

OUR POSITION.

A SERMON,

PREACHED BEFORE THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBY-
TERIAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES;

IN THE

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1 CORINTHIANS xii. 4—11. Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations; but it is the same God that worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge, by the same Spirit; to another faith, by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing, by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: but all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

THE Emperor Charles V., after he resigned his crown and retired to private life, amused his leisure hours, among other things, by endeavoring to make several clocks and watches run together so as to keep exactly the same time. "Having found," says the historian, "after repeated trials, that he could not bring any two of them to go exactly alike, he reflected, with a mixture of surprise, as well as regret, on his own folly, in having bestowed so much time and labor on the more vain attempt of bringing mankind to a precise uniformity of sentiment concerning the profound and mysterious doctrines of religion." The attempt to make all men see those profound and mysterious doctrines alike, whether by argument or by force, has thus far always failed, and in the present condition of things must always extensively fail. Men have different kinds of mental structure; they possess different temperaments; they receive a different education; they see objects from different points of view; they estimate the value of things by different measures; they are more or less under the influence of the imagination, or they subject the articles of belief more or less to the rules of a rigid logic; they are brought under such influences at their conversion as to give a greater or less prom-

inence to particular views of truth ; and they have such idiosyncrasies of character and feeling, that it would be much easier to bring the laws of matter in a machine to perfect uniformity of action, than the human soul in religion.

The existence of different opinions on the doctrines of religion, in the Christian Church, has always been referred to, by certain persons, as a reproach against Christianity ; but with little reason. If such a difference is a reproach at all, it should not be regarded as such against the Christian religion, but against the human mind ; but it is against neither. It is better that mind should be independent and free, though it does work differently ; it is better that grace should be free, though it develops itself in different forms and manifestations, than that there should be dead, and lifeless, and cold uniformity. The Apostle Paul, the great expounder of the gospel of Christ, did not suppose, according to the fair interpretation of my text, that all men, even under the influence of Christianity, would develop the same character, evince the same degree of piety, or maintain precisely the same opinions on the subject of religion in the present life. There would be, indeed, the same Holy 'Spirit' in all parts of the true Church, dispensing gifts to all the followers of the Saviour ; there would be, if religion was fairly developed, and was as controlling in its influence as it should be, 'the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,' (Eph. iv. 3 ;) but there would be 'diversities of gifts,' and 'differences of administration,' and 'diversities of operations ;' in one case, 'the word of wisdom,' in another 'the word of knowledge,' in another 'faith,' in another 'the gifts of healing,' in another 'the working of miracles,' in another 'prophecy,' in another 'discerning of spirits.' 'All these worketh the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.' This fact is based not on any difference in religion itself, either in spirit or doctrine, as if it taught one thing in one land and another at another ; or as if it inculcated one system of doctrines in one age and another at another ; as if its teachings could be marked off by geographical limits or by epochs in time : but it is based on the characteristics and temperaments of the human mind—as sanguine, choleric, melancholic, or phlegmatic ; as characterized by prudence, or by rashness and impetuosity ; as disposed to associate with others, or to prosecute its own plans alone ; as endowed with activity, or inclined to retirement and solitude ; as under the control of the reason or of the imagination ; as capable of originating great and sublime conceptions, or moulding those which are originated by others into new and beautiful forms ; as under the domination of high and exalted purposes of the intellect, or under the gentler influence of the charities of the heart. Paul naturally represented one class of minds, and would attract to himself eminently that class ; Peter

would represent another, and would find men in all communities, and in all ages, who would more naturally ally themselves to him than to another leader; John would represent another, and perhaps in any great division of the whole body of Christians, embracing both sexes, would attract more admirers and followers than either. Calvin represented one class of minds in religious matters, Luther another, and Melancthon another; Owen one class, and Baxter another; Whitefield one class, and John Wesley another. Yet all loved the same Saviour; and, in their way, labored to promote the same great end.

The existence of different denominations in the Church has also been referred to as an evidence that there can be no definiteness in the volume that is regarded as a revelation, and no unity of spirit among those who profess to receive it. But it is proof of neither. It is merely an illustration of what everywhere occurs from the nature of the human mind, and from the circumstances in which men are placed. That there have been bigotry, and selfishness, and pride, and the love of power, and want of charity, in different denominations of professed Christians, and that all this has been the worse for being organized and consolidated under a Christian name, no one need deny; but these things are not necessarily the result of the fact that there are different denominations of Christians, and, taking human nature as it is, they prove nothing as to the want of clearness and definiteness in the volume of revealed truth.

The existence of separate organizations in the Church arises from causes which have no necessary connection with Christianity, or with any other form of religion. As individual minds look at objects from different points of view, or have different degrees of education, or are thrown together by outward causes and kept together by outward pressure, those which have the same mental characteristics, or which have adopted the same way of thinking or acting, will naturally associate together, and will be held together with increased strength by the new bonds of sympathy that are created. "As long as the reason of man continues fallible, and he is at liberty to exercise it, different opinions will be formed." (JAMES MADISON, *Federalist*, p. 51.)

There are different denominations, formed by the great lines which always divide the human family among all people. The Grecian sects in philosophy contended as keenly as Christian denominations have ever done. The followers of Omar or of Ali, in the Mohammedan world, are as much divided as the followers of Calvin and Arminius. The disciples of Bernard and Abelard—of Duns Scotus and Bonaventura—were as much separated as any Protestant sects have been. Under the pressure of outward unity in the Roman Catholic communion there is as bitter a spirit of internal strife as among Protestants: and among the ranks of

Nominalists and Realists there was more rancor than would be tolerated now between any two religious denominations. The zeal of theological controversy has seldom, if ever, led to scenes so exciting and so disgraceful as were those between these contending parties in philosophy. If the great and momentous inquiries pertaining to men's eternal welfare had been connected with the questions of philosophy, the world would have been divided into more rival and contending sects in philosophy than it has been in religion, and passions would have been developed among those sects not less fierce than those which have existed in the Church. Newton, at one time, would have represented one of those organizations, and Des Cartes another; one denomination would have been named after Hobbes, another after Berkeley, and another after Hume; Locke would have given name to as large a denomination in philosophy as Calvin has done in religion, and Reid or Kant would have laid the foundation of a new sect in philosophy as Wesley did in religion.

The spirit with which contending sects in religion and philosophy have maintained their opinions has been wrong; the existence of such sects, as human nature is, has been, and is, unavoidable. The purpose in creating human beings was to make them so that all would have their own characteristics, yet so that they could be gathered together under common bonds of charity. This arrangement implied that men would see things differently; that they would rely on different arguments in maintaining the common truth; that they would adopt different measures in spreading it; that new truths would be stricken out from age to age by the conflict of mind with mind; and that the world would be thus kept from the evils of stagnation and inaction. The waters of the ocean, restlessly heaved, are kept pure by the unceasing agitation; the atmosphere is always in motion, and the universal movement diffuses beauty, health, and life, over the face of the world.

