

Church Hist. Bk.

HISTORY

OF ALL

THE RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS

IN

THE UNITED STATES:

CONTAINING AUTHENTIC ACCOUNTS OF THE

RISE AND PROGRESS, FAITH AND PRACTICE, LOCALITIES AND STATISTICS,

OF THE DIFFERENT PERSUASIONS:

WRITTEN EXPRESSLY FOR THE WORK,

BY FIFTY-THREE EMINENT AUTHORS, BELONGING TO THE RESPECTIVE DENOMINATIONS.

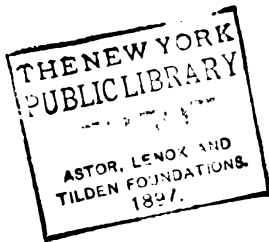
*J. S. Ebaugh
& Forsyth & others*

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HISTORY

OF

THE ASSOCIATE REFORMED CHURCH.

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OF the earliest Scots' Presbyterian Churches in this country, we have no very certain accounts, with the exception of a few in South Carolina. In 1680, Lord Cardron took measures for the establishment of a Colony in South Carolina, with the view to afford a place of refuge to his persecuted Presbyterian brethren. This was formed at Port Royal, and the minister of it was the Rev. Dr. Dunlop, afterwards Principal of the University of Glasgow. An invasion by the Spaniards, and the English Revolution of 1688, which afforded the exiles an opportunity of returning to their native land, led to the abandonment of the colony. Numbers of private persons, however, remained in Carolina, who were gathered into congregations under the care of a Presbytery, which continued to exist until about the close of the last century. Of these churches, only one now remains, the Old Scots' Church of Charleston.

During that dark period of Scottish history, from 1660 to 1688, numbers of Presbyterians were transported to the American plantations, and sold as slaves. Wodrow sets the number down at 3000. They were for the most part sent to Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. To a congregation formed of these exiles, in New Jersey, Fraser, the author of the work on Sanctification, for some years preached; he afterwards removed to New England, and from thence returned to Scotland. It is much to be lamented that the accounts of these Scottish Churches are so exceedingly scanty, inasmuch as their history

is connected with that of the American Presbyterian and the Associate Reformed Churches.*

The earliest application to the Secession Church of Scotland for ministerial aid, was made very soon after the secession took place. In 1736, the Associate Presbytery received a letter from a number of persons in Londonderry, Chester county, Penn., requesting that an ordained minister, or a probationer might be sent to them, and promising that all the expenses of the mission should be defrayed by themselves. The condition of the Presbytery, however, was such, the demand for laborers at home was so great, as to render it impossible to do more than send to the people of Londonderry a friendly letter. (McKerrow's Hist. Secc. i. 230.) The first minister sent out to America by the Secession Church, was the Rev. Alex. Gellatly, who arrived in 1751, and after a laborious ministry of eight years, finished his course at Octorara, Penn. The Covenanters, or Reformed Presbyterians, sent out the Rev. Mr. Cuthbertson in 1751; he was followed, in 1774, by Rev. Messrs. Lind and Dobbin. As the Associate Reformed Church was made up of these denominations, a very brief survey of their history will not be out of place.

Of the Reformed Presbytery, it is only

* Wodrow, the historian, corresponded with many of them for a long series of years; his correspondence, now in course of publication by the Wodrow Society, it is to be hoped will throw much light upon this early period of American Presbyterian history.



Lith. of P. S. Duval, Philad.^a

JOHN M. MASON, D. D.

necessary to observe, that it originally consisted of those who objected to the terms on which the Presbyterian Church of Scotland was re-established at the Revolution of 1688; they considered that she had fallen from the attainments she had made, especially about the year 1646, and to which she was bound by solemn covenants. While they professed to rejoice in the blessings secured to Britain by the banishment of the house of Stuart, they still regarded the constitution both of Church and State as imperfect, and hence, while they refused to become members of the former, they at the same time declined to recognise the legality of the latter. Their most distinguishing principles, are those which relate to civil government. As these will be fully explained by a member of that communion, it is not necessary to state them in this place.

The Secession originated in 1733, and was occasioned by a sermon preached by the Rev. Ebenezer Erskine, in which he strongly inveighed against certain recent acts of the Assembly having reference to the settlement of ministers. For this sermon (preached at the opening of the Synod of Perth and Sterling) he was immediately called to account, but refused to submit to the censure imposed, appealing from the sentence of the Synod to the General Assembly. The result was the secession from the Establishment of Mr. Erskine, together with his brother Ralph of Dunfermline, Mr. Wilson of Perth, and Mr. Moncrief of Abernethy, and the formation of a body known as the Associate Presbytery. Immediately upon constituting themselves into a Presbytery, they emitted a Testimony, in which they declared that they had not separated from the Church of Scotland, but only seceded from "the prevailing party;" they appealed to the "first free reforming assembly" for an adjudication of their case, they declared their faithful adherence to all the Canons and Confessions of the church, and they particularly and strongly testified against the unsound doctrines, as well as the mal-practices which, for some years previous, had been creeping into the church. This testimony they required all who afterwards joined with them to approve; a step this, eminently injudicious, inasmuch as it was a large addition to the ancient terms

