces by honest, but misguided friends, on the one hand, and a really small hostile junto on the other, without lifting a hand or a voice to stay the catastrophe?" Could a doubt have existed as to the proper answer? We have spoken without reserve; and to Him who can make the feeblest word useful we commit the result.

Having said thus much concerning our own course—perhaps more than was necessary, or even proper—we proceed to make a few remarks on what we deem to be the present state of the church, and the probable influence of measures proposed for her benefit. And in the first place, we are far from believing that the apprehensions of those fathers and brethren who have emitted the Act and Testimony, as to the existence of unsound opinions in our church, are without foundation. We have no doubt that there are ministers and elders in the Presbyterian Church, who ought

never to have been admitted to a place among its teachers and rulers; who cannot with propriety remain in it a day; and whose influence, so far as it goes, is, in a high degree, unfriendly, both to the purity and peace of the church. We think, too, that some others, whatever their real sentiments may be, frequently employ *language* which very strongly savours of error, and which is adapted to excite alarm among those who desire to "hold fast the form of sound words once delivered to the saints." Some of this language we have heard with our own ears; and the rest has been reported to us by witnesses on whose testimony we have just as perfect reliance as upon that of our own senses. We have read statements from the press, which, unless theological language has lost its established meaning, must be considered as importing the adoption of very serious errors. We have perused with intense interest, and with all the scrupulous impartiality which we could summon to our aid, the numbers of the *Christian Spectator*, of New Haven, for several years past, and have read defence after defence of its editors, when accused of holding erroneous opinions, and the deliberate conclusion which we are constrained to admit is, that those brethren do really appear to hold and advocate sentiments at which all the friends of evangelical truth have reason to take the alarm, and against which they are bound to lift up a warning voice. We find, too, in confirmation of this conclusion, that a large body of the most pious, learned, and venerable ministers of New England take the same view of this subject with ourselves; and have erected a seminary, the main object of which is to counteract the corrupting influence of New Haven theology, and to secure to candidates for the ministry a purer fountain of instruction than that which their neighbours furnish. Is it possible to misunderstand the language of these facts? Can those venerable and discerning men be under an entire mistake as to the real character of the system which they oppose? And when we have so much reason to believe that the erroneous sentiments just alluded to, are by no means unknown within the bounds of our own church, can it be consistent with fidelity to our Master in heaven to close our eyes against the fact, and to persuade ourselves that there is no danger to be apprehended from the spreading of these sentiments? We think not. Every line in the history of the rise, progress, and prevalence of the Pelagian and Arminian errors;—every memorial which remains of

the conduct of the early advocates of those erroneous systems,—their dissimulation, their studied concealment, their artful evasions, until they had attained strength enough to throw off all disguise;—all admonish us to be on our guard against the encroachments of speculations in their very nature insidious, and which easily prepare the way for a radical departure from the system of evangelical truth. We repeat, then, we do not consider the respected framers of the “Act and Testimony” as mere causeless alarmists. There is, we think, no small reason for the warning which they give with so much emphasis and solemnity. If the apprehensions expressed by them and others be wholly groundless, we must reject every rule of human testimony.

Neither do we dissent from our brethren in regard to the *malignant and dangerous character* of the errors which they denounce. We do not think that, in describing them, they have used one word too hard, or laid on one colour too dark. We cannot resist the evidence that THE errors in question amount to the essence of Pelagianism; that is, although no case has come to our knowledge in which that system, *in all its parts*, was avowedly adopted; yet we cannot avoid the conclusion, that there are cases in which the deviations from truth are so wide and serious as to comprehend the essential principles of the Pelagian scheme; and, of course, to amount to “another gospel.” Against such errors we are constrained to acquiesce in the most severe denunciations which have been uttered. We believe them to be wholly irreconcilable with that confession of faith which all Presbyterian ministers and elders have solemnly subscribed; adapted to undermine all the fundamental doctrines of the gospel; in a high degree unfriendly to vital piety; and, under the guise of promoting revivals of religion, calculated directly, and in a high degree, to pervert, dishonour, and destroy them. Wherever errors like these are found, we would be among the last to extenuate or defend them. In every case in which the charge of holding them can be legitimately fixed on any man, we say, with our whole hearts, he ought not to be in our church. Let him be dealt with promptly and faithfully in the spirit of our public standards.

