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A

HISTORY

OF THE

Presbyterian Church in America,

FROM ITS ORIGIN UNTIL THE YEAR 1760.

WITH

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF ITS EARLY MINISTERS.

BY THE

REV. RICHARD WEBSTER,

LATE PASTOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, MAUCH CHUNK, PA.

WITH

A Memoir of the Author,

BY THE REV. C. VAN RENSSELAER, D.D.

AND

An Historical Introduction,

BY THE REV. WILLIAM BLACKWOOD, D.D.

PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

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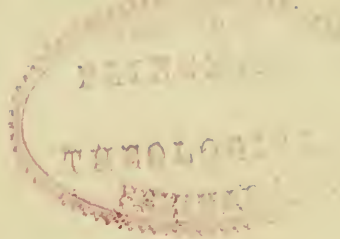
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NOTICE.

THE PRESBYTERIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY resolved, in 1853, to publish the Rev. RICHARD WEBSTER'S "History of the Presbyterian Church." A committee, consisting of C. VAN RENSSELAER, JOHN C. BACKUS, and SAMUEL AGNEW, was appointed, with power to take measures to carry the resolution into effect. Various circumstances interfered to prevent the publication of the work until the present time.

Since the committee was appointed, the basis of the Presbyterian Historical Society has been enlarged so as to include other branches of the Presbyterian church. It is, therefore, proper to state that the Society itself is not to be considered as committed to any of the controversial statements of the present history; but merely as issuing it under its general patronage and authority, after the manner of other Historical Societies.

This volume of Church History is the first volume of the PUBLICATIONS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

C. VAN RENSSELAER,
Chairman Ex. Com. of P. H. S.

DECEMBER 22, 1856.

INTRODUCTION.

THE great King of Zion has endowed the Presbyterian church in the United States with a goodly heritage, and, under his fostering care, its borders have been widely extended. In the space of a century and a half, a cause which at first was represented by a few itinerant missionaries, labouring among a number of scattered settlers on the shores of the Chesapeake and the adjoining regions, has attained to a magnitude unprecedented in the annals of Presbyterianism.

For many years past, the Presbyterian church numbers among the most valued of her members the descendants of settlers from Holland, France, Germany, and other nations of Continental Europe. Still, the great body of those hardy pioneers who sought a home in the Western world, or who were driven hither by persecution, and founded our Zion, were from Scotland and the North of Ireland. It is true, that a large proportion of the English Puritans who settled New England held Presbyterian principles, and were favourable to our form of church polity. Popularly, the term Puritanism, when associated with New England, is understood to signify Congregationalism; but the fact, as here stated, that many of the English Dissenters, who fled from their native land to New England, in order to enjoy liberty of conscience, were Presbyterian in sentiment, is established by abundant and most satisfactory evidence.* Into the causes which operated in producing a gradual change in the character of the early New England churches, and which prevented a full development of a distinct Presbyterian organization, it is not our object here to enter. We desire rather to advert to the circumstances which led to the formation of our church in the Middle States of the Union; and, in this connection, the few pages of this work which can be spared for an introductory chapter may be devoted to a recital of the causes which led to the settlement of

* Hodge's Constitutional History of the Presbyterian Church, chap. i. Philadelphia: W. S. Martien, 1839.

the fathers of our Zion in the wildernesses of this continent,—to the principles which these hardy sons of a covenanted Reformation brought with them to the land of their adoption,—to an exposition of their social characteristics, and their influence in forming and modifying the religious institutions of our country. We can merely glance, as it were, at each of these topics. To treat them fully, as their importance merits, would require the compass of several volumes, and the command of much antiquarian and statistical information, of which, it is to be regretted, that, through neglect, much has been already lost. A large portion of valuable material for the history of the church might yet be preserved by the industry of competent persons, who would collect and arrange such facts as are connected with their own districts; but it is to be feared, that the causes which allowed so much information to be lost, by the men of the last generation, will continue to operate in our own day also.

Scotland has stood out pre-eminently in modern times as the great witness-bearer, among the European nations, for civil and religious liberty. In carrying out the reformation of religion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Scottish people displayed an intelligence and an energy of character which contrast most favourably with the conduct of the inhabitants of the southern portion of the island. In England, the heads of the church or of the state might overthrow the power and repudiate the doctrines of the Church of Rome, as was done in the reigns of Henry VIII. and of Edward VI.; or, as in the reign of Mary, they might reverse what had thus been accomplished. In either case, a numerous body of the people clung to their national sanctuaries, and permitted their leaders to effect such changes in the formularies of the church as they pleased, without appearing to feel that they should have an influential voice in such important arrangements, and that there was a divine standard to which an appeal in all such matters should be made. In Scotland it was far otherwise. There, the people soon comprehended the great truth, that the evils under which the country groaned were mainly traceable to the tyranny, the rapacity, and the debasing superstitions of the Romish church, which had departed from the principles and order which God had enjoined in his Word. They further perceived, that these evils must continue to afflict the country, until a thorough reformation was effected in the church, and that no church should be considered reformed or pure whose doctrines and discipline were not strictly in accordance with the revelation which the King of Zion had given, and in which alone his will was to be discovered.