of communion—bred among them a spirit of High Church exclusiveness, and was the remote cause of their subsequent unhappy divisions. In 1746 a dispute arose among the Seceders relative to the Burghers' Oath. By this time the Presbytery had reached the dignity of a Synod, numbering about forty ministers, and as many congregations. The point in debate was a clause in the oath required of those admitted to the freedom of the Royal Burghs, to this effect, that they professed the true religion as then professed in the kingdom, and "renounced the Romish religion, called Papistry." One party maintained that the taking this oath was inconsistent with the position occupied by Seceders; the other party held that there was no such inconsistency, inasmuch as the oath was no more than a recognition of the Protestant faith, as held forth in the standards of the Reformed Church of Scotland. The former were called Anti-burghers, and insisted upon making abstinence from the oath a term of communion, the latter were termed Burghers, and opposed any such restriction. The dispute, which was carried on with much vehemence and animosity, produced a division of the Synod into two distinct bodies, each claiming the name and the succession of the Associate Synod; but they were popularly known by the names just mentioned. The numbers were about equal at the time of the separation, and the growth of the two bodies in succeeding years was very nearly equal. The first effect of this breach was a change in the old Testimony to meet the new condition of things. There were, thus, in 1747, two Secession bodies, each having its own distinctive Testimony. In this state the Secession body continued until 1796, when the Burghers were again divided by a dispute respecting the power of the civil magistrate *circa sacra*. The subject had been in discussion for some years, one party (a very small one) holding that the magistrate was bound not only to profess the true religion, but also to maintain it at the expense and by the power of the state; the other, forming the large majority of the Burgher Synod, approached, in their views, very nearly to what has since been termed the voluntary principle, though they did not abso-

lutely condemn the principle of a civil establishment of religion. Connected with this question, was another respecting the binding obligation of the Solemn League and Covenant; the former party asserting the obligation of these ancient instruments upon posterity, in the strongest manner, the latter admitting it only in a very modified sense. This dispute resulted in the separation of a small party from the Synod, in 1796. They were called the Old Light Burghers; while the majority were known as the New Lights. In 1806, the Anti-burgher branch of the Secession was agitated by the same questions, and a small body, headed by Prof. Bruce, of Whitburn, and the late Dr. McCrie, the eminent historian, seceded from the Synod, in consequence of a change in the Testimony on the subject of the covenants, and the magistrate's power, and formed themselves into a body called the Constitutional Presbytery; but the two parties were popularly known as the Old and New Light Anti-burghers. There were thus four distinct bodies of Seceders, all equally strenuous advocates of Presbyterian government and order; all observing the same forms of worship; and the ministry in each branch being equally distinguished for evangelical sentiment. Yet each had its own Testimony, an approbation of which was demanded as a term of communion.

To finish this brief sketch: in 1820, the two principle branches of the Secession, viz: the New Light Burghers and Anti-burghers, united themselves into one body under the name of the United Secession Church. The two Synods contained at this time about 150 ministers, each; their reunion took place just seventy years after the breach, and in the same building, Bristo Street Church, Edinburgh, where the division had occurred. Into this union the Burghers entered unanimously; but a small party of the Anti-burghers, with Professor Paxton at their head, refused to go with their brethren. These dissenters in 1827, joined the Old Lights, (Dr. McCrie's party.) While in 1837, the Old Light Burghers returned to the communion of the Established Church, thus leaving at the present time but two branches of the Secession, viz: the United

Synod, numbering some 400 churches, and the Old Light Anti-burghers with 40 or 50.

The earliest missions to this country, were sent out by the Anti-burgher Synod. Having received in 1751, a very earnest application from Rev. Mr. Alexander Craighead, of Octorara, for ministerial aid, the Synod appointed Messrs. James Harne, and John Jamieson, to proceed as missionaries to America. These appointments having not been fulfilled, the Synod in 1752, passed a very stringent "act concerning young men appointed to missions in distant places," to the effect that if unwilling to go wherever the Synod might choose to send, they should no longer be recognised as theological students. In 1760, this act was extended to probationers, and it was enacted that probationers refusing to be sent to North America, by the Synod, should be deprived of their license; and in 1763, it was farther enacted, that no probationer, under appointment to North America, could be proposed as a candidate in the moderation of any call in Scotland. In our day, this would be deemed ecclesiastical tyranny of a high order; still it shows the exceeding earnestness of the Synod to answer the American call for help.

In 1752, Messrs. Gellatly and Arnot arrived; the former as a permanent laborer here; the latter being a settled minister in Scotland, and having been sent out for a special purpose, soon returned home. These brethren were charged by the Synod, to constitute themselves into a Presbytery, immediately on their arrival in Pennsylvania, which they did under the name of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania. In 1753, the Rev. James Proudfit was sent, and after laboring as an itinerant for some years, was settled at Pequa, Pennsylvania. The hands of the Presbytery were strengthened in 1753, by the arrival of Rev. Mr. Matthew Henderson; and 1761, by the arrival of Rev. Messrs. John Mason, (afterwards of New York,) Robert Annon, and John Smart; in 1762, by that of Rev. William Marshall. In 1770, Messrs John Roger and John Smith arrived, with instructions in reference to a subject which shall presently be mentioned.

The Burgher Synod received in 1751, a very earnest application for a minister from a number of persons resident in Philadelphia; this request was renewed in the year following, (1752,) with the promise of defraying all the charges of the mission. In consequence of repeated and earnest applications, the Synod resolved, in 1754, upon establishing a mission in America, and they appointed the Rev. Thomas Clark, minister of Ballybay, in Ireland, to proceed to Pennsylvania; but he was prevented from fulfilling the appointment at that time. However, in 1764, Mr. Clark, in company with the major part of his congregation, emigrated to America, and settled the town of Salem, Washington County, New York. He was followed in 1766, by the Rev. Messrs. Telfair and Kinloch. Mr. Telfair became the minister of the Burgher Congregation, in Shippen Street, Philadelphia.* Mr. Kinloch, ultimately returned to Scotland, and was settled in Paisley. In 1770, he was called by the Old Church in Cambridge, Washington County, New York, but the call was declined.