The existence of different denominations in the Church, when charity reigns, accomplishes great and good ends. It would be a calamity to fuse them, if it could be done, into one great organization. The direst curse which has ever befallen the Christian Church has been the attempt to make it one in its outward form rather than in its spirit of love; to place it under one earthly head, and by force, or by ecclesiastical censures, to compel men to adopt the same forms and shades of thought. In this state all internal corruptions are suffered to grow unchecked to a giant size, all those safeguards which result from the careful vigilance of one portion of the general body on another is destroyed, and the one denomination soon learns to aspire to universal civil dominion. One of the greatest curses which could befall *our* country, would be to have all the great denominations of Christians blended into one, and aiming—for the

period would not be remote when it would do it—at the whole control of the state. As it is now, one denomination is, from the nature of the case, a check on each other; for if one should aspire to any improper control in the state, *all* the others would rally to the protection of their rights, and to the rebuke of the aspiring member of the brotherhood. “A religious sect,” says Mr. Madison, (*Federalist*, p. 57,) “may degenerate into a political faction in a part of the confederacy: but the variety of sects dispersed over the entire face of it, must secure the national councils from any danger from that source.”

With incidental evils—for what is there of human or divine origin, that comes under human influence, that is not liable to such evils?—the existence of different denominations in the Church has such proprieties and advantages as the following:—

(a) These denominations are mutual checks on each other. They watch each other with an eye of love or of jealousy; they check arrogance and ambition; they rebuke exclusiveness; they encourage by the force of example; they infuse their own spirit of life and warmth into those around them.

(b) These denominations operate as a stimulus to find out truth, and to make progress. All the progress which was ever made in the Roman Catholic communion in the mediæval ages, arose from the fact that, with all the boasted unity, there was a real conflict of opinion as between the followers of Bernard and Abelard, of the Jesuits and the Jansenists; and this conflict did more than anything else *in* that body to prepare the way for the glorious Reformation. Two minds, differing in opinion, cannot be warmly engaged in defending their own positions without being likely to strike out some new truth pertaining to the matter in dispute, that shall indicate progress, and that shall place them both in a position in regard to the cause of truth, which neither of them would have occupied alone. It is much, in the progress of things, to have different minds engaged on the same subject; for truth breaks through all the zeal of party discussion, and secures a permanent hold in the world, as the result of conflicts commenced for other ends.

(c) The division into different denominations calls out the varied talent of the Church, and classifies and combines it in a better way than could otherwise be done. Society, though in general harmony, is everywhere broken up and classified into different trades and occupations by which its varied talents may be better employed, and the great ends of the social organization be better secured. There are men eminently fitted to be engineers; there are those qualified to be merchants or mariners; there are those with an original adaptation for the mechanic arts; there are those qualified for the pursuits of profound science: and society is so organized,

that by the proper developement of this varied talent, its great interests shall be best promoted. There is in the Church, and always has been, talent as varied and peculiar; there are gifts and graces as diversified and as strongly marked; there is as much variety in the characteristics of mind and temperament, in the Church as in the world; and it is well that it should be classified and arranged to secure the great ends of the Church organization. There are those that are characteristically conservative and prudent—friends of regularity, of consolidated movements, and of order; and there are those who are sanguine and impetuous—disliking restraints, and ready to encounter danger in an enterprise that demands boldness and impetuosity. There are minds that will be always Calvinistic—that are born into the kingdom of Christ to be such, and that *will* be such, no matter what may be the mode of their education, and no matter what the popular sentiment, and no matter what may be the creed of the Church, and no matter how unpopular the doctrine may be; and there are minds that will be Arminian, no matter what influence may be brought to bear upon them; for as the other class looks primarily upon God and His sovereignty, so these look primarily upon the freedom of man, and are jealous of all that would invade it. There are in the Church men of Augustinian, and men of anti-Augustinian sentiments; there are those whose peculiarity of taste or of feeling would incline them to an Episcopal form of government, and there are those who can work better in a Presbyterian or an Independent organization. There are those all whose thoughts cluster around one idea, and all whose sympathies are absorbed by that; and there are those who can look upon many ideas related to each other, and can combine them into one great and harmonious system. It is better that these should be distributed, as the arts and trades are in society, than to attempt to compress them, as is done under the Papacy, by a mere outward organization, into one.

(d) Every denomination of Christians has had some peculiar mission in our world—some great object to accomplish—some great *idea* which was to give it character, and which was to be preserved and transmitted to future times by its organization. That idea may have been to remedy some existing evil, or to originate some new doctrine or principle that was to be established by its agency; and then perhaps the denomination was to pass away, and the idea or the principle was to be incorporated into the great truths of society, preparatory to that higher state to which all things on earth are tending. A new denomination of Christians in the world has usually indicated *progress*, and been the result of some necessity in the Church at a time when the Divine plans so came round as to indicate that there was to be the development of some new truth or of some great principle. The Paulicians and the Waldenses had great ideas in advance

of their age, and which were to be embodied in the permanent organization of future times. Wiclif, Huss, Jerome of Prague, had great and noble ideas in advance of their age, which were also to become permanent *elements* in the doctrines of the Church. Luther had new and great conceptions far in advance of the previous age; Calvin had, Knox had, Cranmer had; Pym, Hampden, Cromwell, all the Puritans had. The Quakers had great and noble ideas in regard to the rights of conscience, to war, to slavery, which were far in advance of their age, and which it was *worth* an organization to establish, through much persecution and blood—though when these principles shall go into the general constitution of society, the necessity of the peculiar organization will die away. Wesley and Whitefield had great ideas respecting revivals of religion, far in advance of their age, and destined to take their place in the permanent things that shall give character to the Church; and so had Edwards, and Bellamy, and Hopkins, new and great conceptions—though the great truths which they struck out may sink so deeply into other organizations, that it was not necessary that any should be called after their names. So David Brainerd, the Bohemian Brethren, and Samuel J. Mills had new and great ideas far in advance of their age, destined yet to give character to all forms of religion in the world. The organizations in which these ideas sprang up may die away; the denomination as such may cease; but they accomplished a great work in their day, and the augmented truth and vigor thus started into being, embodied in new organizations, will become the permanent inheritance of the better ages of the Church. The races that lived in the geologic periods before the creation of man, were not in vain. Each race had a work to accomplish to fit the world for its higher and better state when man should live upon it, and when the earth should be needed for the incarnation and the atonement. That done, the races themselves passed away, to be followed by advanced and more perfect orders of being. We dig up their fossil remains, and wonder at their strangeness of forms, but we are learning to admire the wisdom of Providence in fitting up the world to be adapted to its highest and last stage, when the Son of God should come to accomplish his great work; as the ecclesiastical historian disentombs the remains of the organizations of other days, and brings to view the principles which started into life at particular periods, and shows how all combined to prepare the world for its highest and last stage. Existing organizations, our own among the number, *may* pass away; truths now deemed great and glorious, may be detached from their present connections, and come up in new combinations; new necessities in the world may *demand*, or new truths yet to be stricken out by minds that shall be in their age what Wiclif, or Luther, or Calvin, or Edwards were in theirs, may *suggest* them, and

the existing forms may pass away. We shall have done well if we act in accordance with the truths made known to us, and if we put them into the best form for influencing our own age, and transmit them unimpaired and unsullied to future times.