The great doctrine of the Headship of the Lord Jesus Christ soon came to be recognised on the north of the Tweed; while in

England, the civil power, in freeing itself from the bondage under which it suffered in the palmy days of Romish supremacy, not only regained the possession of the civil sword,—which rightfully belongs to civil rulers,—but, at the same time, it reversed its former condition. It was not satisfied with securing an independence of spiritual control in the affairs which belonged to its own province, but it laid the church prostrate, depriving it even of spiritual jurisdiction, and trampling it under the foot of the state. In Scotland, however, the distinction soon became apparent to the public mind, between the province of civil rulers, and the department which belonged to them, as ruling in civil affairs, on the one hand; and the province of spiritual officers, on the other hand, who were called to administer the functions of an office, which they held from the Lord Jesus Christ, which regarded spiritual things, and was instituted for the administration of the affairs of the church. Addressing the regent of the kingdom, even as early as 1571, Erskine, of Dun, says, “There is a spiritual jurisdiction and power which God has given under his kirk, and to them that bear office therein; and there is a temporal jurisdiction and power given of God to kings and civil magistrates. Both the powers are of God, and most agree to the fortifying one of the other if they be right used. But when the corruption of man enters in, confounding the offices, usurping to himself what he pleases, nothing regarding the good order appointed of God, then confusion follows in all estates. The kirk of God should fortify all lawful power and authority that pertains to the civil magistrate, because it is the ordinance of God. But if he pass the bounds of his office, and enter within the sanctuary of the Lord, meddling with such things as appertain to the ministers of God’s kirk, then the servants of God should withstand his unjust enterprise, for so they are commanded of God.”*

In Germany, the controversies in which the church was engaged were of a different character from those which were raised in Scotland in consequence of the action of the civil power, and the discussion of which so rapidly made the people of that land familiar with the principles for which they had afterwards to contend, even to the forfeiture of liberty and life. In France, the terrible power of the monarchy, which was used so recklessly in the vast holocaust of St. Bartholomew, effected such an overthrow of the upholders of the reformed faith, that their cause was merely able, for a considerable time, to struggle for existence, without asserting for itself the prerogatives which the nobles and people of Scotland demanded for the church of their land.

That Christ is King in Zion—the only king whose right it is

* Bannatyne’s Memoirs, pp. 197–204; Calderwood, p. 48.

to prescribe what doctrines are to be taught and believed, what ordinances are to be observed, and what offices are needful for the welfare or the extension of the church—is not only important as a correct theological principle, but it is momentous also in the consequences which flow from it. Whatever the doctrines, the ordinances, and the offices may be, which Christ has instituted in his church, his people have received them from him, to be held as a sacred deposit, for the ends for which they have been given. The members of the church are not at liberty to surrender these doctrines, to yield up these ordinances, or to change or abolish these offices. To do either would constitute a breach of trust, and manifest a contempt for the privileges with which they were endowed. It would indicate a disparagement of the wisdom of the church's Head, and would further involve a usurpation of the authority with which he alone is clothed. If the members of the church—as individuals or in their collective capacity—dare not act in this manner without flagrant sin, neither have those who are invested with office a similar liberty. They hold their office from Christ, to whom they are responsible, and who demands of them that they shall be faithful in the administration of all their functions. They are not at liberty to increase or to diminish the number of the institutions which Christ has appointed. They are not legislators, to enact new laws, enjoin ordinances or doctrines which are not already given by Him whose right it is to rule. Their office is executive and declarative, not legislative. And, consequently, they are not at liberty—either at the suggestion of their own wisdom, or in order to please any party, within or without the pale of the church—to change or surrender what Christ has ordained. If speculative men, who are fond of novelty or changes in religion,—if worldly men, who dislike holiness of doctrine,—if civil rulers, who are ambitious of authority in the household of faith,—should suggest or demand any change or surrender of these trusts, then the reply of every enlightened and faithful servant must be, “These are not ours, but Christ's. They have been committed to our hands, to be held for his glory; to be retained, amid all perils, in their integrity, for the ends of their institution, and thus to be transmitted to coming ages. It is His prerogative who gave them to modify or abrogate them, not ours.”

The Scottish mind soon comprehended this principle. It permeated the masses of the people; and, under the influence of such leaders as Knox, Melville, and Henderson, the professors of the reformed faith comprehended their duties as well as their privileges, and they saw that the one involved the other.

It is obvious, that an intellectual, energetic, and high-minded people, educated in such principles, and thoroughly imbued with their influences, would be prepared for resisting all attempts at en-

croaching on their spiritual privileges. Hence the prompt resistance of the Scottish people to the exercise of arbitrary power, in ecclesiastical matters, by Charles I. and Charles II. in Scotland,—a resistance as remarkable for the clearness of conception which pervaded all ranks of the community regarding the principles which were involved, as it was for the tenacity of purpose which they displayed, and the enormous sacrifices of ease, property, liberty, and life which were so freely made during the protracted contest. The struggle had commenced in the reign of James; but, when Charles I. succeeded to the throne, it became obvious that all the wiles of diplomacy and courtly intrigue, and all the power of the secular arm, would be used to abolish presbytery and establish prelacy in its stead. There were a few in Scotland who held the doctrine, that resistance to the civil magistrate was unlawful for Christians—although his rule might be unjust and oppressive—so long as he confined his power to mere secular things.* We shall have occasion to show that the great majority of the people had clearer views on the relation which should subsist between rulers and their subjects. Many would have submitted to much that was oppressive, with no other kind of opposition than that of remonstrance and supplication; while others held more decided views on this subject. “But all were compelled to perceive, that the king had much more in view than to allow them even the hard alternative of obedience or punishment, which, in matters distinctly religious, must always subject men to penalties till the civil magistrate can be prevailed on to relax his requirements. The intention of his majesty, it was easily seen, was positively to compel them to adopt all those changes in religious worship which he might think proper to introduce, and to prohibit absolutely and unconditionally those modes of worship which they believed to be most accordant with the word and will of God. The alternative was not obedience or the forfeiture of certain civil advantages and the infliction of certain temporal penalties, but obedience or imprisonment, exile, and death; or, rather, it was, obey the king, though you should thereby be disobedient to God. With deep and anxious solicitude, they set themselves to the investigation of this