The Burgher ministers appear to have had no desire to keep up a separate organization on this side of the Atlantic; they accordingly united, very soon after their arrival, with their brethren; but the union was disturbed by the refusal of the Scottish Synod to approve of it. In 1776, the old Presbytery of Pennsylvania was divided into two; the one bearing the old name, the other called the Presbytery of New York; this procedure was also condemned by the Scottish Synod, but no attention was paid to their order to rescind the act of division.

An attempt was made in 1765, to unite the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania to the Synod of Philadelphia and New York; the minutes of the conference held by the joint committee, of which Dr. Witherspoon and Dr. Mason, were members, are now before the writer, but they are too long for insertion. The chief

points of discussion were the ground and extent of the Gospel offer, the divine right of Presbyterian government, and the qualifications for the ministry. This attempt at union might perhaps have been successful, but for the animosities excited by a foolish publication of the Newcastle Presbytery, against the first secession ministers who came to this country.*

The Revolution of 1776, may, in one sense, be regarded as the cause of the union which produced the Associate Reformed Church. The importance of union among the divided Scots' Presbyterian churches in this country, had indeed been felt long before it was actually accomplished. The weakness of the congregations of the several sects showed the need of united effort; and the consciousness of this gradually excited and increased the desire for it, until the independence of the colonies, in the judgment of many, removed the ancient causes of disunion. During the progress of the war, several conventions were held between the members of the Associate and the Reformed Presbyteries, with the view to attain this desirable end. A detailed account of these conventions would be of little use, even if we had ampler materials for giving it than we actually possess. It will suffice to say, that the three Presbyteries sat in Philadelphia in October, 1782, and formed themselves into a Synod, under the name of the Associate Reformed Synod of North America, on a basis consisting of the following articles, viz.:

1. That Jesus Christ died for the elect.
2. That there is an appropriation in the nature of faith.
3. That the Gospel is addressed indiscriminately to sinners of mankind.
4. That the righteousness of Christ is the alone condition of the covenant of works.
5. That civil government originates with God the Creator, and not with Christ the Mediator.
6. The administration of the kingdom of Providence is given into the hand of Jesus Christ the Mediator; and magistracy, the ordinance appointed by the Moral

* It may be here stated that the Shippen Street congregation, united with the old Scot's Church, in Spruce street, about the year 1783 or 1784. The ground in Shippen Street, is we believe, still used as a burial ground.

* For fuller details, see McKerrow's History, vol. i.

Governor of the world to be the prop of civil order among men, as well as other things, is rendered subservient by the Mediator to the welfare of his spiritual kingdom, the Church, and has sanctified the use of it and of every common benefit, through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

7. That the law of nature and the moral law revealed in the Scriptures are substantially the same, although the latter expresses the will of God more evidently and clearly than the former, and therefore magistrates among Christians ought to be regulated by the general directory of the Word as to the execution of their office.

8. That the qualifications of justice, veracity, &c. required in the law of nature for the being of a magistrate, are also more explicitly revealed as necessary in the Holy Scriptures. But a religious test, any further than an oath of fidelity, can never be essentially necessary for the being of a magistrate, except where the people make it a condition of government.

9. That both parties when united shall adhere to the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Catechisms, the Directory for Worship, and propositions concerning church government.

10. That they shall claim the full exercise of church discipline without dependence upon foreign judicatories.

Upon this basis all the members of the Reformed Presbytery, and all the Associate ministers, with the exception of two members of the Presbytery of Pennsylvania, (Messrs. Marshall and Clarkson,) united. A small minority of the people in the two communions also declined to enter into it. From these minorities have sprung the Covenanter denomination on the one hand, and the Associate on the other. The limits of this article preclude any extended comment upon this basis; it will be sufficient to observe, that at this distance of time it is difficult to discover the reason for inserting some of its articles. In reference to the extent of the atonement, the nature of faith, and the extent of the Gospel offer, there had never been any difference of opinion among these parties; and it is therefore somewhat surprising that these topics are mentioned. There had been a dispute about *common*

benefits, i. e. whether the common blessings of life were derived to mankind in virtue of Christ's mediation, or were merely bestowed by God as Creator. But a calm and candid perusal of the pamphlets begotten by this controversy—once deemed a very vital one—will convince any one that it was a dispute about words rather than things. Most of the articles, it will be perceived, relate to the subject of magistracy, and this was the grand topic of difference, viz. the essential qualifications of the civil magistrate, and the extent of his power *circa sacra*. On these last points, it must be confessed, that the language of the basis is by no means clear, yet it is perhaps as much so as its authors intended, and as much so as the subject admits. It should be borne in mind that each of these bodies held to the Westminster Confession, their catechisms were the same, their government, forms of worship and mode of administering the sacraments identical; their views of Gospel doctrine, and even the style of preaching prevalent among them, were quite similar. Their differences had grown out of acts of discipline, rather than points of doctrine.

