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ART. I.—*Sectarianism is Heresy, in three parts, in which are shown its Nature, Evils and Remedy.* By A. Wylie. Bloomington, Ia. 1840. 8vo. pp. 132.

OUR church has occasion to rejoice whenever those who go out from her undertake to give their reasons. Who will venture to predict how many heedless lapses into high-churchism, on the one hand, and no-churchism on the other, have been already, or may yet be, prevented by the printed arguments of Mr. Calvin Colton and of Dr. Andrew Wylie? In this respect, if in no other, these distinguished writers may assure themselves, they have not lived in vain.

The work before us is a series of dialogues between one Gardezfoi, one Democop, and Timothy, an alias for Andrew Wylie. As he gives the outlandish names to his opponents, so he does his best to give them all the nonsense, but without success. The book is not so violent as we expected from the author's temper. He is a man of talents, and of reading, but inaccurate, and sadly wanting both in taste and judgment. He makes sectarianism to consist in bigotry and carnality. By bigotry he understands a disposition to lay stress on doctrines; and by carnality all zeal for particular denominations. His great point is, that faith is trust in God, not

the view of the enlightened readers of the Holy Scriptures. The gates of hell can never prevail against the church; for it is founded, not on Peter, a poor frail mortal, who needed to be held up himself every moment, but on CHRIST the ROCK OF AGES, and on the truth, that he is THE SON OF GOD. This truth cannot utterly fail, because the Holy Spirit is promised to abide with the church forever. And we are assured, that in the latter days his influences will be poured out more copiously and universally than at any former periods. Then shall the truth of God, accompanied by this celestial light, shine forth clear as the sun; so that "all shall know the Lord from the least to the greatest," and then contentions and divisions shall cease, for Zion's watchmen shall see "eye to eye." May this glorious day speedily dawn upon our miserable world, and upon a divided and distracted church!

Cheraw, S. C.

ART. VII.—*The substance of a Discourse, delivered upon the occasion of the Semi-Centenary Celebration, on the second Sabbath in December, 1839, before the Presbyterian Church in Cheraw, S. C. By J. C. Coit. Prepared for the press and published by the Author, as a Testimony against the established Religion in the United States. Columbia: 1840. pp. 72.*

WE have read this Discourse, consisting of seventy-two closely printed pages, twice through, with as much attention as we could command, and yet we are far from being confident that we understand it. The author begins with remarking on the influence of the institutions of the State upon religion. In this country, where public opinion is effectually the law of the land, the church, he thinks, has become subject to its power, so that "in the fashion, form, and substance of religion, the people are as absolute as the Ottoman Porte, though they declare and enforce their canons by opinion only." Thus the majority of the people, "without the forms of legislation, have established a national religion." This establishment admits of great diversity: it includes every thing which will tolerate and live in peace with all other things. Nothing but "infamy, bonds, and imprisonment,"

he thinks, can await Christianity, under such an establishment, since the gospel reveals a religion "which not only condemns man's dishonour, sin, and shame, but annihilates, with a more withering curse, his glory, pride, and righteousness; a religion that stands pre-eminent, apart, and alone; rejecting all offered alliances, and denouncing every other system, not only as erroneous, but infernal." The great majority of the people, he adds, "will declare war against such a religion; all the orders of the establishment, with their overwhelming influence, will oppose her, and endeavour to awe her into silence, or to frown her into insignificance and dishonour." "If Christianity will renounce her exclusive principle, and exercise a liberal charity for all forms of idolatry; if she will recognize, or even let alone, (cease to prophecy against) Taylorism, Arminianism, and the various other forms of infidelity in the national pale; if, in short, she will submit to the authority of the state in matters of faith, she will be received with the 'sister churches' into the embraces of popular favour." But if she dissent, she will be denounced and persecuted.

"If there be," says the author, "an uncompromising, exclusive principle in Christianity, it is of the greatest importance that all should hear it; this principle we hold to be faith in the doctrine of Christ, according to our standards; this is our testimony as Presbyterians; this is our confession. Our system is a peculiar one; and as it differs fundamentally from all others, so we hold it to be the only true system. This, our exclusive principle, is denied by the unanimous voice of the establishment; by the temper and convictions of the great body of the people, and by the spirit of the age. We are told that there are men of benevolent hearts and pious sentiments, of great goodness, truth, justice, and mercy, every where among people of every sect, name and denomination, and therefore that no particular faith is necessary to true piety and salvation. This fatal opinion is every where opposed by Scripture."