The Calvinistic denomination of Christians, of which we are a part, is, taken comprehensively, one of the largest denominations that give character to the Church, and one that is destined to act an important part in maintaining and diffusing the gospel of Christ. It attaches to itself a peculiar class of minds. It makes its appeal on its own grounds, and expects to accomplish its own work. It has always existed in the Church, and in all that part of the Roman Catholic communion that was ranged among the Jansenists; in the valleys of Piedmont among the Waldenses; in the parts of Europe, at the Reformation, where the names of Calvin and Knox had influence; in our own land where Puritan principles have reigned, and where the names of Edwards, of Davies, and of Witherspoon have been known, the influence has been well understood, and strongly marked. We are before the public avowedly and gratefully, as a part of that great organization; and it is not unfit, on an occasion like this, to speak of its *general* character and of the *peculiar* advantages with which we go before the public as its advocates and friends.

As this form of Christianity is represented in the great denominational family to which we belong, it combines two things—the Presbyterian form of government, and the Calvinistic or Augustinian type of doctrine. In the former we are distinguished from Prelacy and Independency, in the latter from Pelagians and Arminians, and from all kindred or affiliated doctrines. In reference to this *general* system—a system which has been much spoken against in the world—I have the following remarks to make :

(a) The Calvinistic doctrines seem to have some kind of affinity with the Presbyterian mode of government. It may not be easy to see precisely *why* it is, but the general course of events has shown that there *is* such an affinity, and that this is a natural alliance. Using the word *Presbyterian* in a large sense, as it is often used, to embrace our brethren of New-England,—and as in such a sense it is not improperly used, for they stand up for the essential views which we maintain on the subject,—it is to be observed that the purest form of Calvinism has sought to express itself in connection with Presbyterianism. Indeed, in the popular apprehension, these are now almost identical. It was not a matter of accident that the Church founded by Calvin in Geneva was Presbyterian; it was not a matter of accident that the Church formed by John Knox was Presbyterian; it was not a matter of accident that the churches in Holland represented in the Synod at Dort were mainly Presbyterian; it

was not a matter of accident that the Calvinistic doctrines of the Puritans, represented in the Westminster Assembly, and the whole Calvinism of England in the time of Charles I. and the Protectorate, went forth in essential Presbyterianism as opposed to Prelacy; and it was not a matter of chance that when the New-England Pilgrims came to our shores, though most of them had been reared in the bosoms of Prelatical churches, and most of the ministers had been ordained by Prelatical Bishops, the substantial form in which those doctrines expressed themselves was the Presbyterian rather than the Episcopal form. There have been Calvinists, and there are still, in the Established Church of England, and there was a large infusion, we think, of genuine Calvinism into its 'Articles,' but the doctrine has from some cause found little that was congenial there; has been little welcomed there; has been cramped, and has never found its full development there; has been buried under forms and silently melted away, or has been made a term of reproach. In connection with Presbyterianism, however, it has worked freely; combining, with a very efficient mode of church government, its own great energy as adapted to move and mould the human mind. In Geneva; in Scotland; in Holland; in New-England; in the various Presbyterian organizations in our country, it has operated without restraint, and its proper fruits are to be found there.

(b) The Calvinistic system, thus identified with Presbyterianism, has an affinity for a certain class of mind, and makes its way in the world by appealing or depending on that order of mind. It supposes that there are certain classes of mind that will be more *likely* to embrace that form of doctrine than any other, and that there are minds, not few in number, or unimportant in their character, which, when converted, will, naturally embrace this form of belief. That form of doctrine, though in an eminent degree distasteful to the unconverted *heart*, may have already commanded the assent of the *understanding*, and in their conversion such minds will see prominently the sovereign grace of God, and will never doubt that this is the system revealed in the Bible. This class of mind, too, is strongly marked. I do not say that it is the most numerous; or that it is in all respects the most desirable; or that it has no undesirable traits; but I say that there is such a class of mind, which it may be anticipated will be ready to embrace the Calvinistic system, and to welcome its great doctrines to the soul. Past history has shown that this class is most likely to be found among the thinking, the sober, the educated, the firm, the conservative, and the free; and that, as it finds strong affinities between itself and these minds, so it tends to cherish and develop those qualities of the soul. It has shown, may I not say, its natural affinities in attaching itself to such minds as those of Augustine, Calvin, Edwards,

and Chalmers ; it has found its home among the Huguenots, among the Scotch, and among the Puritans of Old and New England. It is a class of mind that will be likely, we think, to be increased by all that can be done to make men think—to rouse up the great virtues of the soul—to spread over a community the principles of a sound education and a thorough conscientiousness. There are minds, indeed, and those in many respects of a high order, that will not see the truth of the Calvinistic system ; but there are minds that can never see the truth of an opposite system. We could not perhaps undertake to say whether John Wesley could ever have been a Calvinist, but we *can* say that Jonathan Edwards could never have been any thing else ; and if there be a mind in any community formed like that of Edwards, we anticipate that it will embrace the same great system which he defended.

(*c*) The Calvinistic system identifies itself with education, and a large portion of the cultivated mind of a community will be always imbued with the sentiments of this system. It makes no appeal to ignorance, to passion, to superstition ; it asks not the help of a religion of forms ; it relies not on excited feelings as the basis of its operations ; it assumes always that, as educated mind will be more likely than any other to embrace Christianity in general, so it will be more likely than any other to embrace this peculiar form of Christianity. Calvinism has never sought to keep a people in ignorance with a view to propagate itself, and has never expected to maintain its hold on the public mind except as that mind is educated and enlightened. The first college in our country, and the third, and the fourth, were Calvinistic institutions, and a very large proportion of the colleges in the land maintain the same character now. Abolish the colleges in our land, and cease to educate the public mind, and you would strike a fatal blow to our hopes of propagating the form of Christianity which we hold.

(*d*) Calvinism, as a system, has a strong affinity for liberty. It has the essential element of all freedom—that *God* rules, and that his law, when others come in competition with it, is alone to be obeyed. It regards God as exalted on the throne ; as alone having a right to preside over and direct the conscience ; as having made men equal and free. Under Calvinism, when fairly developed, men have a right to think freely ; to speak freely ; act freely ; to enjoy their religious privileges, and the avails of their own labor. Whoever else, in the War of Independence in our country, were cold, or indifferent to the rights of liberty, Calvinists were not ; whoever else were disposed to look tamely on the wrongs done by the mother country, Calvinists were not ; whoever refused to pray for freedom, the Presbyterian ministers of the land did not ; and whoever was found giving ‘aid and comfort’ to the enemies of the country, Cal-

vinists were not of that number. Witherspoon, in the Congress of 1776, represented the exact views of the Presbyterian body in this country on that subject, and every feeling of Calvinism in the colonies revolted against all that was oppressive in the acts of the mother country.

(e) The doctrines of Calvinism are not of a *negative*, but of a *positive* character, and have strongly marked traits. To no doctrines do men ever become more strongly attached than to these where they are embraced from the heart; none are more cordially disliked by large classes of men; none are more easily misrepresented—none more easily perverted and abused. (1) The system *begins* with God, and makes *Him* the centre of the whole circle of doctrines and duties. It exalts Him always and everywhere; exalts his wisdom, his power, his efficiency, his sovereignty. It makes his glory the beginning, the middle, and the end of all things—exalting

“Him first, him midst, and him without end.”—PAR. LOST.