* The peculiar character of the trials which the people of Scotland had to encounter soon dispelled from their minds any lingering clouds of darkness on the subject of non-resistance and passive obedience. In England, so long as the Court visited Puritans and Dissenters with pains and penalties, there were many of the Prelatists who held most determinedly to the doctrine of passive obedience. When, however, after James II. ascended the throne, the Episcopalians began to experience the application of their own principles, they speedily abandoned them for the rational and common view which had been maintained by those whom, without compunction, they had seen visited with confiscation, imprisonment, and complicated penalties.—*Vide* Hume's History of England; Boston: Phillips, Sampson & Co., 12mo, vol. vi. pp. 322–329. Macaulay's History of England; New York: Harpers, 12mo, vol. ii. chap. ix. pp. 301–306.

momentous question; and, after the most profound and studious perusal of eminent divines and jurists, and especially of the Bible, they arrived at the conclusion, that a Christian people were entitled to take up arms in defence of their religious liberties against any assailant.”*

It is not our province to trace the history of the great struggle which was continued during four reigns, and which deluged the soil of Scotland with the blood of her martyred heroes. Our object is merely to point to the principles which were involved in the strife, and to the fact, that these persecutions were mainly instrumental in bringing to this country many of the worthy fathers and founders of our Zion. Of these, some were ignominiously transported as felons for their attachment to the cause of God. They were prayerful and holy men. Their crime, in the eye of their oppressors, was, that they would not violate the dictates of conscience, and sin against the law of their God. Others fled, because they saw no prospect in their own country that the ark of the Lord would enjoy a safe resting-place, and they sought a region in which they might worship God in peace; while others still, attracted by the prospects which the colonies held forth to them, left the homes of their ancestors, and sought an asylum in the companionship of those who had borne a good testimony and endured much hardness for their Lord and Saviour.

In Ireland, the causes which produced the remarkable exodus of the Presbyterian inhabitants of Ulster to the North American colonies, which commenced in the end of the seventeenth century, and which has continued to flow with more or less regularity until the present time, were different, in some respects, from those which prevailed in Scotland. These causes soon began to affect the Scottish settlers, who had been induced to occupy the lands which fell into the hands of the Crown after the suppression of the great rebellion of O’Neill. The settlement, or, as it has been called, the “Plantation of Ulster,” by settlers from Scotland and England, commenced in the reign of James I. This great measure was rendered necessary because of the deplorable condition to which the northern province had been reduced by the protracted wars in the time of Elizabeth. The whole kingdom had greatly suffered, but the northern portion had especially been devastated and reduced to the lowest and most abject condition of misery.†

After the accession of James, arrangements were made to extend English laws and customs over the whole of the kingdom. In

* Hetherington’s History of the Church of Scotland; third edition, p. 102. *Vide* also Baillie, vol. i. p. 189.

† Leland, vol. ii. p. 410; Cox, vol. ii. p. 3; Morrison, vol. ii. pp. 172, 200, 283.

London, O'Niell and O'Donnell were received with marks of distinguished favour. The former was confirmed in the Earldom of Tyrone, and the latter was created Earl of Tyrconnell; while an act of oblivion and indemnity was published under the Great Seal, whereby all offences committed before the accession of James were pardoned, and never to be called into further question. Most of the Irish lords yielded their estates to the Crown, and received them back again under an English title. Speedily, however, it appeared, that the restraints under which O'Niell and Tyrconnell had placed themselves were more than their impetuous spirits could brook. Formerly, they had been recognised as masters in their own territories,—their will had been received as law; but now they felt that officials were ordained to administer the provisions of a code which, they perceived with regret and chagrin, abridged their power, and divested them of honour in presence of their people. Smarting under disappointment, and perhaps dreading the further interference of the English authorities, which they apprehended would prove adverse to the Romish church, as well as to their personal dignity, they commenced the arrangements of a plot, which was never matured, in consequence of the speedy flight of the two chieftains to the continent. Romish partisans have laboured most sedulously to show that the charge of a plot against the two Northern earls is absurd; but the authorities on which they rely clearly demonstrate that proceedings had been commenced, which, had it not been for their speedy departure, would have resulted in turbulence and civil war.*

The flight of Tyrone and Tyrconnell caused their extensive estates to revert to the Crown; and the settlement of these lands, with such a population as would promote the arts of peace and industry, became a leading object of James's policy. The regulations which the King adopted for the settlement of the lands in Ulster were, in many respects, well calculated to secure the objects of the Government, had they been faithfully carried out by the principal "undertakers" among whom the estates were divided. In many cases, however, the stipulations assented to by the undertakers were disregarded, especially in relation to fixed rents and the granting of leases to the tenants, who had been induced to settle on the lands as farmers. Grievances on these points were complained of equally by settlers from England and Scotland. In the twelfth article of the "Conditions" on which the proprietors received their estates, it was enacted, that "the said undertakers shall not demise any part of their lands at will

* Cox's History of Ireland, vol. ii. p. 12; Lingard, vol. ix. p. 144, Dolman's edition; Lynch's "Alithinologia, Supplement," p. 186, in O'Connor's "Historical Address," xi. p. 226

only, but shall make certain estates for years, for life, in tail, or in fee-simple;”* and yet it was found that this important condition, so essential to the prosperity of the plantation, was neglected from the beginning.†

During the subsequent history of the Ulster Plantation, the irritating and depressing influence of this unjust conduct of the undertakers continued to produce a plentiful crop of injuries. Tenants learned that they were altogether in the hands of their landlords, and they felt that they possessed no adequate means of protecting themselves from their rapacity and avarice. If they improved their holdings, then they might be—and were often—called on to pay a higher rent to their landlords, because of their own industry, which had increased the value of the farms. If they neglected to improve their lands, then they suffered from poverty and its attendant evils.