Having thus defined the position of the church, he proceeds to examine her ways for the last fifty years, and finds her guilty of apostacy both as to faith and practice. The former charge is sustained by a brief account of the rise and progress of the New Divinity. As to the latter, appeal is made, if we understand the writer, to the prevalence of benevolent institutions in proof that the practice of the church has been no better than her faith. "With the coronation of

Love commenced the era of benevolent institutions among us. You know, my hearers, that the king and his subjects in the American Israel have not been restrained to a spiritual jurisdiction, but have been everywhere projecting reforms, where any thing is amiss in persons, families, neighbourhoods, cities, states and people all over the world. It has been a liberal, and enlightened, a magnanimous, a disinterested, a comprehensive, a universal love. This is the king that has reigned in our Israel, and we have rejoiced in his high places and groves; offered upon the altars which he has made; burnt incense and sacrificed to his idols; observed his times and walked in his statutes and ordinances." A long parallel is then run between this apostacy of our church, and that of the ten tribes under Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and that of the papacy. "Have not our churches," he asks, "been degraded into mere financial agencies to raise their quota of taxes for the royal treasury, that king Love may carry on his magnificent campaigns of benevolence and humanity? Has our church in fact obeyed the word of the Lord; walked in his ways; done that which was right in his eyes; kept his ordinances; sanctified his sabbath; honoured his church and ministers; defended his truth; lifted up his sacrifice, and gloried in the mediation of the royal and eternal priesthood of the man Christ Jesus? Or have we, like Jeroboam and the Pope, so humanized Christianity, that all obligations to duty and worship are such as may be done by substitution of human appointment; by a representation we are competent to ordain and establish? Has not gold become, under the dynasty of king Love, value in the abstract? Is it not accounted an equivalent for any religious service; and will not the king compound for money in lieu of personal services?"

As to the unfaithfulness of the church in matters of doctrine, he says, "If the new school theology is true, then our Confession is a bundle of lies; yet our church has tolerated these infidel and detestible doctrines more or less for thirty years; they have been preached to the hearts and minds of our people; avowed and defended in printed sermons, books and commentaries, by presbyterian ministers, and all the people have said, amen! Is here no room for repentance, humiliation and reform?" . . . "Have we not indiscriminately intermingled in religious correspondence with Arminians, Methodists, Pelagians and others of licentious doctrines; and has not a spirit of love and polite-

ness to them shut our mouths and proved us recreant as witnesses for God?"

What this reform should be we are taught under the third head. "We must go back to the old paths; the good old ways which we have deserted: we must recant our false doctrines and renounce our false worship." As to reform in doctrine, he says, "Necessity is upon us to cry aloud and spare not, to lift our voice upon the mountains, and proclaim that there is a difference; a great and impassable gulph is fixed between us. We believe their religion to be a fundamental departure from the faith of the gospel; we oppose it not mainly or radically by the force of argument, but by the word of God; by the testimony." As to practice, the reform should be directed against the national societies. "Is there any king Saul among you who would spare the king and the chief and best of the spoils of Amalek, to sacrifice to the Lord your God? Do you murmur among yourselves saying, 'Old king Love has a very good heart, fine feelings and an excellent spirit, and has been devoted to the liberty and happiness of the people; that his institutions have done a great deal of good, and ought not to be utterly destroyed?' In religion nothing is good but obedience to God. Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing; but obedience to the commandments of God. If these national societies confessed allegiance to Caesar, making no other pretensions than (the truth) that they are mere political organisms to promote the public welfare, we should have no religious controversy with them; their merits would be discussed like other measures of mere practical ethics, or civil government; upon the principles of morals and political expediency. But when they put the cross upon the banner of their empire, and march in the name of the King of kings, call upon us for levies of money and of men, and for submission to their laws and ordinances, upon the obligations of conscience and religion; we ask for their commission. There is no pretence of any authority, or word, or warrant from the throne. Their glory is that they are volunteers; every band is a free will, a voluntary society, self constituted to do good; that is, to destroy the works of the devil upon principles of action more efficient and better adapted to the spirit of the age, than those impotent institutions and ordinances, the church, the ministry, the word, the sacraments and prayer, which Jesus Christ, in his want of forecast in olden time, established as his means to this very end, but which have proved a failure! Such pro-