It places him always on the throne in the view of the conscience; brings him into his own world in reference to the most minute object, and the least important event, as well as the most mighty; and represents him as directing all things to the accomplishment of his own grand and incomprehensible purposes. (2) It assumes that it is not by chance or haphazard that things occur; that there is a wise, eternal scheme,—formed because it is wise and eternal,—a scheme that runs through all things; embraces all; and that has given to each event and object its appropriate place in respect to time, and to all the circumstances of its being. Nothing that was designed to be *in* that plan falls out of its proper place; nothing occurs that is a *side* matter, or an offshoot, or that has not sprung up in accordance with that plan. (3) It makes man and his purposes little, in respect to God and his plans; great only as comprehended in that plan. The place of each one has been assigned to him by his Maker; the work which he is to do has been arranged by Him; and all the grace which will enable him to carry out the purposes of his own being, originates from on high. He is not great in himself, and nothing that he does makes him great: he is great only as he was comprehended in the eternal plan; that from eternity the eye of God was fixed on him; and that in due time his welfare was sought by the incarnation and sacrifice of the Son of God, and that his salvation is originated and carried forward by the agency of the Holy Ghost. In his salvation, as in all things, God is the beginning and the close—the Alpha and the Omega—the all and in all. He bestows salvation on whom he pleases; and where it is bestowed it is not the result of any new scheme, but the purpose to bestow it in this particular case was laid far back in the eternal counsels. Every good

thought in man is originated by Him, and his purpose limits and bounds all the actions of man. (4) The scheme supposes an animating spirit of love to God as the fountain of all blessings; of unwavering confidence in him as infinitely wise; of profound and absolute submission to him as a Sovereign; of a steady and rigid regard to duty, and an inflexible conscientiousness; of heroism in danger, and patience in trial. It supposes true freedom,—as all power is from God, and as He alone is Lord of the conscience; and it prompts to the love of liberty in every form,—for Christ has set his followers free from the most degrading servitude, and has breathed into the soul an inextinguishable love of freedom. (5) It is a scheme adapted to nourish the stern and the rigid virtues; delighting more naturally in strength than in refinement; seeking virtue itself more than the appearance of virtue; and sometimes by its roughnesses repelling the gentle, and appearing repulsive to the fastidious; not incompatible with the amenities and refinements of life, but seeking to make men virtuous and pure, rather than to give them elegance of manners. The stern virtues of the Puritans and the Pilgrims grew out of it; their conscientiousness manifested itself sometimes in little things, but it *was* conscientiousness, and *when* so regarded, they had no option but to obey. (6) Yet it is a scheme that may become, by abuse, one of the most repulsive, severe, and, I will admit, gloomy, that can be presented to the human mind. In the form of Antinomianism, it opens the flood-gates of licentiousness without restraint. In the form of mere *orthodoxy*—the mere belief of its dogmas—it is, like the bones in Ezekiel's vision, 'dry'—'very dry.' In such forms it becomes a hard, cold, unfeeling, and repulsive system; delighting in its opposition to the common courtesies of life, or to the common methods of profane reasoning among men; making a man 'an offender for a word,' and holding to the most literal and rigid construction of symbols of doctrine; allowing no liberty of sentiment or discussion; making the essential point of orthodoxy to be that all the points of belief have been long since settled by the Fathers, and that they are never to be re-argued; and that the world is to look for no further progress; and setting itself against all the principles of interpretation that would throw doubt on the received explanation of a passage of Scripture. In one form, by teaching that the atonement was measured in its extent by the actual number that shall be saved, it sets itself against the *obvious* meaning of the Scriptures, and practically against the free offer of salvation to all mankind; in another, by representing all our race as guilty of the crime of our great ancestor, it confounds all proper notions of moral agency and responsibility; makes criminality a shifting thing, like the sands of the desert, or like raiment that may be put on and off; teaches men to feel guilty for that for which they never can feel

guilty; and abuses the doctrine of sovereignty, by teaching that God attaches blame and merit where he pleases, irrespective of moral character; and in another form—representing that man has no ability of any kind to do the will of God—it destroys the force of all appeals to the conscience and the heart; makes all effort, and all appeals to put forth an effort, a mockery, and represents God in his revealed Word as neutralizing all the common principles of responsibility and obligation which he has stamped upon the human mind.

Of the great Presbyterian or Calvinistic denomination, we are a part, and stand, not by any act of our own, before the public, as a distinct denomination, having much in common with others, but occupying a position peculiar, and having a 'mission' to perform: we think with some advantages over our brethren.

We are not a separate denomination by our own act, or because we preferred it, or because, in our own apprehension, or I may add in the apprehension of the public at large, it was right that it should be so. We never made a movement to withdraw from our brethren, or to drive them from us. We were, perhaps, as extensively as they were, trained in the American Presbyterian Church, and we think we loved it as really as they did. We had no desire to change our organization, or the articles of our faith. We had expressed our attachment to those articles, and to the form of government, as solemnly and as sincerely as any of them had done. We preferred, as we still do, the Presbyterian Church to all others, and we believed that its form of government best carried out the principles of the New Testament; we preferred, as we still do, the Calvinistic form of doctrine to any other, for we believed, and still believe, that that form of doctrine comes nearer than any other to the teachings of the Bible. We valued our name; our standing in the Church; our privileges, and the hopes inspired there: we loved union for the sake of union, and for the common good; and we looked with admiration upon that great system of Presbyterianism which had grown up, and which was extending itself so far over the land.

Our brethren thought differently. In a majority which they happened to have, contrary to all the forms of our government, and to all the rights secured to us in the Constitution, they at once, without arraignment, charge, or trial, severed from the great Presbyterian body four Synods, embracing five hundred ministers, and sixty thousand communicants. Not one of the number had been accused and tried; not one had had opportunity of defence; not one could return to the Church, except as a man could come in from another denomination, or from the world. We felt that an enormous wrong was done; and though most of those that then constituted our body, or that have since united with us, were not

personally interested in it, yet they *were* interested and united in the feelings and views which it was designed to condemn and remove by this act.

Offence had been given to our brethren in these respects :—

(1) First. We had supposed that the terms of adhesion to the Presbyterian Church allowed a reasonable latitude of construction, so as to admit all who held sincerely the great Calvinistic system, as distinguished from Arminianism, Pelagianism, and Socinianism. We so understood the adopting act of 1729, and the principles which it embodied, and which were incorporated into the basis adopted in the re-union of the two bodies in 1758. We supposed that in respect to the great questions which had arisen in the Presbyterian body, and which had once led to a long and painful separation, on the re-union it was intended to be admitted and established, that “while the great vitals of the system were to be held intact and sacred; the members and ministers of the Church were to be allowed to give it power and life, in practice, without incurring suspicion of heresy, or being condemned by the cold-hearted and formal for disloyalty to truth, or for zeal in doing good, and saving souls.” We supposed that it was understood that Presbyterians were not sworn to a cold, cheerless, and rigid system of mere opinion, or that they were to be cramped and fettered in the freedom of their minds, or in their investigations of the Word of God, by methods of interpretation, and by philosophical systems of explanation, devised in other ages. Holding, as we did, the great truths of the system, we wished to preach a free Gospel; to represent the Atonement as made for all men, and the Gospel as offered to all men, in good faith on the part of God; and we wished to be able so to present the claims of the Gospel, that men should not take refuge in their sins, under the plea that they were condemned for the sin of another, or that they were wholly, and in all senses, without any ability to obey the commands of God. We wished so to give life and power to the system that it might be connected with the deepest sense of guilt and responsibility in the consciences of men; that it might be blessed in glorious revivals of religion; that it might move forward with the progress of true mental philosophy; and that it might be identified with the great movements of the age for the conversion of the world.