On the whole, and notwithstanding these obstacles to improvement, the province continued to advance in prosperity. Letters arrived from Scotland, and they were followed by ministers of the gospel, who were encouraged to remove to Ireland by the prospects of usefulness among their countrymen, as well as by the proceedings of the Irish Convocation, in which the learned and tolerant Ussher had borne so prominent a part. A remarkable revival of religion followed the labours of these devoted servants of God, and the cause of divine truth began to prosper in a remarkable degree in Ulster.

No sooner, however, had the inflexible character of the Presbyterianism of these faithful ministers been established, and the success become obvious which followed their services, than they were called on to encounter the jealousy of Echlin, the Bishop of Down, who proceeded, in a short time, to suspend two of their number. Through the influence of Ussher, these men were restored again; but, soon afterwards, Echlin silenced four other

* *Vide* “Confiscation of Ulster,” by MacNevin, Dublin and London: 1846, p. 135.

† Complaints on this subject became so loud that, at length, a commission was appointed to investigate the state of the Ulster settlement. The returns, as given in “Pynnar’s Survey,” indicate a lamentable state of affairs. No less than eighteen of the most extensive undertakers are reported as defaulters in the matter of leases. “He hath made no estates,” is a common entry. In the cases of others, no information could be procured, because of their absence from their properties. (*Vide* “Confiscation of Ulster,” pp. 171–195.) The conduct of the London companies, among whom the county of Londonderry was divided, appears to have been equally negligent. The Grocers’, the Ironmongers’, the Haberdashers’, the Drapers’, and the Salters’ Companies appear to have been most culpable. (*Vide ante*, pp. 221–228.) It is no wonder that Pynnar should state in his report, “that from the insecurity of tenure, many of the English tenants did not then plough upon the lands, nor use husbandry, because they feared to stock themselves with cattle and servants for such labours.”

brethren, and, accordingly, the whole Scottish settlers were filled with alarm and distress. Although the case of these aggrieved men was carried up to London, and referred by the King to the Lord-Deputy of Ireland, still, they did not receive redress. Alarmed at the gloomy state of affairs, and perceiving no ray of light in any part of the horizon, the Ulster Presbyterians directed their attention to New England, with the view of removing thither, in despair of enjoying either civil or religious liberty at home. In the spring of 1634, Mr. Livingston, and a layman named William Wallace, were deputed to visit the colony, and select a suitable place of settlement. They went to London, and afterwards to Plymouth, in furtherance of their instructions; but subsequently, being deterred by various untoward circumstances, they returned to Ulster, where they found their brethren prepared to await the events which a change, that had taken place in the administration of the civil affairs of the kingdom, might produce.*

Instead, however, of any amelioration in ecclesiastical affairs, the appointment of the notorious Wentworth as lord-deputy led to an accumulation of grievances which sadly oppressed an already-afflicted people. Under the influence of Laud, decided steps were taken to modify the church in Ireland so as to accord with his Romanizing views. Serious alterations for the worse were made in Trinity College in Dublin. Arminianism was openly favoured. Bramhall† and Leslie, who proved most bitter and unscrupulous tormentors of the Presbyterians, were promoted; and, through the efforts of Wentworth, a high-commission court was established in Dublin, which enabled the deputy to subject the freedom and property of every individual in the kingdom to his control. The Presbyterians were soon made to feel the effects of this new instrument of tyranny. On the death of Echlin, Leslie was appointed to his see. He immediately signalized himself by the suspension of five other ministers. And his intolerance and relentless severity hastened the intended voyage to New England; for the Presbyterian laity were now thoroughly satisfied that it was their duty to abandon a country in which their religious privileges were so flagrantly violated. The affecting incidents of this remarkable voyage are well known, and need not be enlarged on here. The vessel which bore so precious a cargo,‡ after accom-

* Reid's History, vol. i. p. 142.

† Afterwards called "The Canterbury of Ireland," from his zeal in imitating Laud.

‡ "This little colony, who were about to settle in the uncultivated wilds of America for the sake of enjoying liberty of conscience, were one hundred and forty in number. Among them, were Mr. Blair, Mr. Livingston, Mr. Robert Hamilton, and Mr. John McClelland, afterwards ministers in Scotland; John Stuart, Provost of Ayr, Captain Andrew Agnew, Charles Campbell, John Sumervil, Hugh

plishing about two-thirds of the voyage, was arrested by severe storms, and, after great suffering by all on board, was providentially driven back to Carrickfergus Bay. The ministers, being prevented from exercising their offices in Ireland, were compelled to flee to Scotland, where they were soon settled in pastoral charges.