fane and blasphemous principles are the foundation stones of the national establishment." "The American Tract and Sunday School Societies are self impeached, as witnesses for Christ and his gospel. The bond of their union is a compact to suppress the truth; that truth and those doctrines which, according to the testimony of our church, and of all her true children, are the pillars of the gospel. Associations no better on Christian principles (so far as their object or effect is to deny the faith, and to usurp the offices and functions of the church,) than the assembly of chief priests, scribes, elders and rulers of the people, who were convened at the palace of Caiaphas, the high priest, to consult how they might take Jesus by subtlety and put him to death."

As to the missionary societies, he asks, "What are the objects and works of the missions of the Establishment? To civilize, educate, and improve the degraded, ignorant, and destitute, at home and abroad; their missionary teaches letters, grammar, geography, arithmetic, astronomy, moral and mental science, agriculture, medicine, the useful and fine arts, history, political economy, &c. &c. Religion! such religion as they have, they send; their religion, in this behalf, consists in teaching and preaching these very things. They have more faith in the efficacy of this mental and moral cultivation and training to do good, than in the power of the gospel; or they may regard these as a preliminary expedient; a sort of John the Baptist to go before in the wilderness, to prepare the way, to make crooked things straight." "As to the Education Societies of the Establishment, the learning which pertains to this world merely, such as mental and moral philosophy, and the common branches of science and the arts, this is the proper business of the parent, the guardian, the state. It is not the work delegated to the church. All these things are desirable, some of them indispensable; and so are bread and meat and water; but it is not the office of the church to manage plantations, raise stock, dig wells or make pumps." "As to the Bible Society, of all the works of king Love, the most plausible and seductive, I object," says our author "to its vital principle. It is pledged to send the written word without note or comment; without the testimony of the church, without the voice of the preacher. Now God has not given his word on this wise to volunteers; and if any voluntary society undertake this office, it is a self constituted agency and a will worship; it is not obedience to a command."

It is not however these national societies alone, that the au-

thor fears and denounces. "We now," he says, "it seems, are to have our Boards for missions, foreign and domestic, for education, and for publication of tracts and divinity. Whether we are not like Rachael, stealing Laban's images and concealing them; whether we are not hankering with the Hebrews after the flesh pots of Egypt, or with Achan hiding in our tents the wedge of gold and the Babylonish garment, whether these Boards are not calves like those in Dan and Bethel, or altars after the fashion of that in Samaria; whether, in short, this device of Boards be not a Trojan horse which has in its bowels the principles of the voluntary societies, benevolent institutions, and even king Love himself, is a matter of most momentous import. Let us hear no voice but the word of the master; and let every one who hath an ear hear him. If the administration of our church be established through the functions and agency of these Boards, the captains will become invested with a prelatical superintendence and control; they will, de facto, constitute the government, nothing will remain for the churches and presbyteries to do in the important departments committed to the Boards but to obey and to pay."

"These Boards, unless speedily arrested in their growth, will infallibly take root and perpetuate their existence; and from their inherent tendency to expansion, will spread out their leaves like the green bay, till like the societies they overshadow, obscure and blight the plantings in the garden of the Lord. They are very great trees, which Paul hath not planted nor Apollos watered. Let us then remember the Scripture, 'Every tree which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up.'" In the Appendix, he tells us the Presbytery of South Carolina resolved to support the Boards, and declared 'they are fully convinced of the insufficiency of individual churches or presbyteries to carry forward the great enterprizes of benevolence.' "Here," says our author, "is a formal renunciation of presbyterianism, and a college of Cardinals is elected by the presbytery, to carry forward the work which Christ has given the church to do. We believe presbyteries and individual churches are fully competent to do what it is proposed the Boards should do for them."