(2) Secondly. We wished to sympathize with, and to co-operate with, other Christians in promoting the great purposes of Christian benevolence. We supposed that organizations might be formed not strictly ecclesiastical, for the promotion of the common objects of Christianity; that would at the same time combine with ours the energy of other denominations of Christians; that would tend to strengthen the bonds of brotherhood in the great Christian family, and that would preserve all

that it was proper to save that was strictly ecclesiastical and denominational. We were disposed to rely much on the 'voluntary' principle in religion, and to give it its widest play, consistently with a due regard to truth, in great and combined movements for the propagation of the common faith. Our preferences were for a 'co-operative Christianity, in distinction from ecclesiastical exclusiveness.' We supposed that the world had seen enough of the evils of denominational exclusiveness, and of attempting to control the minds of men by mere ecclesiastical authority, and that the principles of our religion demanded, and that the age demanded, that the 'energies of evangelical Christians should be united in making a common Christianity as widely and speedily prevalent as possible.' Hence we preferred, in propagating our common Christianity, voluntary associations to ecclesiastical boards.

(3) Third. We were especially disposed to make common cause, as far as we could do, with all the Puritan family, and particularly with our New-England brethren. Many of the Presbyterians in the land are descended from New-England, and counted it no dishonor that they could trace their ancestry back to the Cottons, and Mathers, and Brewsters. A very considerable portion of the churches had grown up under a solemn compact between Presbyterians and Congregationalists, an arrangement which had been always favorable to Presbyterianism. We loved the great features of the New-England theology, and regarded our country as honored in having produced such men as Edwards and Dwight. We had supposed that they had done much, not only to defend the great system of Calvinism and to place it where it could not be assailed with advantage; but also that they had done something to give to the ancient system a more liberal cast; to divest it of some of its harsh and rigid features; to warm it into life; to adjust it to a true mental philosophy; and to show how, in its essential features, it accorded with the true laws of mind. We had learned to admire that system, and to adore the grace of God, as the power of the modified form was developed under the preaching of Edwards, of Whitefield, and of David Brainerd. Moreover, not a few of us had been educated at Princeton. But 'the sun of Edwards went down at Princeton, and his sepulchre is there until this day.' In our rambles, we were accustomed to tread near his grave—to pause and contemplate that tomb—to think of the wonderful man whose remains rested there awaiting a resurrection so glorious as his must be. There he then reposed by the side of Davies and Witherspoon; there he now reposes also by the side of Miller, of Green, and of Alexander. We did not suppose that to respect a man thus honored, a grave was regarded with so much veneration—I will not say pride—at the seat of the theological seminary where we were trained, could be re-

garded as heresy ; nor did we suppose that to admire his worth, to seek to imbibe his spirit, to love his theology, even in Princeton, could be regarded as fundamentally wrong in the Presbyterian Church. And if, in after years, to love our New-England brethren ; to desire to act with them ; to seek to make the chain of friendship between them and us bright ; and to welcome light to our souls, though it *should* come out from their seats of sacred learning, was *heresy*, we could not help it. "Here am I," said Luther, "I cannot do otherwise,—God help me." Yet, our brethren said, 'Let the Lord be glorified,' and cast us out ;—and here we are—a branch of the Presbyterian family, with one thousand five hundred ministers, and one hundred and forty thousand communicants.

By other acts than our own, acts which we have never been able to reconcile with the ideas of justice and charity in which we were trained, and yet taught by our Calvinism to recognize as occurring under the Providence of God, and as being somehow subservient to his great designs, and already beginning to see reasons why it should be so, we stand before the community as a distinct religious denomination. Compared with the other denominations in our land, we are not feeble in numbers, or in influence ; in educational resources, or in the means of permanently affecting the destiny of our country and the world. It is natural to inquire what we have on which to rely in our appeals to the people of this land ? What is the relation which we sustain to other denominations ? What advances have we made in questions of great moral interest ?

(1) First. We stand before the community with all the advantages, whatever they may be, of the Calvinistic system, adjusted more nearly, we think, to the principles of the New Testament, and to a sound philosophy, than is elsewhere to be found. We make our appeals to the class of mind that we think is always predisposed, when converted, to embrace this general system of doctrines. We expect to commend ourselves to the sober, the thinking, the conservative portions of our countrymen. We expect to lay a solid foundation for piety in the proper recognition of the supremacy and sovereignty of God, and in the deep sense of weakness and dependence on the part of man ; making God great in all things, and man great only as he is redeemed, and is an heir of glory, and a favorite of heaven by electing love.

At the same time we go before the world with this system, not as a naked skeleton, but covered with flesh, and fitted up with nerves and sinews, and warmed by the impulses of a throbbing and a generous heart. We present it to our fellow-sinners, not adjusted by design to the opinions of the age in which we live, or accommodated to the philosophy of the age, but better adjusted to the New Testament, we think, than any other system, and *therefore* adjusted to human nature as it is, and to true philo-

sophy. It is a system which can be *preached*, and all parts of which can be preached. We are not cramped in our offers of the gospel to all men, elect or non-elect. We are not driven to find the principles of a philosophy that will justify us in asserting that one man may be guilty of the sin of another. We are not compelled to endeavor, in the face of the common apprehensions of mankind, to find reasons for vindicating a government where more is required than can possibly be rendered, or to urge upon our fellow-men duties which, in the same breath, we tell them they have no power to perform. We believe, moreover, that the gospel was originally so adjusted as to be in accordance with truth always and everywhere—by whomsoever discovered, and whatever progress may be made in science. We do not believe that all wisdom died with the fathers, or that all truth has been embraced in any symbol of doctrine, or that all the truth in the Word of God has yet been brought out. In the language of John Robinson, the pastor of the church at Leyden, we believe “that the Lord hath more truth and light yet to break forth out of his Holy Word.”

Thus we stand in the estimation of the community; and thus we are disposed to stand,—as Calvinists who have adopted in our practical theology the best suggestions of the profound thinkers of modern times; who have availed ourselves in our practical preaching of the profound suggestions of Edwards, Bellamy, and Dwight; who embrace the system as it is brought back to the doctrines full of life and power in the New Testament; a system, as we hold it, not antagonist to, but coincident with, all proper efforts to promote revivals of religion, and to secure the conversion of men.

(2.) Second. In common with all other denominations of Christians, we feel bound to extend and to propagate the views which we entertain. Though in charity with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and though not wishing or expecting to obstruct their efforts, yet we regard ourselves as in possession of the best form of Christianity, and we believe that the effort to diffuse Christianity, *as such*, will result in accessions to our numbers, from the classes of mind that have an affinity by nature and grace with our views. In common, too, with other Christians, we should not feel that we had done our duty to our Master, unless we sought to diffuse the principles which we regard as most in accordance with His will; and in common with others, we feel also that God has given us a great work to do in this land. From the nature of the case, therefore, efforts to extend our own denomination could not but enter into our plans. The only question has been on what principles, and in what way, it shall be done.