From this period until the breaking-out of the Massacre of 1641, the trials of the Presbyterians were exceedingly oppressive. For instance, the Bishop of Down was authorized to arrest, in a summary manner, and to imprison during pleasure, the Non-conformists in his diocese. Wentworth, aware that the laity were accustomed to maintain an affectionate intercourse with their pastors who had been banished to Scotland, resolved to abolish the practice. By concentrating troops in the northeastern districts, he cut off all connection between the kingdoms, and, at the same time, alarmed the Scotch, who knew not when he might land these forces to aid the King in his efforts against the religious liberties of Scotland. In pursuance of his plans for the extermination of Presbyterianism, and the prevention of any effort on the part of the people to oppose the arbitrary measures of Charles, Wentworth now adopted an expedient more intolerable and oppressive than any which he had previously attempted. This was the imposition, on the Ulster Scots, of the celebrated **BLACK OATH**,—so called, because they were compelled to swear, never to oppose any of the King's commands, and to abjure all covenants and oaths contrary to the tenor of this unconditional engagement. The proceedings connected with the enforcement of this ensnaring and illegal measure were of the most flagitious character, involving the Presbyterians in manifold sufferings. Having tried every expedient short of extirpation—oaths, fines, forfeitures, and imprisonment—without subduing the Scots, he, at length, conceived the idea of banishing them altogether out of the kingdom. The result, had he succeeded, would have secured the overthrow of Protestantism in Ireland; for the few scattered Protestants who would have remained could never have withstood the furious assaults of the Romanists in the massacre which took place during the year following. His object was, by means of intrigue, to procure from the Irish Parliament a recommendation to remove the Northern Presbyterians, lest they should unite with Argyle and aid him in his objects in Scotland, or lest he might invade Ulster, and, by their means, effect an insurrection in the North. Happily, when Parliament assembled, the state of affairs was such that the project was never submitted; and it only remains on record as an evidence of his reckless and unfeeling despotism.

Brown, with many families and single persons." (Reid's History, vol. i. chap. iv. p. 201.)

In the calamitous period of 1641, the Presbyterians suffered severely, and many were treacherously and ruthlessly butchered. Of the ministers, a number had withdrawn or been banished to Scotland, and, on the occasion of the first alarm at the breaking out of the storm, a season was given for preparation ere the terrible visitation, which swept over the country, had time to reach the Scottish settlers. In this way many lives were providentially saved. As soon as peace was restored, the cause of Presbyterianism began to flourish again. The chaplains, who had come to Ulster with the Scottish regiments which had been drafted over to meet the emergency, consented to remain in the country. A presbytery was regularly organized, sessions were formally established in many congregations, and the foundations of the church were laid broad and deep in the land. A fervent appeal to the Assembly, in Edinburgh, was favourably entertained, and additional ministers were sent to Ulster. Of these, some had been in Ireland before. They were all men of deep piety and fervent zeal, and, under their ministrations, the church broke forth on the right hand and on the left. In many districts of the country, where settlers had languished for the ordinances of religion, churches were formed, and successful efforts were made for the enforcement of strict discipline throughout the bounds of the presbytery, in accordance with the practice of the parent-church.

On the abolition of the monarchy, by the execution of Charles I., the Ulster Presbyterians found that trials were still in store for them; and, although Prelacy had been deprived of its former power, they learned that the downfall of their old enemies brought them little relief. They occupied a middle position between the High-Church Prelatic party, that would have restored the monarchy on the principles of non-resistance and passive obedience, and the Independents and other sectaries, who would have destroyed all royal authority in the state, and all settled government, whether Episcopal or Presbyterian, in the church. The Presbyterians were anxious for a constitutional monarchy, with proper restraints on the royal authority, and with adequate securities on the subject of religion; while they adhered to the Covenants, and desired the establishment of a Presbyterian form of government in the church. Accordingly, they did not assent to the policy of the leaders who represented the authority of Cromwell in Ireland; and, on his own arrival, they continued steadily to repudiate his views. Forthwith, the presbytery was first threatened by the army, under Venables, and, subsequently, a considerable number of the ministers were imprisoned because they refused to swear to an ENGAGEMENT, which would have committed them to an abandonment of their well-known principles. Afterwards, many of them, because of the privations which they had to encounter,

were compelled to flee to Scotland, while a plan was concocted for transporting the remainder of them out of the kingdom. At one time, Cromwell designed to remove the leading Presbyterians to Munster, the southern province of the island, and a proclamation to that effect was made.* Had the measure been carried out, it might have produced a powerful effect in ameliorating the condition of the island, as the North would not have been surrendered by the Scottish population; and when the influence of that people in Ulster is contrasted with the want of energy which has been displayed by the Protestants of the South, it is perhaps to be regretted that the design of Cromwell was not executed.

Although Charles II. was fully aware, that the Presbyterians laboured with great zeal and success in promoting his restoration, yet, having determined on patronizing Prelacy, it would have manifested weakness to expect that a man who had no gratitude, and who never remembered his benefactors, would interfere to deliver his friends from the fresh troubles in which they were involved by the return of their old enemies to power. About this period it became customary with the gentry, who aimed at commending themselves to the bishops and their friends in power, to exhibit their zeal by inflicting a series of annoyances of an irritating character on the Presbyterian ministers. Foremost, now, among their clerical persecutors, stood the celebrated Jeremy Taylor, Bishop of Down and Connor, † who, after citing the brethren in his diocese to his visitation, proceeded, in the most summary fashion, to proclaim thirty-six of their churches vacant. His example was followed by others of the Northern prelates, and, in a short time, no less than sixty-one ministers ‡ were prohibited from

* *Vide* Copy of the Proclamation, in Reid, vol. ii. pp. 272-275.