Many of our readers, if they have not looked at the name of the author of this discourse, will no doubt think that we have here an exhibition of the bigotry and narrow-mindedness of the genuine old Scotch seceder school. The writer,

however, is a native of New England, and, as is very obvious from his sermon, has not been long enough in the church of which he is so over-zealous an advocate and rebuker, to learn its principles or to imbibe its spirit. His sermon is in conflict with our standards, from beginning to end; and no man, formed under their influence, or who really adopted their principles, could possibly exhibit the spirit which pervades this discourse. When we say that the sermon is in constant conflict with our standards, we do not refer so much to its theology as to its ecclesiastical principles. We are, however, far from being satisfied with its theology. The man who calls Taylorism and Arminianism infidelity, holds, if we understand him, the most objectionable of all Dr. Taylor's doctrines. "In the first man," says Mr. Coit, "who was created in the maturity of human perfection, God made an experiment or probation of the power of the law of personal holiness, or of the sovereign dominion of the human will to maintain life in man; and the fact was thus manifested and proved that life could not be preserved by this law. Such is human nature in its best estate that it will be seduced into disobedience by temptation and the subtlety of Satan." We know not how the author would explain this, but to us it seems plainly to teach the doctrine that sin is necessarily incidental to a moral system. This is still plainer from what follows, for it is added, "Had every one of the human race been created good, like the first man, every one would in time have yielded to some modification of temptation which an endless existence and social intercourse would involve." Nor could God prevent such a result without destroying the moral agency of man, for the writer says, "To affirm that God is bound in justice to interpose his dominion or power to preserve the agent from transgression, is to destroy legal or natural liberty, and to deny the facts of the probation and fall of mankind." We cannot see the difference between this statement and the fundamental doctrine of Taylorism, viz. that God cannot effectually control the acts of a moral agent without destroying his liberty. This idea is still more plainly presented in the Appendix, where the writer says, "Should He control the will of man by perfect laws of intellect, sensibility and organization, the agent would be brought within the empire of necessity; liberty would be destroyed, and the subject become and be merely a ministerial or executive agent." If then, according to the doctrine of the scriptures and of our standards, Adam was created perfect, he was not

a free agent, of course the author holds that he was not thus created, but was imperfect, faulty, or other than good from the beginning. What a contradiction of Scripture, and what a reflection on God are involved in this statement, every man can see.

When we say that the doctrine that God cannot effectually control the acts of his moral creatures without destroying their liberty, is the fundamental doctrine of Taylorism, we are not to be understood as meaning that it is peculiar to that system. It is the first principle of Pelagianism in all its forms. Mr. Coit does not carry it out, and therefore it does not vitiate his theology. He seems to have introduced it to justify the fall of all mankind in Adam. Since it is certain that all would sin sooner or later, even if created as perfect as the first man, and as God could not prevent such a result without destroying the liberty of men, there was no harm in treating them as though they had done what it was certain they would do. Whatever this may be, it is not the doctrine of the Bible or of our standards. Our object however is not to convict Mr. Coit of heresy. We are willing to believe that he may have some way of explaining the passages referred to so as to reconcile them with the other doctrines which he so strenuously advocates. We do not the less believe, however, that the sentiments which they contain are both erroneous and dangerous.

The ecclesiastical principles of this discourse we regard as in direct conflict with the standards of the Presbyterian church. It is the leading doctrine of this sermon that no man is to be regarded and treated as a Christian who does not adopt the standards of the Presbyterian church, or some formula of doctrine of like import. The exclusive principle of Christianity, the writer teaches, is faith in the doctrine of Christ according to our standards; all who do not adopt that doctrine as thus set forth, we are bound to denounce, and to have no communion with them as Christians. He censures the church for having "intermingled in religious correspondence with Arminians, Methodists, and Pelagians." He sneers repeatedly at the expression "Sister churches." He exclaims, "We turn the new school presbyterians out of our house, because we say they deny our faith, our gospel; and avowed Arminians are invited into it, welcomed and embraced as Christian brethren." This idea pervades the whole discourse, and unless we are prepared to maintain this exclusive principle, all talk of reform, he calls, mere vapouring.