(a) It is of the very nature of Christianity, in whatever form it is em-

bodied, to diffuse itself. The Saviour only stated what is inherent in it in all forms, when he said it was 'like leaven hidden in meal;' he only stated a great truth which must have found expression in the Church itself, when he gave his last command; "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." For ourselves, from the very fact that we have embraced the views which we have, we believe that those views, coming nearer to the New Testament than any other, *ought* to be propagated; and as those views have commended themselves to our own minds, we believe that there are large classes in every community that will find their views better expressed by our symbols than elsewhere, and that they will work more freely and more usefully with us, than in connection with any other organization. We do not disguise the fact, that it is our intention to diffuse these views as extensively as can be done through the land. We think, too, that we have some peculiar advantages for this. These advantages are found in the simplicity of our modes of worship; in our love of order; in our conservative principles; in our freedom; in the appeals which we make to the reason and the conscience of men,—relying little on appeals to the passions, and little on forms; in our respect for education; and in our being, on great questions of morals, in advance of most others. We are conscious of no sense of shame in desiring to spread over the land the principles which made the Waldenses what they were; which were illustrated in the lives of the Huguenots; which appeared among the Swiss Reformers; which were developed in the Reformed Church of Holland; which gave their firm and hardy virtue to the Covenanters in Scotland, and to the Puritans in England. The plant which we seek to propagate is a vigorous and fruitful stock, whose 'shadow has covered the hills, and whose boughs have been as the goodly cedars.'

(b) It is a duty which we owe to our Master to do this. We could not be faithful to Him, and to the trust which we have received from Him, if we did not do it. We believe that the best interests of our country, and of the world, are identified with the spread of the pure gospel, and that the form in which we have received it is indispensable as an element of preservation in society, and indispensable to the best development of true religion. The class of mind that we, on the broad scale, would be most *likely* to enlist in the cause of religion, would be the most *undesirable* class to have enlisted in the cause of infidelity and atheism. The greatest calamity which could have befallen the Church, would have been to have had the mind of Edwards under infidel principles, or the whole New-England mind, with its energy, and zeal, and enterprise, enlisted in diffusing the doctrines of atheism. The Church could better afford to have many such races as the Gallic race opposed to Christianity,

than the Anglo-Saxon race; it could better spare many such minds as those of Hume and Volney for infidelity, than one such mind as that of Jonathan Edwards.

(c) The field which is assigned us for propagating our views, without interfering with any other Churches or organizations, is ample to the extent of our wishes, and is as inviting as the Christian heart could desire. Without saying anything that would disparage any other denomination, or without saying that they, too, would not find an ample field for their efforts, we may say that we are more *at home* in Western New-York, Northern Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, and Minnesota, than either the Episcopalians, Congregationalists, or our brethren of the other branch of our Church. To great States and Territories also, at the South and the West—to Oregon, New-Mexico, and California, we have, also, unlimited access; and never did the face of the world present so beautiful, ample, and inviting a field for the propagation of truth, or call so imperatively for the exertion of every energy, as now invites us in this land. We cannot help being Home Missionaries. We cannot help putting forth efforts for extending the Church. The question which has been started on this subject, is one that has been started under the Divine Spirit, and we cannot put it down. Our business is merely to devise means to give it a proper expression, and to adjust it to other great questions that have sprung up with it, and that are as important in their place, and on the great scale, as this is.

(3) Third. The great and difficult question which has forced itself upon us, and which now demands all our wisdom to adjust it, is, how shall these views be so maintained and acted on that there shall be no collision with those with whom we wish to act; in other words, what is our relation to other denominations at large, and especially to those who sympathize with us in our doctrinal views, and in efforts to spread the gospel?

Our relations to those other denominations can be expressed in few words:—(a) We recognize them to every extent, and in all respects, as belonging to the great common family of Christians. We recognize their ministry; their ordinances; their rules of membership, their ecclesiastical acts:—we exclude not their ministers from our pulpits, or their members from our communion tables; and we intend to press this as a great point to be reached in *all* the great common brotherhood. (b) We are disposed to co-operate with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, in promoting the common cause. It was one of the points in which we began to diverge from our brethren, and which was the cause of their alienation from us, that we were disposed, in spreading the gospel, to make common cause with others on the broader platform of Christianity.

In respect, for example, to the circulation of the Bible, we thought there might be an organization which would embrace the whole Protestant brotherhood—for all receive that as the standard of their faith; in reference to religious tracts, and the establishment of Sunday-schools, there was a common basis on which Christians of all denominations might unite; in reference to the prosecution of Missions, there were those who so nearly harmonized with us on the whole, and so entirely in the Missionary purpose, at home and abroad, that the great Missionary enterprise might be conducted under a common Board, and that, whatever might be the acts of *sect* in Christian lands, a broader basis of Christian union might be laid in the Christianity that should spring up in the heathen portions of the world. We believed, too, that such voluntary associations, responsible directly to the public, would be safer, and would be less likely to introduce an abuse of power into the Church, and would have more vitality and efficiency than if they had a strictly ecclesiastical form. We *found* such societies, organized with great wisdom, and admirably adapted to such ends.

Of all the great denominations in our country, those with whom Presbyterians harmonized in most points, and whose co-operation it was most desirable to enjoy, were our Congregational brethren of New-England. Many of the Presbyterian body were descended from the same venerated ancestors, and rejoiced in the honor of tracing their history up to those who landed at Plymouth. The great essential institutions which they had established, had spread themselves over the territory where Presbyterians were laboring. We held with them the same essential faith, and preached the same system of doctrines. Moreover, there were things about Presbyterianism, as it had come in from Scotland and the North of Ireland, which would be greatly improved by blending with it the New-England spirit. It would become more liberal; more catholic; more aggressive; more vigorous:—it would have a higher love of learning, and would be more friendly to revivals of religion, and to systematic enterprises for the conversion of the world.

It was not a matter of chance that these organizations met and mingled on the same field, and were brought into contact;—and if Congregationalism had not gained anything from us, Presbyterianism had not lost anything by an intercourse with our New-England brethren. There has never been a time when we could *afford* to have a controversy with our New-England brethren; and when it was not for *our* interest to cultivate the closest terms of friendship with them. But two things seem now to be required, in order that our operations on the great field where we meet should continue to be harmonious:—(1) One is, that it shall be understood that the churches which are formed there shall take their own

form as they spring up, being determined in the form of their organization by their own preferences, without any influence from without, or without any foreign patronage, dictation, or control; and (2) the other is, that each of these great denominations shall be regarded as offering no interference with the other, and that both are at entire liberty to go into any unoccupied fields, and to establish as many churches as they can—exercising the rights of a common Christianity in diffusing their faith. Let the Presbyterian go, let the Congregationalist go to any and every part of the land, and spread their religion as far as they may be able. There need be no collision—for the land is large; and if they have the spirit of the fathers, and the spirit which it is for the interest of *both* to cherish, there *will* be no collision.