† These references to the arbitrary proceedings of the bishops in Ireland, and to the Prelatical supporters of the despotism of the Stuarts in Scotland, are not made with a view to create prejudice against Episcopacy. In Scotland there was a Leighton, and in Ireland there were Ussher, Bedell, and others, who were tolerant and benevolent as well as learned men. The odium of these unjust and tyrannical measures belongs to the men and to the spirit of the age in which they lived. In Scotland, the Parliament never represented the people. The General Assembly was the court in which the popular voice was heard. Hence it came to pass that, as the Assembly was opposed to Prelacy, the Scottish bishops threw themselves into the arms of the monarch, and sided with his subservient Parliament. They sustained the King because he supported them. In Ireland, also, the upholders of Episcopacy found that the spread of Presbyterianism would certainly limit the powers of the hierarchy, and eventually succeed in abolishing the peculiar features of the system, if its progress were not arrested; and they therefore lent themselves to sustain the Court against a people whose political views gave offence to the monarch. Thus, in Ireland, as well as in Scotland, the bishops saw that, as a reward for their services in maintaining the royal authority, the power of the civil arm would be extended to sustain themselves. (*Vide* Hodge's History, p. 59, note.)

‡ There were nearly seventy ministers, associated together in presbyteries, at

exercising any of their functions in the country. Had they merely been deprived of their temporal benefices, they would have borne the injury with meekness; but to be prohibited, under pains and penalties, from preaching, baptizing, and ministering, in any way, to their flocks, and to see that thus, by one stroke, nearly all the ministers of the province were silenced, was to them and to their people an inexpressibly severe trial.*

In process of time, a season of relief was enjoyed again, and a goodly number of ministers returned to their charges; but they had scarcely resumed their labours ere they were called on to encounter renewed persecutions. Numbers of them were imprisoned. In different districts their churches were closed; and, generally, their worship was interdicted, while the penalties of recusancy were inflicted on both ministers and people, by an intolerant, time-serving, and reckless magistracy. So long did this deplorable state of affairs continue, and so severe were the distresses of the ministers and the members of their charges in the counties of Donegal and Derry, that, in the year 1684, the majority of the Presbytery of Laggan intimated to their brethren in other presbyteries their intention of removing to America, "because of persecutions and general poverty abounding in those parts, and on account of their straits and little or no access to their ministry."†

During the reign of James II., the Presbyterians, as well as the other Protestants of the country, were called on to contend against the efforts which were then made to establish Popery in the kingdom. Favoured by William III., and even endowed by that prince, yet no sooner had Anne ascended the throne than the same intolerant High-Church party that had formerly oppressed them renewed their assaults. At one time, their annoyances arose from embarrassments about the marriages which the minis-

this period. Of these, seven only conformed to Prelacy, and sixty-one remained faithful to their principles. Of the small number of ministers in Ulster who were not Presbyterian, and who had been endowed during Cromwell's time, no fewer than eleven appear to have conformed to Prelacy.

* "These ministers enjoyed the painful, though honourable, pre-eminence of being the first to suffer in the three kingdoms, the Non-conformists of England not being ejected till the month of August in the following year, nor the Presbyterians of Scotland till the subsequent month of October, 1662. The reason of the ministers being ejected in Ireland so long before their brethren in the sister kingdom was this:—The old form of church government and worship had never been abolished by law in Ireland; and therefore, at the Restoration, Prelacy, being still the legal Establishment, was immediately recognised and enforced. Both in England and in Scotland it had been abolished by acts of their respective Parliaments, and the Directory substituted in room of the Common Prayer Book. It was necessary, therefore, that these acts should be first repealed, and new acts of Parliament passed, before the bishops had power to proceed against those who did not conform." (Reid, vol. ii. p. 350, and note 16 on same page.)

† From MS. Minutes, quoted by Reid, vol. ii. p. 425.

ters were accustomed to celebrate among their own people. At another time, they were assailed because their ministers obeyed their presbyteries by preaching in vacant charges; while the most absurd charges of disloyalty were urged against them in virulent pamphlets, and often made the subject of legal investigation before unscrupulous magistrates. To such lengths were these harsh proceedings carried, that a presbytery, which had met for the purpose of forming a new congregation, were arrested and indicted for a riot, while they were sitting peaceably engaged in the discharge of their duties, making provision for the spiritual edification of their own members. Add to these trials the complicated insults and vexations which flowed from the adoption by the Government of the "Sacramental Test-Act," an act which, in its operation, was most oppressive, and it will not seem strange that, at this period, considerable numbers of the Presbyterians began to seek relief by emigration to the colonies. In England, the Dissenters enjoyed full security for their religious observances; but in Ireland, and among the Presbyterians, the disabilities created by this act extended to all civil and military offices held under the Crown. In fact, no Presbyterian could hold any situation in the army, the navy, the customs, the excise, or the post-office, in any court of law, or officiate as a magistrate, without conforming to the Established Church.

After the accession of the House of Hanover to the throne, the Ulster Presbyterians continued to endure many grievances of the most mortifying and irritating character, even subsequent to the period when their worship was legalized by the "Act of Toleration." Many of the largest estates were in the hands of Episcopalians, who utterly refused to allow Presbyterian churches to be erected on their properties. To enforce conformity, many landlords exacted a higher rental from Presbyterians than they demanded from their Episcopal tenantry; and, as soon as any yielded to this pressure, and joined the Established Church, their rents were reduced to a just standard. Though constituting two-thirds of the population of Ulster, no gentleman of their communion could fill the office of magistrate or sheriff, and even their teachers had much difficulty in conducting their schools. At length, on the accession of George II., such changes occurred in many districts of Ulster, that emigration to America began to be carried out on a scale far beyond any thing known in the history of the province. After the Revolution, and with a view to encourage the agricultural prosperity of the North, many of the landholders had given leases to their tenants in conformity with the article in the "Condition" to which we have already referred. Many of these leases were only for thirty-one years; and, now that they had expired, the landlords took advantage of the

tenants, and raised the rents of their holdings to an unwonted sum, because of the increased value of the lands, which had been improved by the tenants' skill and industry. Add to this the annoyance of a proportionate increase of tithe paid to a hierarchy and clergy who not only rendered the Presbyterians no spiritual benefits in return, but, on the other hand, were their most determined oppressors,—and, still further, the distresses arising from a number of uncongenial seasons, which produced scanty harvests,—and it will not be thought strange that emigration should be hailed as a boon by any people so unfavourably circumstanced.