Now we confidently affirm, that this is not the doctrine of the Presbyterian church, but, on the contrary, is in direct opposition to her spirit and principles. The first proof of the correctness of this declaration, though negative, is conclusive. The fact that our church no where enjoins the adoption of the Confession of Faith as a term of Christian communion is proof positive that she does not consider it necessary. She wisely demands the adoption of that Confession of all who are admitted to the office of bishop, or ruling elder, or deacon, but she has never required it of the private members of the church. Many of our new school brethren went to the extreme of asserting that our church required of her ministers nothing but what was essential to the Christian character; and now it seems that some are for going to the opposite extreme; and teach that the Confession of Faith is the test not only of ministerial, but of Christian communion. These extremes are equally dangerous and equally opposed to our standards.

It is not however by merely abstaining from requiring the adoption of the Confession of Faith by private members, that our church teaches that such adoption is not necessary to Christian communion, but by expressly teaching the contrary doctrine. Our standards from beginning to end teach that we are bound to regard and treat as Christians, and to receive to our communion as such, all who give credible evidence of being true Christians; and she no where prescribes, as part of that evidence, the adoption of the whole system of doctrine contained in our Confession of Faith. "The Catholic church," our Confession teaches, "hath been sometimes more, and sometimes less visible. And particular churches, which are members thereof, are more or less pure, according as the doctrine of the gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them. The purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error: and some have so degenerated, as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan."* In describing those who ought not to be admitted to Christian communion, the Confession says, "All ignorant and ungodly persons, as they are unfit to enjoy communion with him, so are they unworthy of the Lord's table."† It is here plainly taught that those who are fit for communion with the Lord, should be admitted to his table. And what a monstrous doctrine is the opposite assumption! Who are

* Confession, ch. 25. §. 4, 5.

† Con. 29. 8.

we, that we should refuse communion with those with whom Christ and the Holy Ghost commune? We devoutly thank God, that no such anti-Christian doctrine is countenanced by our church. In the Larger Catechism, in answer to the question, May one who doubteth of his being in Christ, or of his due preparation, come to the Lord's supper? it is said, "One who doubteth of his being in Christ, or of his due preparation to the sacrament of the Lord's supper, may have true interest in Christ, though he be not assured thereof, and in God's account hath it, if he be duly affected with the apprehension of the want of it, and unfeignly desires to be found in Christ, and to depart from iniquity, in which case, (because promises are made, and this sacrament is appointed for the relief of even weak and doubting Christians) he is to bewail his unbelief, and labour to have his doubts resolved; and so doing, he may and ought to come to the Lord's supper, that he may be further strengthened." And in the immediately following answer, we are taught that it is only "the ignorant and scandalous," whom we are authorized to debar from communion. The qualifications for the Lord's supper, as laid down in the Shorter Catechism, are knowledge to discern the Lord's body, faith to feed upon him, repentance, love and new obedience. In the Directory, chapter 8, we are told that "the ignorant and scandalous are not to be admitted to the Lord's supper." And in the following chapter, in reference to the young, it is said, "When they come to years of discretion, if they be free from scandal, appear sober and steady, and have sufficient knowledge to discern the Lord's body, they ought to be informed, it is their duty and privilege to come to the Lord's supper." And on the same page it is said, "Those who are to be admitted to sealing ordinances, shall be examined as to their knowledge and piety."

Nothing, therefore, can be plainer than that our church requires nothing more than credible evidence of Christian character, as the condition of Christian communion. Of that evidence the church officers are to judge. Not one word is said of the adoption of the Confession of Faith, or of any thing but the evidences of piety. Any man therefore who gives evidence of being a Christian, we are bound by the rules of our church to admit to our communion. And so far from there being the slightest intimation that the adoption of the whole system of doctrine contained in our standards, is necessary to a man's being a Christian, there is the strongest evidence to the contrary. This evidence is to be found in

the omission of any mention of the standards in those passages which speak of the communion of saints; in the mention of other terms than those of subscription to a formula of doctrine; and in the admission that true churches may be impure both as to doctrine and practice, that is, may reject what we hold to be truth without forfeiting their Christian character.