But, while we make these acknowledgments, and mourn over the evidence which constrains us to make them, we see no reason to believe that the evil in question is either so *extensive*, or so *deeply seated*, as some excellent brethren

imagine. Were we to measure the prevalence of the errors in question by the representations given by some of our "Act and Testimony" friends, we should conclude that they had gained, indeed, a most fearful extension. They are sometimes spoken of as pervading the church; as infecting the whole mass; as boldly lifting up the head in every Synod within our bounds. In one word, it would seem to be supposed that a moiety of our whole ecclesiastical body has become deeply infected with this theological pestilence. Now, to statements of this kind, we can by no means yield our assent. After giving much attention to the subject; after making diligent inquiries, for several years past, of persons intimately acquainted with different parts of the church; and after making every allowance for that kind of denial, concealment, and prevarication, which seem always to be more or less connected with the errors alluded to;—we are persuaded that nine-tenths of our ministry are in a great measure free from the unsound opinions in question. We believe, moreover, that the errors to which reference is here made, are declining rather than gaining ground; that is, that some who once thought well of them, have, within a year or two, become convinced of their erroneous character; and that the standard which has been, in various forms, lifted up against them, has been blessed to their discouragement and depression. This is, most distinctly, our impression. And the impression has been made by a variety of circumstances. If the fact be not so; if the whole church is flooded with these errors; if they are preached in many hundreds of pulpits, and published without reserve from the press, in every part of the land;—why, in all the public documents which complain of them, and bear testimony against them, are only three or four names, out of two thousand, mentioned as implicated in this charge? Surely, if the country every where resounded with these errors, nothing would be more easy than to produce hundreds of culprits on whom the charge of theological delinquency might be invincibly fastened. There are, undoubtedly, a number of Synods, and a still greater number of Presbyteries, in which there are large old-school majorities. Why have not they arraigned, and caused to be brought before the proper tribunals, some of the offenders, who are supposed to be so numerous and bold? We are utterly unable to account for this, but by supposing, either that the cases of infection with error are much less numerous than some imagine, or that some old-

school men find it much more easy to complain of the General Assembly by signing an "Act and Testimony," than to do their duty as members of their respective Presbyteries. How has it happened, that, for a number of years past, a charge of heresy has never been brought before the General Assembly, in such a manner, by reference, appeal, or complaint, as enabled that body to take regular cognizance of it, excepting in a single instance? And even that was connected with so many peculiar personal and local circumstances, as rendered a calm and dispassionate decision of it all but impracticable.

The truth is, we totally disbelieve that corrupt opinions exist among the ministers and elders of our church, *to the extent that is proclaimed by some*. That such opinions are found in our camp, we have already declared that we have no doubt. But if a few dozen men, whom we could name, had either the honesty to withdraw from a church whose formularies they never really believed, or the discretion to keep their speculations to themselves, we are fully persuaded we should have occasion to hear little more on this subject in the Presbyterian Church.

This leads to another observation, which is, that, of almost all the decisions of the General Assembly, for the last four or five years, of which our old-school friends have most loudly complained, as favouring heresy—scarcely one has been brought before that body, in a manner which admitted of a calm and impartial decision, on its own merits. We have deeply lamented this; and we know that it has been lamented by many others. It is the part of wisdom, in contending for the truth, to present her claims in an unembarrassed form, and to fight her battles on well-selected ground. We have no doubt that sound, old-school principles would have fared far better in the General Assembly—nay, that they would have invariably triumphed, IF THEY HAD BEEN MANAGED AND PRESENTED WITH EVEN TOLERABLE DISCRETION. But, in most cases, if not every one—not only had the previous management been unskilful and injudicious;—but each case was finally brought before the highest judicatory, under such an aspect, and so unhappily mixed up with other and highly exciting matters—as almost to ensure an unfavourable reception. We have often thought, that if our respected brethren of the Philadelphia Presbytery and Synod had really intended to make their own defeat in the General Assembly certain, and to render the Presbyterian

Church a "hissing and a by-word" throughout the land; they could scarcely have taken a more direct course than on several occasions they did, to attain their end. We say this with unspeakable pain, but with unwavering confidence; and we know it to be the deliberate opinion of hundreds who ardently wish well to the old-school cause, and mourn over all its disasters.