Here it may not be out of place to give some brief notices of the leading persons who were active in effecting this union. The *Rev. Thomas Clark* was one. Perhaps no minister of his day was "in labors more abundant" than he; and many interesting traditions are still in existence respecting him in various parts of the country. His public ministrations were marked by some eccentricities, so that he usually attracted large crowds to hear him. But he was a man eminently given to prayer, laborious, zealous, of a most catholic spirit, and he had many seals of his ministry, not only by his labors in the pulpit, but also by his private faithfulness, with all sorts of persons, at home and abroad. He longed for the salvation of souls; in season and out of season, he made full proof of his ministry. After a most laborious ministry of about thirty years (in this country,) he died suddenly at Long Cane, in South Carolina, in 1796. He was the founder and first minister of the church at Salem, New York.

The *Rev. Dr. John Mason*, of New York, was one of the most accomplished

preachers and pastors of his age. He "was a man of a sound strong mind, of extensive learning, and of unusually fervent piety. His scholarship was rare. He had so habituated himself to classical studies, that at the age of twenty, he spoke the Latin language on all the higher subjects of discourse, with equal ease and greater elegance, than his mother tongue. In Greek his proficiency was but little inferior; and he was familiar with Hebrew. At the age of twenty-four, he taught logic and moral philosophy in the seminary of the Anti-burghers at Abernethy. His lectures were in Latin. As a preacher he was uncommonly judicious and instructive; as a pastor singularly faithful and diligent, and as a friend and companion he displayed an assemblage of excellencies rarely found in so great a degree in one person. Few ministers have ever lived in New York, in so high esteem, or died so deeply and generally lamented."—The following testimony of regard is from the pen of the late Dr. Linn, who knew Dr. Mason well:—"He had prudence without cunning, cheerfulness without levity, dignity without pride, friendship without ceremony, charity without undue latitude, and religion without ostentation."* For thirty years he was minister of the Old Scots' Church, (Cedar Street,) New York; he died in 1792, and was succeeded by his distinguished son, Dr. John M. Mason. He is said to have written in connection with Gov. Livingston of New Jersey, some powerful political papers, during the discussions that preceded the Revolution. Banished in common with other Presbyterians from the city during its occupancy by the British army, he acted as a chaplain to the American forces, and was very warmly esteemed by Washington.

The *Rev. Robert Annan* had been a fellow student with Dr. Mason, and they came to this country about the same time. He was first settled at Neelytown, in Orange county, New York; and during the early years of the Revolution he was a very active promoter of the Whig cause. About the close of the war he was called to the charge of a newly formed Scots' church in Boston; but finding himself

unable to carry out the discipline of the Presbyterian Church, he removed to Philadelphia, and for some years was minister of the Spruce Street Church. He afterwards accepted of a call from a congregation in Baltimore. In this his last fixed charge he continued about six years, when he demitted it in favor of the present pastor, Dr. John M. Duncan. He died in 1818. He wrote (with some slight aid from Dr. Mason) a short but very excellent exposition of the Westminster Confession; a narrative of the steps which led to the union; a tract on Universalism; one on civil government; and while resident at Philadelphia, he engaged in a discussion with the late Dr. Rush on the subject of capital punishment. He was a man of superior eloquence, an able, though a rather bitter controversialist; he seems to have been better fitted to lay the foundations of a congregation, than to carry up the superstructure.

The *Rev. James Proudfit* was also educated for the ministry at Abernethy. His first settlement was at Pequa, Pennsylvania. After laboring here upwards of twenty years, he was called to Salem, as the successor of Mr. Clark, where he remained until his decease, in 1802. For some years before his death, his son, the *Rev. Dr. Alex. Proudfit*, was associated with him in the pastoral charge. He was one of the first Presbyterian ministers settled north of Troy, and for many years he was abundant in labors over a wide extent of country; not a few of the largest congregations in Washington county having been founded by him. He published nothing, but he was eminent for his holiness. A brother minister who had long known him, once said to his son, that "he was the holiest man he ever knew." So great was his acquaintance with the Bible, that he was often called by his friends *the concordance*. Of the Covenanted brethren, Messrs. *Dobbin*, *Lind*, and *Cuthbertson*, we regret that we are unable to give any certain information.

In this connection it may not be out of place to give a few notices respecting the principal localities of the Associate Reformed Church, in these early days of her history. The earliest settlements were in Pennsylvania, within the Cumberland

* *Miller's Life of Rogers*, p. 164.

Valley. From these, colonies went forth to various parts of the United States. Numbers emigrated to West Pennsylvania, but in what year, we are unable to state,—we only know that these emigrants formed some of the earliest Presbyterian churches west of the Alleghany mountains. Some of the first settlers in Pennsylvania remained but a short time, and then removed to the upper parts of South Carolina and Georgia. The Old Church in Philadelphia, was formed by a few pious Scotsmen, who at first met together as a praying society. The Old Church in New York was formed by the separation of the Scottish members from the Wall Street Church in 1751, in consequence of changes in the forms of worship, and the neglect of Presbyterian order. In Orange county, a colony of Irish Presbyterians was established under the auspices of Col. Clinton, the founder of the Clinton family, so early as 1734; from these have sprung the various Associate Reformed churches in that county. Others were induced to settle on the Colden and Campbell patents. The first settlement in Washington county, was made by Dr. Clark; his congregation emigrated from Ireland about the year 1760: one part going to Carolina, another portion accompanying him to Washington county. To this day, this county is eminently Scottish in its religious peculiarities. It may be added, that the Associate Reformed Church was one of the first to plant the standard of the Gospel in the State of Kentucky; and at the close of the last century the prospect of increase in that commonwealth was highly promising. These prospects were, however, soon darkened and destroyed by dissensions among the ministers. At the beginning of the present century, the Lexington Academy was founded under the auspices of the Associate Reformed Church. It was incorporated by the legislature of the State, and received from the same source the very handsome endowment of 4000 acres of land. Had the affairs of this institution, and of the church, been managed with ordinary prudence, there can be little doubt that it would now have been among the best colleges in the great valley of the West. But the opportunity

was madly thrown away, and now it is irrecoverably gone. All the subsequent efforts of the church to extend herself in Kentucky, have been attended by no encouraging results.