Why should there be any jealousy? Why should there be any falling out with each other? Why, in either denomination, should there be any who would wish to sever or to weaken the cords that bind us? Why should there be any strife when we meet on the great prairies of the West; any jars, or cold and alienated feelings? Why should there be a close sectarian calculation of the gains and losses to each respectively in the operations of the great societies through which our charities flow? We, as Presbyterians, whether when all were united in one body, or whether speaking of the two branches, separately, have no reason to be jealous of our New-England brethren. We have lost nothing by this union; we have gained much. In the number of ministers, members, and churches; in the literary institutions which are educating our sons and daughters; in the spirit of large benevolence which has been breathed into our body, and in the erection of many of our churches, we owe much to the cheerful liberality of our New-England brethren. I know not that New-England, from the time when my own predecessor, the first pastor in the first Presbyterian church, was imported from New-England, or when Edwards, the glory of New-England, was called to preside over Nassau Hall, to the present day, has ever withheld a man, however valuable his services in New-England, or however richly endowed, when his services have been asked in the Presbyterian Church, or has ever withheld a donation that was solicited, on the ground that a church or college was Presbyterian, or from a fear that its charities would tend to promote Presbyterianism.

And our New-England brethren have no reason to be jealous of us. To that great Board located in their chief city, which has sprung up on her soil, and whose influence has spread in all lands, we have contributed as cheerfully as we would have done if it had been originated in our own body, and we claim for it as warm an attachment as they have for it themselves. To them, with the same spirit, we sent our Wisner and Arm-

strong, and had they wanted more, there has not been a man of our number whom we should have withheld. We stand up as the advocates of the same system of doctrine ; we seek to spread a common Christianity over our land and world.

By common consent, no organization that has appeared on the earth has evinced more practical wisdom, or been more worthy of public confidence, than the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. For a similar reason, and commending itself more directly to our denominational feelings, by combining more elements from our own Church, the American Home Missionary Society has a like claim to the confidence and affection of both. It has been and is among the richest of Heaven's blessings to our land. Though for myself, too young in the ministry to take any part in its organization, yet I count it as among the happiest circumstances in my own life, that I was present and witnessed its organization. It would be too much to say that there *could* not have been other means of saving the great West, and bringing it under a wholesome evangelical influence ; but human wisdom would fail to tell what those means could have been ; and could all the influences which have been sent out from the Society be now withdrawn, how hideous, and base, and sad would the scenes of moral desolation be ! We shall be most ungrateful if we do not remember its services ; we shall be most unwise if we do not remain its steadfast friends ; we shall injure our own cause, and more deeply the cause of our common Christianity, if in any of the arrangements demanded by our own organization we diminish the confidence of the churches in that noble institution.

(4) Fourth. I have thus spoken of our position before the world as a part of the great Presbyterian or Calvinistic family ; of our position as a branch of the Church distinct from our brethren, and made such not by our will, but by their act ; of the principles which we cherish, and which must lead us to a desire to propagate our views ; and of the fact that we desire and design to maintain this position in harmony with all the great Christian brotherhood. The view would not be complete, and I should not be just to your feelings or my own, if, in speaking of our position, I should omit to refer to one other point which has been as much agitated among us as any other since we have had a separate organization, and on which our enemies have been looking with an expectation that our vessel would be driven on rocks, and which has given more solicitude than perhaps any other to those who look on us with a friendly eye. I refer to Slavery. I allude to this, not to produce agitation, or open discussion anew, but because, in speaking of our position before the world, I could not with propriety avoid it, and because I would humbly hope that a statement of our *real* position may do something to allay feeling, and to prevent the necessity

of giving to this subject the prominence which it has had in years that are past. It may be that we have not looked as we might have done at the points which have been gained, or at what must be the regular working of the principles which we have adopted.

Nor do I allude to this subject to urge any separation between Northern and Southern brethren, or to use any language of denunciation. We are brethren; and it is but just to believe all are alike sincere, and are anxious in all respects to do the will of the common Master. And it is but right, when our Southern brethren assure us that they are environed with difficulties on this subject, that we should not discredit their statements, or denounce them for what they cannot avoid, and that, in speaking of a great evil which has come upon the land, we should not speak of it as if the blame were with them alone. Nor in speaking of an evil in our land which we all so much deplore, should we doubt they would as sincerely rejoice in its complete removal as the most zealous of their Northern brethren.

It is not the result of chance or accident, as already remarked, that Calvinists are the friends of liberty; it would be a denial of all the principles which distinguish us if we were not. We appreciate, we think, from the nature of our views of the dreadful evil of sin, and the merciful sovereignty of our God, more highly than other Christians can, the force of our Saviour's words, "If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed," and of Paul's words, "Ye are bought with a price, be not ye the servants of men;" and we have come out from among our brethren that we might enjoy in its fullness the inestimable sweets of liberty. Our religion is free; our opinions are free; we are free. We sympathize, therefore, naturally with all those who are in bondage of any kind, and desire that in their persons and their opinions, and in all their rights as men, they may be as free as we are. We may appeal to history, and to say nothing of the early effects of Christianity in loosening the bonds of servitude in the Roman empire, we may look to the lands where there have been the warmest struggles for freedom, and the most violent resistance to tyranny in all forms; to the valleys of Piedmont, to Switzerland, to France in the time of the Huguenots, and to Scotland; and we shall see that these are the lands where our principles have most prevailed, and where they resided whose names we most love to cherish. A Calvinist who oppresses another, or who sees another oppressed without sympathizing with him, is a man who violates all his own professed convictions of the rights of conscience, and belies all the process which has been employed to make his own soul free. A Calvinist who does not wish that every human being should be free to follow his own convictions; should be educated and qualified for self-government; should be in possession

of the Bible, and be able to read it; should be regarded as a human being and a brother; should be esteemed as of inestimable worth in the scale of being, as being redeemed by the blood of Christ, and being an object of the eternal love of the Father, is a man whose practice is at variance with all the elementary principles of his own system, and the position which God designs that he should occupy in the world.

It was not then accidental that, as early as the year 1787, at a time when most of the other denominations of our land were slumbering over the subject of slavery, the Synod of New-York and New-Jersey, before the General Assembly was constituted, adopted, among others, the following resolution:—"They recommend it to all the people under their care, to use the most prudent measures consistent with the interest and the state of civil society, to procure eventually THE FINAL ABOLITION OF SLAVERY IN AMERICA."—MINUTES OF THE GEN. ASS., iv. 30. And it was not an accident that, in 1818, at a time when most of the other great denominations were still slumbering on the subject, our General Assembly, when our body was one, passed, with entire unanimity, the celebrated resolutions, embracing the following among other declarations and principles:—"We consider the voluntary enslaving of one part of the human race by another as a gross violation of the most precious and sacred rights of human nature; as utterly inconsistent with the law of God, which requires us to love our neighbor as ourselves; and as totally irreconcilable with the spirit and principles of the Gospel of Christ. Slavery creates a paradox in the moral system; it exhibits rational, accountable, and immortal beings in such circumstances as scarcely to leave them the power of moral action. It exhibits them as dependent on the will of others, whether they shall receive religious instruction; whether they shall know and worship the true God; whether they shall enjoy the ordinances of the Gospel; whether they shall perform the duties and cherish the endearments of husbands and wives, parents and children, neighbors and friends; whether they shall preserve their chastity and purity, or regard the dictates of justice and humanity.