On such a subject it would be an irksome task to enter into details. Suffice it to say, as a specimen of what we mean—that the original complex management, and final presentation to the Assembly of the first striking case which occurred in 1831; the whole management of the case relating to the division of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, in 1831 and 1832; the pertinacious denial of the right of the General Assembly to erect new Presbyteries; the refusal to acknowledge the Presbytery formed by the Assembly in 1832, and shutting out all its members from their seats in Synod; the attempted dissolution of that Presbytery, by a Synodical act, in 1833; the adoption and presentation of the *Western Memorial* in 1834; and last, though not least, recommending in the "Act and Testimony," that no Presbytery or Synod formed by the Assembly on the *elective affinity* principle, should ever be acknowledged as a judicatory at all; these are a specimen of the management and the measures over which we have never ceased to lament, as most unwise; as adapted to weaken the hands of old-school men; and to bring their system, and their portion of the church into disrepute. We take no pleasure in adverting to these things. Our hearts, we say again, were in general, unfeignedly with the brethren who adopted these measures. We cordially wished them success in their efforts for promoting the purity and order of the church. But in these things our conscientious judgment forbade us to concur with them. Our doubts and our disapprobation were freely expressed, as we had opportunity: but they were disregarded. Of this we make no complaint; for we felt that we had no claim either to lead, or to be consulted: and we only mention the fact for the sake of showing that we have endeavoured, in our humble place, to do all that belonged to faithful men, who loved that portion of their brethren of the old-school ranks of whom we speak; and sincerely desired their honour and success, as opponents of theological and ecclesiastical innovation.

As one proof that our estimate of the character and ten-

dency of the measures referred to is correct, let any one who witnessed the proceedings of the General Assembly for the last four years, or who has looked over the record of the *yeas* and *nays* called on a variety of interesting occasions, recollect a moment, and he will find the evidence complete. He will find in the list of votes in opposition to those measures, the names of men as decided in their attachment to old-school principles, both in regard to doctrine and order, as the church contains; and men whose lives have been marked by a fidelity and zeal in this cause, as steady and as exemplary as any, without exception, of their brethren. It is easy, we know, to say of such men that they were timid; that their prudence degenerated into trimming; or that they were actuated by jealousy; that they were not consulted, or permitted to take the lead. But, surely, it is neither kind nor wise to bring such charges against men of quite as much reputation for honesty as any of their accusers. Surely those who wield such weapons forget that they are quite as much exposed to imputations of a different kind, indeed, but equally unworthy of disinterested conscientious men, as those whom they thus unceremoniously denounce. A number, then, of the most adverse votes in the General Assembly, within the last four years, were really and truly brought about by our brethren of the ultra old-school party themselves. They took ground on which some of the best men in the whole church—who knew its history, understood its interest, and felt for its honour quite as much as they—could not go with them, or sustain them. They loaded their cause with principles and claims which did not belong to it. They waged battle on wrong grounds; and then imputed their defeat to those who had seen their mistake, and warned them of the result.

In the next place, we must declare our utter incredulity as to all prospects of relief to our divided, struggling church, from the measures prospectively proposed by our respected brethren of the “Act and Testimony.” We are not sure that we understand all the principles of conduct proposed by those brethren, and solemnly pledged to the public, for their guidance in time to come; especially as some disavowals have been made respecting purposes which we thought had been intimated. But, as we read their language, we understand it as importing, that they are determined to continue, without abatement or deviation, the policy which they have hitherto pursued; that they will not

acknowledge as parts of the Presbyterian church, any of those judicatories which have been formed upon the principles of *elective affinity*; of course, that they will never receive an individual member, or recognize an official act of one of those judicatories, however sound and unexceptionable the individual or the act in question may be; and that they will never cease to present and urge their claims, until they either succeed in obtaining their end, or are cast out of the church. These we understand to be the resolutions which they have formed and publicly announced. Now, concerning these resolutions, we are firmly of the opinion, that the course which they mark out is a course which never can lead to the benefit of the church; but must lead to a result either destructive to the influence of the brethren who pursue it, or destructive to the church which they wish to save.