In addition to these early settlements of the church, in the States of New York, Pennsylvania, Carolina, and Kentucky, it should be mentioned that there were some in New Hampshire and Maine. Mr. Greenleaf gives some notices of them in his Ecclesiastical History of Maine. They were associated under the name of the Presbytery of Londonderry. The region, however, was unfavorable to the growth of Presbyterianism; so soon as the older generation was removed, their descendants became "like the people of the land," and degenerated into independency, though the name of Presbytery was still kept up. The consequence was, that the Synod in 1802 passed the harsh and unwise act, declaring this Presbytery no longer a portion of the Associate Reformed Church.

We now resume the history of the Synod. As before stated, it was constituted at Philadelphia, in 1782, and was then composed of three Presbyteries, and numbered in all fourteen ministers. One of the first acts of the Synod, after its organization, was, the adoption of a series of articles, which were afterwards published under the very unsuitable name of the Constitution of the Associate Reformed Church: among the people it was known as "the Little Constitution." These articles were vehemently attacked both by the Covenanters (in Scotland) and the Seceders here; yet they deserve attention as showing the ardent attachment of the men of that day to "the truth and peace;" they furnish striking evidence that they possessed a truly catholic spirit, and were eminently free from that mean and narrow sectarian temper which has often been displayed by those who make the loudest professions of universal charity. Our limits forbid the insertion of these articles; and we shall only say in reference to them, that the spirit of charity and moderation which they breathe, has been characteristic of the Associate Reformed Church from that day to this: in no case has she attempted to profit by the dissensions of her neighbors, and with

the single and noble exception of the Moravians, no other denomination in this country has ever displayed less sectarianism than she. Whether these articles were designed to serve only a temporary purpose or not, can hardly be determined at this distance of time; the fact, however, is, that they were ultimately laid aside for a fuller exposition of the church's faith—a measure that was probably owing to the uneasiness created in the minds of some weak but sincere persons, by the incessant and virulent attacks of the enemies of the union. The final result was, that the Westminster Confession and the Catechism, after a careful revision, at several successive meetings of Synod, in the articles relating to the power of the magistrate, were published in one volume, in 1799, under the title of "The Constitution and Standards of the Associate Reformed Church in North America," and they have continued to be such, down to the present day.

The ground occupied by the United Church was the same as that held by the Church of Scotland. The testimonies of Covenanters and Seceders were approved so far as they did not conflict; but the simple standards of the Church of Scotland were adopted as the standards of the church in the United States, only with a slight change of their language on the subject before named. And even this change amounted to no more than the incorporation in the Confession of the very sentiments expressed by the Church of Scotland on this head, in her adopting act of 1646. The Directory for Worship and the Propositions of Church Government remained unchanged; the Rules of Discipline and Forms of Process were not so much altered as drawn out into a regular system, the want of which the Church of Scotland has long felt; instead of rules she has only precedents for her guide in matters of discipline. In this connection it may be mentioned, that various doctrinal acts were passed by the Synod, which were intended to oppose particular errors prevalent at the time. Of these, the acts on Faith and Justification, written by the late Dr. John M. Mason; on Original Sin, by the Rev. Robert Forrest, and on the Atonement,

by Dr. Robert Proudfit, are very valuable expositions of Scripture truth, and have long been highly prized.

For twenty years after the union, the growth of the church was very rapid; in fact, the demand for laborers in all parts of the land, New England excepted, was far greater than the Synod could possibly supply. This rapidity of increase led the church, in 1803, to adopt a measure—under the influence of Dr. Mason, of New York—which was altogether premature, and ultimately exerted a most disastrous influence upon her fortunes; this was the division of the church into four Provincial Synods of New York, Pennsylvania, Scioto, and the Carolinas, under a representative General Synod. The size of the denomination did not warrant this measure; the provincial Synods, held at great expense and trouble, found that they had no business to transact worth the name, and in a few years ceased to assemble; the affairs of the church fell into the hands of a few, and thus jealousies were engendered, the evil effects of which are felt to this day.

In 1800 it was resolved to take steps for the establishment of a Theological Seminary, as the only means of supplying the increasing demand for ministers; and in the meantime an effort was to be made to obtain a supply of ministers from Scotland. For these purposes, Dr. John M. Mason was sent as the agent of the church to Great Britain in 1802; he succeeded in obtaining funds to the amount of about \$6000, the largest part of which was expended in the purchase of a most valuable library; and on his return he was accompanied by five Scottish ministers, several of whom still survive. At the meeting of Synod in 1804, the plan of the Seminary was carefully framed; Dr. Mason was chosen Professor of Theology; and the sessions of the Seminary began in the autumn of the same year, in the city of New York. This was the first Seminary established in the United States, and for many years the most famous seat of theological learning in our country. The chief credit of its foundation, and especially of the admirable plan on which it was based, belongs to Dr. Mason. It is the model according to

which all the other Seminaries of the Associate Reformed Church have since been framed. Of the character of Dr. Mason, his unrivalled eloquence, his rich and varied scholarship, his immense popularity, it is hardly necessary to speak. He is one of the very few American clergymen, whose fame is as bright in Britain as in the United States. Yet it is melancholy to reflect that his fame, once so great, is rapidly passing away, for he has left no durable monument behind him. The Seminary might have been such, but he, unfortunately for it, as well as for himself, undertook too much, and besides, lacked that indomitable perseverance which never rests until it has fully attained its objects. The Seminary which he founded, exists indeed in another place, but on the spot of its nativity it is now almost unknown.