"It is manifestly the duty of all Christians, who enjoy the light of the present day, to use their honest, earnest, and unwearied endeavors, as speedily as possible, to efface this blot of our holy religion, and to obtain the complete abolition of slavery throughout Christendom, and, if possible, throughout the world.

"We enjoin it on all Church Sessions and Presbyteries, under the care of this Assembly, to discountenance, and, as far as possible, to prevent all cruelty of whatever kind in the treatment of slaves; especially the cruelty of separating husband and wife, parents and children, and that which consists in selling slaves to those who will either themselves deprive these

unhappy people of the blessing of the Gospel, or who will transport them to places where the Gospel is not proclaimed, or where it is forbidden to slaves to attend upon its institutions. The manifest violation or disregard of the injunction here given, in its true spirit and intention, ought to be considered as just ground for the discipline and censures of the Church. And if it shall ever happen that a Christian professor, in our communion, shall sell a slave who is also in communion and good standing with our Church, contrary to his or her will and inclination, it ought immediately to claim the proper attention of the Church judicature; and unless there be such peculiar circumstances attending the case as can but seldom happen, it ought to be followed, without delay, by a suspension of the offender from all the privileges of the Church, till he repent, and make all the reparation in his power to the injured party.”—MINUTES OF THE ASSEMBLY, iv. pp. 28–33.

It was but carrying out these principles, and embodying them in a new form, that our General Assembly, after years of discussion and inquiry, in the year 1849, solemnly adopted these sentiments as their own, and as expressing the opinion of our branch of the Church, (MINUTES OF THE ASSEMBLY for 1849, pp. 185–188,) and that in the year 1850, the Assembly again declared that “the holding of our fellow-men in the condition of slavery, except in those cases where it is unavoidable, by the laws of the State, the obligations of guardianship or the demands of humanity, is an *offence* in the proper import of that term, as used in the Book of Discipline, and should be regarded and treated in the same manner as other offences.”—MINUTES OF THE ASSEMBLY for 1850, p. 325.

Thus we stand on this great and momentous subject before the world. It is not an accident that we occupy this position; and the ultimate bearing of the various steps which have been taken, and the duty of our Church if these positions are to be adhered to, and if their spirit is to be carried out, it is impossible to mistake.

The position which we have thus asserted before the world has claim to public attention, and to our own, in the following respects:—

(a) With the single exception of the Congregationalists, and the ‘Methodist Church, North,’ even if the latter is an exception, we are far in advance of all the other great denominations in our country. We have given utterance to more decided opinions; we have discussed the subject more fully and freely; there are fewer in proportion of our number who are in any way connected with slavery; and we have reached the point where discussion is more free. Indeed, our declared sentiments in regard to the evil are all that can be reasonably demanded by any who are opposed to the system, for we have declared it to be ‘a gross violation of the most precious and sacred rights of human nature, to be

utterly inconsistent with the law of God, and totally irreconcilable with the spirit and principles of the Gospel of Christ.' This is all that can be asked of *Christians* in the utterance of their sentiments in regard to *any* course of human conduct. What *action* is demanded by the utterance of such sentiments, is another question. But in regard to *the utterance of our sentiments* we stand before the world incomparably in advance of any other of the great religious denominations in our country.

(b) From this position we shall not, we cannot recede. There has been no receding; there has been no disposition to discard the sentiments uttered in 1818; there is no disposition in our Church to discard them. They stand on our books before the world, not as uttering the opinion of the body that happened to be assembled in any one year, but as uttering sentiments which have their foundations in all our theology, and in all our religion as a denomination. We cannot recede from those positions. They are the proper application of the principles of the Gospel to the system, and they are sentiments to which all other evangelical denominations will come, and must come. We cannot go back. We are committed before the world. The age will not suffer us to recede. Our own consciences will not suffer us to recede. Humanity and religion, the sufferings of the oppressed, and the principles of the Gospel which we love, will not suffer us to recede. So 'we have learned Christ;' and here we stand before the world—committed against the whole system, and the advocates of freedom for all men.

(c) The object aimed at by all these resolutions, and to which they tend, is one that cannot be mistaken. It is, as expressed in 1818, and re-uttered in 1849, "to use our honest, earnest, and unwearied endeavors, to correct the errors of former times, and as *speedily as possible* to efface this blot on our holy religion, and to obtain the complete abolition of *Slavery throughout Christendom, and, if possible, throughout the world.*" There is nothing ambiguous, disguised, or uncertain. It aims at a definite object, and the purpose of these resolutions will not be accomplished until this institution shall cease among men.

(d) Yet, the immediate and direct bearing of this is on *ourselves*. The duty pertains to ourselves. The result is one that is to affect ourselves. The thing demanded, the end to which all these things appertain, is, to detach ourselves from all connection with the system, and to stand before the world, as the Quakers do, in the high and noble position that in all our borders, not a human being is held in bondage; that not one is excluded from the highest privileges of the Gospel; that no one is debarred from the most free access to the Word of God; that there is no one who is deprived of the fair avails of his own labor; and that under no circumstances, and under no plea, no one connected with our branch

of the great Christian brotherhood shall be liable to have the bonds which unite husband and wife, or parent and child, sundered by his being sold. This is not an impracticable thing. They who hold slaves in our denomination are comparatively few in number, and most of them, if not all, it is believed, would be rejoiced to feel that *they themselves* are free. Not a blow need be struck. Not an act of violence committed. Not a harsh or unkind word need be uttered. Let us imitate the perseverance, the firmness, the kindness, and the fidelity of the Society of Friends, and the work will be done. No man's motives need be impugned; no man's rights invaded. All that is needful is for each Christian man to stand up in the sacred majesty of a solemn Christian principle, and to detach himself, as soon as possible, from all connection with the system, and the work will be done. Then, in a more high and honorable position than we can now occupy, we shall stand before the world, in that attitude to which all our resolutions tend, detached wholly from this great evil, and bringing all the force of a great Christian example to remove the evil from our land and world.

God has given us, fathers and brethren, a position before the world for which we should be unfeignedly thankful. Our natural locality is in some of the fairest portions of the land. Our principles are such as are connected with the progress of the race, and with the best interests of man. We stand before the public with more than one thousand and five hundred churches, and more than one thousand and four hundred ministers, and more than one hundred and forty thousand communicants. We have disappointed the expectations of those who supposed that we might be absorbed into other denominations, or broken into fragments; and we have safely got through with difficulties and dangers with which our brethren of the 'excising branch' of our Church have yet to grapple. We live in a country and an age in which there is no obstruction to our spreading our principles where we please, and as far as we please; in an age when Heaven smiles upon every effort to diffuse abroad the Gospel of Christ.

We, individually, shall not live and labor long. We shall be assembled as we are now but once in our lives; and soon from this convocation we shall go back to our individual fields of labor; to work perchance a little longer, or to lie down and die. Associated together, or as individuals, may the Spirit of glory and of God rest upon us; that, in these united counsels, we may be led to results that shall be well pleasing to our Master; that while life lasts we may maintain those great principles which we have received; and that we may send them onward, not weakened, to future times, when we die.