The doctrine here contended for has been repeatedly recognized by the General Assembly. So recently as May, 1839, in their letter to the churches, the Assembly said, "We have ever admitted to our communion all those who, in the judgment of charity, were the sincere disciples of Jesus Christ." They add, however, that "this has no reference to the admission of men to offices in the house of God." With regard to all office-bearers, they say: "The founders of our church, and all who have entered it with enlightened views and honest intentions, have declared to the world and to all other Christian churches that the system of doctrine contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, is that sound doctrine, which we are to require of all those who seek the office of a bishop." "Such are the principles," add the General Assembly, "on which our church was founded, and on which for more than a century it was faithfully administered. It is believed, that during all this period no one was ever debarred from the communion of saints, who was regarded as a sincere disciple of Christ, and that no one was admitted to any office in the church, or, if admitted, was allowed to retain his standing, who dissented in any material point from the system of doctrine contained in our standards."

There is one monstrous assertion relating to this subject involved in one of the passages quoted above from Mr. Coit's sermon, which we cannot pass unnoticed. He virtually asserts that the new school party were cut off as unfit for Christian communion. This assertion is in the very face of the solemn declaration of the Assembly, that they had no intention of affecting either the ministerial standing, or the church relations of any one in the four synods. They declared that it is because of their irregular organization, that the act of dissolution was passed, and that any who chose might organise themselves agreeably to the constitution, and thus their connexion with the church be preserved. This is the very view of the case which Mr. Coit gives, in the body of his sermon, of the acts of the Assembly of 1837. "As to the clamour," he says, "which has been made about 'cutting

off five hundred ministers and sixty thousand communicants' by the Assembly's edict of 1837, the truth is, not one person was cut off, unless he excinded himself upon the voluntary principle, as every one will see who can read and will look at the enactment. The effect of the act was to abolish an anomalous ecclesiastical connection of four Synods with the General Assembly; a connection which had grown up out of a temporary missionary arrangement, (made when the country covered by these synods was mostly a wilderness,) operating most perniciously upon the 'truth, peace, and purity of the churches,' and all the reasons for which had long ceased to exist." This representation is undoubtedly correct. The acts of 1837 deposed no minister and excommunicated no church member. They declared no man and no set of men unworthy of Christian communion. It would indeed have been a monstrous iniquity for the Assembly to excommunicate thousands of Christians of whom they knew nothing, and who had been neither accused nor convicted of any offence. The imputation of any such purpose to the General Assembly is a gross calumny against that venerable body.

The doctrine so plainly taught in our standards, that Christian-fellowship should be extended to all who exhibit the Christian character, is no less plainly taught in the word of God. We are there commanded to receive all those whom God has received. In the fourteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, it is in various forms enjoined on Christians not to reject any who live on Christian principles. True religion consists in "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he who in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God and approved of men." And surely those who are acceptable to God may well be acceptable to his church.

There is no duty more frequently or pointedly enjoined in the New Testament, than love of the brethren. It is made the badge of discipleship. "Hereby" says Christ "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. This duty involves of course the recognition as brethren of all those who are really such, and the exercise of cordial affection and confidence towards them. It matters not by what name they may be called, whether they follow with us or

not; if they bear the image of Christ, those who fail to recognise and honour it, fail to love the brethren; they reject and despise those whom Christ has received, and have reason to consider seriously lest Christ should say unto them, In as much as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not unto me. It would avail us little in such a case to say, We did not regard him as a brother; for this is the very heart of the offence. If a man is a brother and gives the scriptural evidence of the fact, not to see and recognise that evidence is an indication of that very state of mind which is so offensive to our Divine Master. Will it avail us in that day, to say, We did not think any man could be a Christian who sang Watts's Psalms, or who did not wear plain clothes, or who refused to give a pledge of total abstinence, or who declined to join an abolition society, or who denied the authority of the pope or of prelates, or who did not adopt the same standard of doctrine that we did? The question will be, Did you refuse to recognise those as Christians who were really such, and who gave scriptural evidence of their being the disciples of Christ? What that evidence is, is recorded in the word of God, and every man and every church must apply it upon their own responsibility. One thing, however, is plain, viz. that we are bound to receive all those whom God has received; and are forbidden to require more for communion with us, than he requires for communion with him.

There is a prevalent misconception on this subject, which ought to be corrected. It is said that by communing with any church we recognise or sanction their errors. This is not so. We recognise them as Christians, and nothing more. If a Presbyterian commune in a Congregational or Episcopal church, no man regards him as sanctioning their distinctive views of church government. It is simply in their character of fellow Christians that he sits with them at the table of the Lord, to which they have a common right. And great is the guilt of those who refuse that right to any to whom it properly belongs.