Dr. Mason's writings deserve a high rank in the theological literature of this country; but we have reason to believe that they are in no respect what they would have been, had the energies of his mind been concentrated upon his duties as a theological professor. His earliest work, which was published about five years after his admission to the ministry, was upon the subject of Frequent Communion. For many years, in fact since the days of prelatial persecution, the Scottish churches were accustomed to observe the sacrament of the Lord's Supper not more than twice a year, and in some cases only once. Besides the usual preparation sermon, the sacrament Sabbath was invariably preceded by a fast day on the Thursday, and succeeded by a thanksgiving day upon the Monday. Palpably opposed as this was to the spirit of the Directory, which declares that "the Lord's Supper is frequently to be observed," the church had become so wedded to these "days," that it was deemed by many almost a profanation of the sacrament to celebrate it without them. Dr. Mason set himself to oppose these additions to the New Testament Passover, as he well knew that its frequent observance was impossible so long as they were continued; his "Letters," addressed to the members of the Associate Reformed Church, were the means of working the desired change in many con-

gregations, though in some parts of the church "the days" are observed even to the present time. But the great work of Dr. Mason is his masterly treatise on "Catholic Communion," published in 1816. The circumstances which gave rise to this important work are given in the work itself, and need not be here repeated. It is a singular coincidence that its appearance was contemporaneous with that of the treatise of Mr. Robert Hall of Leicester on the same subject, and in which substantially the same principles are defended. Previous to the appearance of Dr. Mason's work, the practice of the Associate Reformed Church, in common with the other branches of the Scottish Church in this country, had been that of exclusive communion. We say that such was her *practice*, and it furnished a sad illustration how the practice of a church which glories in her orthodoxy, may be in palpable contradiction to her own standards. In the days of the Westminster Assembly the doctrine of exclusive communion was condemned, especially by Baillie and Rutherford, two of the greatest lights of their age, as one of the peculiar errors of the Independents, who would neither commune with other Christians, nor allow others to commune with them. The Confession of the Scottish Church asserts in the plainest terms the duty of communing with all, in every place, who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, as God in his providence gives the opportunity. But at an early period in the history of the Scottish Secession an unchristian spirit of exclusiveness began to manifest itself; new terms of communion were framed, which had never before been heard of in the Christian church; they assumed ground which was a virtual unchurched of all other denominations of Christians; and they were forced to put a construction upon the language of their own Confession relative to the communion of saints, at war with the well known sentiments of the Westminster divines, and almost too absurd to need refutation. The great aim of Dr. Mason's work, was to expound and defend the doctrine of the church on this subject, and to bring the practice of the church into a correspondence with her own authorized standards.

On this account, as well as for the influence which it was the means of exerting, it deserves an honorable notice in the history of the church. The appearance of this work gave great offence to those in our own and some other denominations, who either could not or would not see the difference between catholic communion and promiscuous communion, and an attempt was made to answer it; still it was the means of producing a happy change in the practice of a considerable portion of the church of which its author was a member. But candor requires the statement, that in some other parts of the church, the doctrine of exclusive communion is taught and practised. The discussion of this subject, connected as it was in point of time with an attempt to introduce a new version of the Psalter, greatly helped to increase those sectional jealousies which had existed for some years before. All the great interests of the church languished; the Seminary was becoming involved in pecuniary difficulties—a fact however no way surprising, when it is considered how sadly its pecuniary affairs were mismanaged. The ministers in the western States made loud complaints against what they deemed innovations on the ancient order of the church; these proving—as might have been expected from the very manner in which they were made—ineffectual, the entire Synod of Scioto at length, in 1820, withdrew from the superintendence of the General Synod. This was a step in palpable violation of the essential principles of Presbyterianism; it was a causeless dismemberment of the church. Those who adopted it did not pretend that the General Synod had sanctioned heresy; they could not pretend that their interests were neglected, for quite as large a number of those educated in the seminary at New York were settled in the western States, as in any other portion of the country. The only thing which furnished them with a show of complaint was the act of the General Synod allowing the use of a different version of the Psalms from that which had been in use in the Associate Reformed Church. But no attempt was made to force a new version upon unwilling congregations. Now it

must be manifest to all that if secession, or, in other words, the dismemberment of a denomination, were warrantable on such grounds, the foundation of such a body must be exceedingly insecure. All the old and sound Presbyterian writers, as Rutherford, Durham and Baillie, are agreed in maintaining, that the only proper grounds of separation are, the authoritative sanctioning of gross heresy, or the positive interference with the rights of conscience; nor will even these justify it, until faithful though unavailing efforts have been made to remove the grievance. The eminent writers whose names have been given, unite in declaring, that to secede merely because the supreme judicatory tolerates something which one party deems to be an evil, while perfect freedom is allowed to testify against it, is to be guilty of schism. The truth is, that the schism of which we have spoken is to be traced to that absurd longing after an absolute uniformity in the mere externals of Divine worship, which Scottish Presbyterianism derived from the Westminster Assembly; this, we are persuaded, more than any other cause, has cramped the energies and hindered the advancement of the Associate Reformed Church in the United States.