Addressing the Secretary of State in England, Archbishop Boulter gives a melancholy picture of the condition to which the Northern Presbyterians had been reduced. According to his statement, a number of agents from the colonies, and masters of vessels, aware of the distress which existed and of the dissatisfaction which was felt by the people with the administration of law, had travelled through the country, pointing out the advantages which might be enjoyed by those who would resolve to cross the Atlantic and seek that peace and prosperity which were offered in an American home. The archbishop also shows that, in three years, no less than four thousand two hundred men, women, and children had deserted the country, and that, of these, no less than three thousand one hundred had gone in the summer of 1728.* The wisdom of the Head of the church in all these providences is abundantly manifest. Had the Ulster Presbyterians been permitted to abandon their country at the time when Livingston and Wallace were deputed to prepare for carrying out the scheme, their numbers were then so few that a small body only could have reached the colonies, while it is probable that a weak remnant only, unable to contend with the trials which were still to be encountered, would have remained at home. Had the voyage of "The Eagle-Wing" succeeded, a similar result must have taken place. Ulster would never, in that case, have become the great nursery for our church which it has been for a century and a quarter, sending off the excess of its population from year to year to strengthen the cause which had been established on this great continent, while the parent-stock, which remained in its own land, continued to grow and prosper. The church had now, however, attained to a considerable magnitude; and, from this time forward, the American colonies presented attractions to the Ulster Presbyterians which the lapse of time and the occur-

* Boulter's "Letters," vol. i. pp. 260-261. Writing in the spring of next year, he says, "There are now seven ships at Belfast, carrying off about one thousand passengers."

rence of many social changes on both sides of the ocean have not served to diminish. The tide which then commenced to flow has never ceased to set in the same direction, until, at the present time, it is probable that the descendants of the Irish Presbyterians in the United States are threefold more numerous than the whole Presbyterian population now in Ireland.*

The circumstances here enumerated will account for the fact, that a greater number of settlers arrived in this country from Scotland than from Ireland during the middle of the seventeenth century, and that afterwards this proportion was decidedly reversed, and the majority were supplied from Ireland. The troubles in Scotland were mainly terminated by the Revolution settlement; but many of the grievances of the Ulster Presbyterians were only then commencing. In Scotland, the difficulties connected with the tenure of land did not exist, while it was chiefly after the Revolution that the evils of the landlord system in Ireland began to be fully experienced.† These trials were endured by the people of Ulster until patience became exhausted; and, as hope died out, the disheartened people began—at first in small numbers, and then in greater bodies—to desert their homes. Although a goodly number of emigrants had gradually been leaving the country for the colonies, and even Makemie and others had commenced their labours among the Scotch and Ulster settlers before the Revolution, still, it was after that period that the great emigration-movement commenced, which, at length, attained to such a magnitude that certain leading authorities‡ in Ireland began to dread the removal of the entire Presbyterian population of Ulster.§ For instance, six thousand Irish are reported as having come to this country in 1729, and, before the middle of the century, nearly twelve thousand arrived annually for several years.|| Of these, the greater number arrived in Pennsylvania, although many of them afterwards removed to Virginia and the Carolinas. At the same time, Charleston had become a favourite port of arrival for Irish and Scottish settlers, many of whom found their way out into the agricultural districts

* *Vide Reid*, vol. iii. p. 514, note 55.

† Many of these evils still exist in different parts of the country, and, for several years past, an effort has been made to settle the questions in dispute between the landlords and the cultivators of the soil. The measure is popularly known as the "Tenant-right" movement.

‡ Wodrow's MS. Letters, xx., No. 129.

§ *Vide Hodge's History*, p. 65; *Holmes's Annals*, vol. ii. p. 123. Holmes says, that, "in the first fortnight of 1773, three thousand five hundred passengers arrived in Pennsylvania from Ireland. In October, a ship arrived from Galway, in the North (west) of Ireland, with eighty passengers, and a ship from Belfast, with one hundred and seventy passengers." Vol. ii. p. 305.

|| Proud's *History of Pennsylvania*, vol. ii. pp. 273-274.

of North and South Carolina, and numbers of the remainder constituted the early settlers of Georgia.*