Our standards tell us that particular churches "may err in making the terms of communion too lax or too narrow." No one, it is presumed, can accuse our church of going to either extreme, in requiring, as the condition of Christian communion, nothing more and nothing less than Christian character. And no individual congregation or presbytery in our connexion has a right to alter those terms. In applying the rule the responsibility rests upon the officers of

each particular church, and no doubt errors in this matter are often committed. The Bible contains a perfect rule of faith and practice; and we are bound to believe all the Bible teaches, and to do all that it commands. But perfect faith is no more necessary to true discipleship, than perfect conduct. There are some things which, if a man does, would afford decisive evidence that he is not a Christian; and there are some truths the rejection of which affords no less decisive evidence of the same fact. But as there are infirmities of temper and behaviour, so are there errors in doctrine, which are consistent with true religion, and we have no more right to exact a strict conformity to our own belief of the true import of the rule of faith, than we have to demand perfect conformity to the rule of duty. "Those who are to be admitted to sealing ordinances," says our Directory, "shall be examined as to their knowledge and piety." Beyond this no church session has a right to go.

We have ever regarded the erroneous views and practice of the churches in relation to Christian communion as one of the greatest evils of the Christian world. It is not the existence of sects, for that perhaps is unavoidable, but it is the refusal to recognise as brethren those who really love and serve Christ, that is to be condemned and deplored. It is this that has turned the ancient eulogium: See how these Christians love one another, into the condemning testimony: See how these Christians hate one another. It is our presumptuously declaring that to be common, which God has cleansed, which has arrayed the different parts of the church against each other. There is such a thing as a faithful adherence to the truth, without anathematizing all who differ from us. We may guard our ministry and admit none to the office of teacher in our churches, who do not hold that system of doctrine which we believe God has revealed, and which cannot be rejected in any of its parts without evil to the souls of men; but we may still recognise as Christian brethren all who hold the essential doctrines of the gospel, and who love the Lord Jesus Christ.

The grave error into which Mr. Coit has fallen of demanding the same conditions, as far as orthodoxy is concerned, for Christian, as for ministerial communion, we suspect is a remnant of his former Congregationalism. As under that system the governing authority is placed in the hands of the church members, there is a constant temptation either to reduce the ministerial, or to elevate the Christian standard of

communion, in derogation of the scriptural rule. In our system there is no such necessity. Of church officers, our church requires the adoption of the Confession of Faith, of church members, knowledge and piety. And we hope that when Mr. Coit becomes better acquainted with the principles of the church, which he pronounces "faithless, treacherous and rebellious," he will change both his opinions and practice on this subject.

The second leading error which pervades this discourse, seems to us to have had a similar origin. It also is a remnant of Congregationalism. The writer does not seem able to elevate his conception of the church, above the idea of a single worshipping assembly, or at most of a single presbytery. He therefore pronounces the resolution of the South Carolina presbytery in favour of the Boards of Missions, &c., and declaring their belief of the insufficiency of individual churches or presbyteries to carry on the great enterprises of benevolence, to be a formal renunciation of Presbyterianism. His fundamental principle seems to be, that nothing can be said to be done by the church, which is not done by individual congregations; and he talks of the Boards as something extraneous to the church, as usurping power over the church, as being a bench of Cardinals, as degrading the churches into mere tax gatherers or tax payers, &c. &c. All this is very well, if a church is a worshipping assembly and nothing more. But according to our standards, the church, in one sense, is the whole body of believers throughout the world together with their children; and in another sense, all those believers who are united in communion, and under the same organized government, are a church. "The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America" therefore is one body; and may act as a whole. It has agreed thus to act through the General Assembly; which is the representative of all its constituent parts. What therefore is done by the Assembly, is as much done by the church, as what is done by a synod, presbytery, or church session. A church session is composed of ministers and elders; a presbytery is composed of ministers and elders; so is a synod, and so is the General Assembly, and we should like to know how the action of ministers and elders in a session, is better entitled to be considered church action, than that of the same class of men in the General Assembly, regularly convened under the same general constitution. This union of many congregations in one church is a radical principle of Presbyterianism. It is

that which mainly distinguishes it from Congregationalism. Yet it is a principle of which Mr. Coit seems to have little or no idea. This principle lies at the foundation of our whole system, and justifies the exercise of ecclesiastical authority by the General Assembly, over the remotest parts of our union. We are all one body, one church; and we meet and act as such. To deny this, is to deny the main doctrine of our standards, as to church government. It is to break up our union, and establish congregational independency.