In 1821, the Synod of the Carolinas petitioned the General Synod to be erected into an independent Synod. The ground on which it was made was the great distance of the Synod from the place at which the General Synod usually assembled, and the consequent impossibility of their being represented in the supreme council of the church. The request was granted. For many years after that event, the Southern Synod could hardly be said to have grown; but within the last few years a more enterprising spirit has been diffused among its members, and the prospects of increase are more promising than at any previous period. The increase of the Western Synod may be said to have kept pace with the rapid strides with which the Western States have advanced in population and in wealth. At the time of their separation in 1820, the number of ministers did not exceed twenty; now it is more than one hundred. The details of their statistics

we shall leave to the close of our article. Both the ministers and membership of the Western Synod are very strenuous advocates of what they denominate a "Scriptural Psalmody," by which they understand not merely a psalmody based upon the Scriptures, but the Book of Psalms, to the exclusion of all imitations such as that of Dr. Watts, and even of all translations of other portions of the Sacred Word. Not only are their congregations confined to the use of the Scots' version (as it is sometimes called) in the worship of God, but their ministers also are compelled to use this version when called to officiate in the pulpits of other denominations. Whether this subject does not receive an undue prominence among them, is a question which it might be deemed improper for one to determine, who is in a great measure unacquainted with the circumstances of that branch of the church. However this may be, it is very certain that psalmody forms the standing topic of discussion in all the periodicals connected with the Western Synod, and is the theme of not a few sermons. They are also very strongly opposed to the doctrine of catholic communion; though it would probably be doing many of them injustice to affirm that they hold to the doctrine of exclusive communion in the strongest sense of the phrase. We are not indeed aware that the Synod, as such, has ever given forth any positive deliverance upon the subject of communion; but there can be no doubt that the practical sentiment of the majority of ministers and members is in favor of the exclusive system. Of late years the Synod has also taken very decided ground against slavery; in many of the congregations, we are informed, that, not only are actual slaveholders excluded from their communion, but even those who have ceased to be such, are refused, unless they express sorrow for their past sin in the matter. These remarks apply to the southern branch of the church also, except in relation to the subject of slavery. In the Northern Synod, on the other hand, while there are some who entertain the views just expressed on the subjects of psalmody and communion, yet the majority of its members hold to a more liberal way of thinking.

About the time of the separation of the Western Synod, a proposal was made to unite the Associate Reformed and the Reformed Dutch Churches, under the name of "The Reformed Protestant Church of North America." The cause of the failure of this projected union has never been very satisfactorily explained. In the report of the committee of the Associate Reformed Church, the coldness with which the proposal was received by some few of the classes of the Dutch Church, is given as the reason for their recommendation not to prosecute the business. But there must have been some more potent agency than this at work; it is well known that the pride of one very distinguished member of the committee of the Associate reformed Church was, in some way, wounded in the prosecution of the affair, and there are those who ascribe to this circumstance—whether properly or not the writer cannot positively determine—the unhappy termination of the project. At the very same meeting of General Synod at which it was resolved to be inexpedient to prosecute the attempt at union with the Dutch Church, on account of the coldness of a few of her classes, a proposition of union was received from the General Assembly. A joint committee was immediately appointed, and a basis of union was very hastily framed, and, it having received the approval of the two bodies, was sent down to their respective Presbyteries for their action. Those under the care of the Assembly do not appear to have ever had the thing before them; at all events they never acted upon it.

At the next meeting of the General Synod, in 1822, it appeared that a large majority of the Presbyteries and Congregations were most decidedly opposed to the projected union. Yet, strange, to relate, those very men whose consciences had been so scrupulous about the coldness of a few of the Dutch classes, as to deem it necessary to drop the project of union (a union be it observed worthy of the name) with that church, had got so completely rid of their scruples, that they resolved to proceed with another proposal of union, in the face of the expressed negatives of a majority of their own Presbyteries. The subject was

debated for some days; when the vote was taken, there were for union *seven*, against it *six*, and silent *four*. The majority immediately declared the Synod dissolved; and in palpable violation of the constitution of the Presbyterian Church, they were at once admitted as members of an Assembly to which they had never been chosen. Within a week after this secession from the Associate Reformed Church, her valuable library was with singular expedition removed from New York to Princeton. We venture to affirm that a more disgraceful proceeding is not to be found in the annals of the American Church. The actors in this scene, besides having the expressed mind of the church of which they were the representatives, knew that their scheme would have been completely frustrated if all the delegates to the Synod had been present; they knew, at the very time the vote was taken, that several of these delegates from a distant part of the church were on their way. The indecent haste with which the library was removed from New York, and the silent manner in which it was effected, proved that these seceders were themselves conscious that their doings would not bear investigation. It is deeply to be lamented that the proposed union of 1822, was managed in the manner described. To an unprejudiced mind there appears no reason, on the score of principle, why these two branches of the Presbyterian Church should maintain a separate existence; their standards, their government, and their discipline are the same, and while there is a difference in some of their forms of worship, yet, as this would be no just cause for originating a separation, it cannot be a just reason for continuing it. Had the proper preparatory steps been taken, had due time been allowed the ministers and congregations of the Associate Reformed Church to consider the subject: the writer believes that within a few years a happy union of the two bodies might have been effected. But managed as the business was, they were only placed wider apart than ever. Such, however, was the end of the General Synod, for it never met again;—ill advised in its origin, unprosperous through its whole existence,

and miserable in its termination, it began in pride and ended in plunder.