We do not claim to be prophets, and may entirely err in our estimate of this matter. But we are persuaded, that what *might* be gained by wise and prudent measures, never *will* or *can* be gained by such a course as is here supposed. And we cannot help fearing that the venerable men who express their fixed and unalterable determination, as we understand them, to pursue this course, will find that every successive step they take in it will diminish their own influence in the church; impair their power of doing it good; confirm and extend prejudice against Presbyterianism; and render deeper, wider, and more embittered the strife which now agitates and divides our portion of the American Church. Indeed, if they enter on the course supposed, with a deliberate determination to pursue it until their end shall be obtained, they will, by this very announcement, preclude the possibility of attaining that end. There is every reason to fear that a series of references, appeals, and complaints, and a succession of "Acts and Testimonies," will follow each other in a painful round, for ten, perhaps for twenty, years to come, which will, after all, leave their authors disappointed, disheartened, and broken; the church a miserable wreck; her piety and benevolent effort scattered to the winds amidst the din of war; and all who wish well to her, mortified, and ashamed of the Presbyterian name. Are these consequences to be contemplated without dismay? We think not. And we are very sure that if those beloved brethren, against whose course we are now pleading, had only one-tenth part of the apprehension of them that we

have, they would, at the present stage of their progress, come to a solemn pause.

If any are disposed to ask, what course will, in our opinion, best conduce to the attainment of that purity and peace which it is the earnest desire of every consistent Presbyterian to see established in our bleeding church, our answer shall be frank, unreserved, and short.

1. Let us begin by assembling in our ecclesiastical judicatories, not with a spirit of suspicion, jealousy, and war, but with a sincere desire to think as well of our brethren as we possibly can, consistently with fidelity to our Master's truth and honour; and with a sincere desire to do the great benevolent work for which the church was founded, as quietly and effectually as we possibly can. Our counsel is, not that we should overlook, or close our eyes against, corruption in doctrine or in practice in the church; but that we should guard against a predisposition to find it where it is not; to magnify it where it exists; or to place individuals in the list of heretics without sufficient evidence.

2. Let every effort that we make, either to reform the church, or to maintain its purity, and promote its edification, be made in a regular, constitutional manner: not by *voluntary, irresponsible* assemblies; but through the medium of her *regular, constitutional judicatories*; whose existence is permanent; whose members are fairly and proportionably authorized on the representative principle; whose acts are recorded; whose doings, at every step, are responsible to the whole church; and whose constitution and order are, as we think, founded on the word of God. Let us not so far dishonour Presbyterianism, as to resort to irregular and unauthorized assemblies to sustain it. We are friendly to private fraternal counsel, in reference to important business about to be brought before judicatories of the church; but cannot approve of ORGANIZED CONVENTIONS, sitting by authority, that is, made up of commissioned delegates deliberating by the side of General Assemblies, for the avowed purpose of intimidating or controlling them.

3. Let us not expect the General Assembly to transgress all constitutional principles, and to *commence process* against men suspected of holding erroneous opinions, over the heads of their presbyteries, when those presbyteries themselves, (consisting, perhaps, of a decided majority of old-school men,) have not thought proper to act in the case; or, if they have acted, have not condemned the implicated

individuals. It really seems to be forgotten by some that our constitution declares, that "all process against a gospel minister shall be entered in the presbytery of which he is a member." Most of the cases of imputed heresy, specified and complained of in public documents, have never, that we know, been recognized by presbyteries, or, in any way, brought up from them to the General Assembly. When the Assembly shall have had such cases, of a plain and palpable character, regularly brought before them, and shall fail to do their duty, it will be time enough to denounce them as recreant to the principles of our public standards.

4. If we desire to bring the character of our General Assembly to a just and candid test, let the first case of plain and palpable heresy that occurs, be brought fairly before that body, in as simple and unentangled a form as practicable; and we will answer for it, that an overwhelming majority will be found on the side of truth. If it should prove otherwise, we will be among the first to denounce and complain. When war shall be waged on *such ground*, we will pledge ourselves to be found fighting side by side with our "Act and Testimony" brethren; and if not equal to them in skill or valour, yet quite equal to the foremost of them in zeal and decision.

5. Let alleged departures from the letter or spirit of our constitution by our higher judicatories, be opposed by the lower, not by attempted "nullification," or by violence, (in which the most ignorant and lawless are as capable of being active and forward as any,) but by regular, constitutional means. Advantages gained in the former way, are generally gained at the expense of Christian character and comfort, and seldom wear well. All wise men advise a resort to such means, unless in extreme and desperate cases, which make a rule for themselves. Whereas advantages gained, at every step, by regular, judicial measures, are always safe, generally comfortable, and may confidently be expected to receive the benediction of Him who is a God of order, and not of confusion, in all the churches.