Mr. Coit's doctrine on this subject is in such violent opposition, not only to our standards, but to the professions of the whole old school party, that we must believe that he stands very much alone, as far as this point is concerned. What have we been contending for these many years? Was not the right and duty of the whole church in its ecclesiastical organization, and acting through its own officers and assemblies, to carry on the work of missions, and other enterprises of evangelical benevolence, one of the main topics of dispute? Did not our new school brethren deny this, and assert that the individual churches associated in voluntary societies, were the proper organizations for this purpose? Must we then admit that after all they were right? Must we give up all we have been contending for, and go back to the plan of each congregation acting for itself, or in voluntary union with other congregations? This, if we understand him, is Mr. Coit's doctrine; and this we affirm is the very spirit of Congregationalism. The work of missions and religious education was assiduously prosecuted by the original presbytery of Philadelphia; by the venerable synod of that name; by the synod of New York and Philadelphia, and by the General Assembly ever since its formation. To be now told that this is an assumption of illegitimate power, an usurpation of the rights of the churches, and a formal rejection of Presbyterianism, may well make us doubt our own identity. Mr. Coit may rest assured that the church will require something more than confident assertion, to induce her to give up a principle coeval with her existence and inwrought into her whole ecclesiastical system.

The only objection, beyond that already considered, even hinted at against the Boards, is the undue power which is attributed to them. There is no doubt power committed to their hands. They have power to employ agents, to collect money, to appoint and sustain missionaries and candidates for the ministry, selected or ordained by the presbyteries.

But whose power is this? It is the legitimate power of the church, which it has ever exercised, for the good of men and for the glory of God, exerted through her own officers and entirely under her own control. It is precisely the power, which Presbyterians have ever contended belongs to the ecclesiastical organizations of the church, and which the opposers of Presbyterianism maintain belongs to single congregations or voluntary societies. These Boards are the mere agents of the church, acting under her direction and responsible to her for every step they take. To complain of the existence of this power, is to complain of Presbyterianism; and to complain of Presbyterianism is to complain of what we profess to believe has the sanction of the word of God. This power of the General Assembly to conduct missions in the name of the church, is analogous to that by which it exercises discipline, or performs the various executive acts which pertain to its jurisdiction. It is the whole church acting through its constitutional representatives. If Mr. Coit has any complaint to make about the abuse of the power in question, the church will no doubt listen to him; but it is rather too late to complain of its existence. To be consistent, he should complain of our having a General Assembly at all.

It may be that the objection against the Boards, contemplates the undue influence of their members in the conduct of the general affairs of the church. Viewed in this aspect, it assumes the form of mere unreasonable jealousy. That Mr. Lowrie or Dr. M'Farland has any undue influence in our church judicatories in the decision of matters of discipline or policy, is so violent an assumption that it need not be discussed. The great safe-guard against the abuse of power, is to have it confined to constitutional forms and committed to hands responsible to those in whose behalf it is exercised. The men who aspire to undue influence always begin by declaiming against power, and by endeavouring to sweep away all its legitimate forms. Take away that bauble, said Cromwell, when he abolished the Parliament, to make room for the dominion of his single will. And tyranny, in many other cases, has been built on the denuded foundations of constitutional authority. We do not make these remarks with any reference to Mr. Coit. We are not aware that he has a particle of the demagogue in his whole constitution. But we are fully satisfied that if the principles of his discourse were carried out, we should not only see the

union and harmony of our churches destroyed, but the dominant influence of irresponsible societies and individuals established throughout our land. We have only to choose between those forms which our fathers have established, and which give to every individual his full influence in the church, by enabling him to act in constitutional union with all his brethren, and nominal independency with real subjection to the power of the few.