The Synod of New York now resumed its ordinary meetings, and took the place of the General Synod as the supreme judicatory of the church in the northern States. But its members, unfortunately, wanted the vigor requisite in the existing circumstances of the church; the consequence was the irrecoverable loss of the old congregations in the city of New York. They even went so far as to direct their students of theology to attend the seminaries of other denominations, instead of appointing a professor of their own; the result was, just that which might have been anticipated, the loss of the greater part of these candidates for the ministry. At length, in 1829, the Synod awoke from this long and singular sleep; it was resolved to revive the Seminary, whose operations had been suspended in 1821, and to establish it at Newburgh, under the care of the Rev. Joseph McCarroll, D. D., who was at the same time chosen Professor of Theology. Steps were taken to recover the library transferred to Princeton in 1822; a representation of the case, marked by great moderation, was presented to the Assembly in 1830, which having proved unavailing, legal measures were adopted, and after a protracted suit, the library was obtained and removed to the Seminary at Newburgh.

From the preceding statement it will be perceived that the Associate Reformed Church, since 1822, has existed in three independent divisions, at the North, the West, and the South. An ineffectual attempt was made, in 1827, to revive the General Synod on the old footing; this failure was not produced by any of the old causes of disunion, for by this time, there was a uniform practice in all the details of Divine worship throughout the several divisions of the church; but it arose from the conviction which had been created in many minds, that in a country of such vast extent as ours, and with so many peculiarities of local interests and feelings, the affairs of the church will be much better managed by particular Synods, than by a representative General Synod or Assembly, having appellate jurisdiction. This sentiment, the truth of

which is very remarkably established by the history of the Associate Reformed Church for the last twenty years, is gaining ground both at the North and the West; and we do not believe that any considerable portion of our church will ever consent to the erection of such a Synod, having appellate jurisdiction over the whole United States. This is, in fact, to carry the principle of Presbyterianism to an unwarrantable length; all the arguments adduced to prove the necessity of such Synods or Assemblies, if worth any thing, prove the necessity of a permanent Ecumenical Synod or Assembly. Recent events, especially the increasing agitation on the subject of slavery, convince us that the day is not very distant, when the other and larger branches of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, will be compelled to take the same position, on this subject, with the Associate Reformed Church.

It only remains to add to this historical sketch, that for the last five or six years a correspondence has been going on between the Associate Reformed, the Associate, and the Reformed Presbyterian Churches, with a view to their amalgamation into one body. Among persons of right Christian feelings, and of enlarged minds, there can be but one opinion, as to the desirableness of such a union; but we are sorry to say, that at the present time, the prospect of its accomplishment is by no means flattering. Still, the parties concerned are acting with great caution, and experience proves that in all attempts at union, the dictate of true wisdom, is "festina lente." The great deliberation by which this movement has been distinguished, may at least inspire the hope that when the union does take place, it will be a union that deserves the name. And yet, if it were speedily effected, while we should greatly rejoice, the question would force itself upon us—why should the united Scottish Church maintain a separate existence in America? We confess that we should look upon this as a step towards a yet more blessed consummation. We should look upon it as the harbinger of that day, when Presbyterians, so long divided and alienated, though one in their confession and gov-

ernment, forgetful of their ancient animosities, shall unite their hearts and their energies against that common and mighty foe which is every day putting on renewed strength, that deadly foe by which in other days so many of our Presbyterian fathers were sent to join and increase "the godly company of martyrs."

We shall conclude the article with the statistics of the church.

I. *The Synod of New York*, contains four Presbyteries, viz: New York, Saratoga, Washington, and Caledonia. The whole number of ministers is 34; and of congregations, settled and vacant, about 43. The Theological Seminary is at Newburgh, Rev. Joseph McCarroll, D. D., Professor of Theology; and the Professorship of Church History is at present vacant.

II. *The Synod of the West*, about four years since, was turned into a General Synod, having under its care the following particular ones, viz:

1. The East Sub-Synod, containing the following Presbyteries: Big Spring, Monongahela, The Lakes, Mansfield, Steubenville, Blairsville, Second Ohio. The East Synod, contains about 60 ministers, and about 100 congregations, settled and vacant. The Theological Seminary is established at Alleghany, near Pittsburg, under the care of Rev. John T. Pressley, D. D., Professor of Theology; Rev. James L. Dinwiddie, Professor of Biblical Criticism; the Professorship of Church History is vacant.

2. The West Sub-Synod, contains the following Presbyteries: First Ohio, Chillicothe, Springfield, Kentucky, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan. It numbers about 40 ministers, and 70 or 80 congregations, settled and vacant. The Theological Seminary is established at Oxford, Ohio, under the care of the Rev. Joseph Claybaugh, D. D., Professor of Theology.

III. *The Synod of the South*, contains the following Presbyteries: First Carolina, Second Carolina, Georgia and Tennessee. The number of ministers is about 25, and of congregations 40. They have a Literary and Theological Institution, called the Clarke and Erskine College, in Abbeville District. The names of the Professors we are unable to give, though we understand the College is in a flourishing condition.