The religious views of these founders of our church—whether they came from Scotland or from Ireland—were equally decided and well known. They steadfastly adhered “to the form of sound words” laid down in the Westminster Standards, which they held to be the fullest, the clearest, and the most scriptural exhibition of the truths of revelation which had been drawn up for the use of the church in any age. All the influences which had been brought to bear on the Scottish population, from the reign of James I. till that of William III., had never infected them with the leaven of Pelagian or Socinian error. The Moderatism which afterwards grew up in the country, and produced such a harvest of evil, was a plant of later growth. The seed of this Upas-tree was sown at the time of the Revolution settlement, when the “compromise” or “comprehension” was assented to, which allowed the intruded Prelatists to remain in the parishes which they then held in the Scottish church. In Ireland, the population were equally Calvinistic and Evangelical. The allurements of place and power, the fascinations of the national Establishment, the tyranny of the Government, the continued persecutions of the hierarchy, and the insolent conduct of the gentry, for upwards of a century, were powerless to seduce or to drive them from their integrity. The Ulster Scots maintained their principles through the storm as well as in the calm, resisting alike the minions of the Stuarts during the monarchy, and the proffered endowments or the frowns of the officials of Cromwell in the days of the commonwealth. They could leave the country, but they could not abandon their principles. No prelatie forms had crept into the system of church government to which they were attached, and they were equally free from Arminian views; while no elements of Congregationalism had been adopted into their discipline. They were as much opposed to Independency, on the one hand, as they were to Prelacy, on the other; and that form of church government which they loved, and for the maintenance of which they had testified in days of trial, they brought with them to these shores. Politically and religiously, they were in a strait between three parties, and from the enmity of each they had to calculate on ill-will and suffering. The Papists hated them, as being heretics, and as intruders on a soil which formed the heritage of their fathers. The Prelatists trampled upon them, as a stiff-necked generation, because they refused to acknowledge the lawfulness of the power which the

* Holmes, vol. ii. pp. 131, 142.

heads of the church assumed. And the civil rulers of the day subjected them to penalties, because they protested against tyranny, and demanded the exercise of constitutional power in the state.

Even as early as 1559 we find Willock—the colleague of Knox—propounding to the Convention of Estates,* in Edinburgh, the doctrine, “that the power of rulers was limited both by reason and by Scripture, and that they might be deprived of it upon valid grounds.” To these sentiments Knox assented, with certain limitations, not of the principle, but merely to guard against passion or prejudice being allowed to rule in the practical application of the principle in individual cases. The Assembly of 1649 declared “that, as magistrates and their power are ordained of God, so they are, in the exercise thereof, not to walk after their own will, but according to the law of equity and righteousness; that a boundless and unlimited power is to be acknowledged in no king or magistrate; and that there is a mutual obligation betwixt the king and his people,—each of them is tied to the other for the performance of mutual and reciprocal duties.” From these positions the Scottish people were never driven. To these sentiments, and to the principles laid down in the Covenants, both the Scottish and the Ulster Presbyterians† adhered during that long warfare, in which they resisted the power of the Stuart dynasty, and in which they ultimately triumphed, while the faithless race that had oppressed them was hurled from the throne.

The training through which, in Scotland and Ireland, our emigrant fathers had been conducted was admirably adapted to constitute them wise and energetic founders of new states. They were lovers of liberty, but they respected law; and it was a portion of their creed that the office of the civil magistrate is of God. Such a people were eminently qualified for establishing and maintaining the institutions of a free country. All national associations of men require the influence of a restraining power. An atheistical or an immoral people may be controlled by the pre-

* *Vide* Hetherington, 3d ed., Edinburgh, p. 25.

† When the Irish Presbyterians were charged with disloyalty by one of their many traducers, in the reign of Anne, their defender, Kirkpatrick, justifies their views by an appeal to the principles which placed William III. on the throne. He quotes the sentiments of Hoadly as expressing Presbyterian views. Hoadly had received the thanks of the House of Commons for his writings; and Kirkpatrick quotes, from the sermon preached by him before the Lord-Mayor of London, the following:—“If, therefore, they (*i. e.* magistrates) use their power, to the hurt and prejudice of human society, they act not, in any such instances, by authority from God, but contrary to His will. Nor can they, in such instances, be called his vicegerents without the highest profaneness: and, therefore, to oppose them in such cases cannot be to oppose the authority of God; nay, a *passive non-resistance* would appear, upon examination, to be a much greater opposition to the will of God than the contrary.” (*Vide* Kirkpatrick’s “Presbyterian Loyalty,” Belfast, 1713, p. 4.)

sence of a military force which represents and carries out the will of an autocrat; but a moral, religious, and educated people, among whom the fear of God dwells and the influences of religion are in full operation, will require little external force or compulsion to secure the observance of order or obedience to just and equitable laws. Their religion and their politics both take hold on the sanctions of eternity; and in their integrity, their obedience to law, and their respect for those who rule, it will be seen that true religion is the only safe foundation on which the edifice of civil society, especially in a republic, can be erected with any rational prospect of permanence.

Such were our emigrant fathers. "Their moral principles were derived from the words of Him who lives and abides forever; and the commands of God, and the awful retributions of eternity, gave force to these principles, which became a living power and a controlling influence. The time has but just passed when the schoolmaster from Ireland taught the children of the Valley of Virginia and the upper part of the Carolinas as they taught in the mother-country,—when the children and youth at school recited the Assembly's Catechism once a week and read parts of the Bible every day. The circle of their instruction was circumscribed; but the children were taught to speak the truth and defend it, to keep a good conscience, and fear God,—the foundation of good citizens and great men. Wherever they settled in America, besides the common schools, they turned their attention to high-schools and academies, and to colleges, to educate men for all the departments of life, carrying in their emigration the deep conviction, that without sound education there could be no permanence in religious or civil institutions, or any pure and undebased enjoyments of domestic life."*

This work, in the body of which and in the biographical department an attempt is made to record the incidents of the lives of a goodly number of those honoured men and to chronicle their labours in founding our Zion, will form an enduring monument to their intelligence, their social worth, and their earnest religious convictions. The seed which they sowed in troublous times, and which they watered with their tears, has, under the divine blessing, grown up a goodly tree, and prospered, until its branches are spreading out and overshadowing this fair land! "The memory of the just is blessed." *Esto perpetua!*

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD.

MARCH, 1857.

* Foote's Sketches of North Carolina, pp. 122, 123.