6. Let all our judicatories, from the lowest to the highest, resolve, that, henceforth, they will be careful to carry into faithful execution our public formularies, according to their spirit as well as letter, in all their ecclesiastical proceedings; and thus endeavour to convince those, in every part of the church, whose suspicions are deeply excited on this subject, that there is a more general fidelity in respect to it than is

commonly imagined. If the apprehensions on this subject, which are undoubtedly to some extent just, have been, in any minds, excited to a morbid degree, the best way, beyond all question, to remove them, is, not to denounce or reproach those who honestly entertain them; but to demonstrate by the renewed and vigilant fidelity of all our judicatories, that these apprehensions may be safely dismissed. Surely if a private member of a church, whose walk has hitherto grieved his fellow members, is bound, upon every gospel principle, in time to come, to set a double guard on his conduct; so we think our ecclesiastical judicatories are called, at the present day, to exercise a greatly increased care in conforming themselves to all the requirements of our ecclesiastical constitution. Let us mutually respect the feelings of our brethren in every part of the church, and strive to be, in spirit as well as in name, one.

7. Let us, with one consent, endeavour to make all the meetings of our respective judicatories, from the highest to the lowest, chosen opportunities for nourishing and extending practical piety, benevolent effort, and enlarged desires of evangelical usefulness. No spirit is better adapted to kill heresy than this; especially when it is manifested in the greatest degree, and in the most active manner, by the friends of old-school orthodoxy.

8. As our covenanted correspondence, and ecclesiastical intercourse with our congregational brethren of New England, is a correspondence of great delicacy, as well as importance, let it be kindly, but carefully, guarded on both sides. Let us take every opportunity of convincing those highly respected brethren, that, while we prize their friendship, and pray that it may long continue to our mutual edification; and while we feel that we are engaged in a common cause with those faithful men who are now employed in raising a standard against error, most cordially wish them success in their hallowed enterprise; let us, at the same time, not scruple to remind them, that we are deeply sensitive to every occurrence, on either side, which may seem to interfere with the ecclesiastical peculiarities of each other. Let us take every suitable opportunity of assuring them that it is, manifestly, of the utmost importance to the comfort of our intercourse, that the most delicate regard be constantly had to this matter. While we would by no means interfere, in the least degree with a form of government which those brethren believe to be best

adapted to their edification; and would beg that if we should ever be chargeable with the remotest suspicion of such interference, it may be promptly pointed out to us; we have no doubt that they will see the justice and the importance of a similar caution, on their part, with regard to the Presbyterian Church.

9. Let us, one and all, strive to hold up Presbyterianism to view, not as a system of everlasting conflict and bickering; not as an ecclesiastical constitution chiefly adapted to promote and regulate the forms of ecclesiastical warfare; but as a system of fraternal union and co-operation, and better adapted than any other to bind all its constituent members together as "one body in Christ, and every one members of one another."

10. Finally: let all who accord with the general scope of the principles here laid down—by whatever party name they may have been heretofore called—all who really love the Presbyterian Church, as such, and cordially desire to preserve her doctrines and order in purity; all who feel determined to oppose whatever appears hostile to genuine Presbyterianism; let them come forth, in this day of conflict and peril, and show themselves. Let them henceforth resolve, that they will no longer be divided; that they will know and support each other; that they will "fight with neither small nor great," but with the real enemies of our Zion; and that they will hereafter labour to have but one matter of strife—namely, who shall love the Master most, and who shall serve him with the greatest zeal. Let this principle be adopted, "not in word only, but in deed and in truth," and all will be well.

Such is our whole heart on this subject; a subject to us, and to the mass of our readers, unspeakably momentous. Never were we more firmly determined to contend earnestly for the honest maintenance of the Confession of Faith, Catechisms, and Form of Government of the Presbyterian Church, than at the present moment; never had we a deeper sense of the importance, the vital importance, of purging out error, fanaticism, and "new measures" from our beloved Church, *by all constitutional means*. This, as conductors of a public journal, is our flag. We have lifted it up that it may be seen by all who think it worth while to look. We have done more; we have NAILED IT TO OUR MAST, and have resolved, in humble dependence on the grace of God, calmly to wait the issue.