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*J. S. Alexander*  
ART. I.—*Guerike's Manual of Church History*.\*

THE rapidity with which this work was sold, is a sufficient proof that it was wanted. The German press teems, it is true, with valuable books in this department, nor are there wanting in that language convenient manuals for the use of students. But research is continually adding to the stock of knowledge; and the favourable change, which has occurred of late years, in the religious views of many, has created a necessity for a compendious work, which should not only furnish the results of recent investigation, but present them in a form consistent with evangelical belief. This task Professor Guerike has undertaken in the work to which we now invite the attention of our readers. He is *Professor Extraordinarius* of theology in the University of Halle, and is well known as a strenuous adherent to the creed of Luther, but at the same time as an humble and devoted Christian. Some of our readers may perhaps recollect him, as the author of a life of Francke, which was reviewed in a former volume of this work,† and from which the late lamented Rezeau Brown

\* *Handbuch der Allgemeinen kirchengeschichte*. Von H. E. Ferd. Guerike. a. o. Professor der Theologie zu Halle. Halle, 1833. 2 vols. 8vo. pp. 1120.

† See *Bib. Rep.* for July 1830.

Charles Hodge

ART. VI.—*The Act and Testimony.*

THE history of this document we understand to be as follows. The proceedings of the last General Assembly of our church being, in many cases, much disapproved of, by a large minority of that body, a meeting was called in Philadelphia, to which all those ministers and elders were invited, who sympathized with this minority in their opinions and feelings. Among other acts of this meeting, a committee was appointed to draft a public declaration to the churches of the views and wishes of those then present. The result of this appointment was the publication of a paper entitled an *Act and Testimony*. It is impossible for any man to read this document, without being deeply impressed with respect for its authors. It is pervaded by a tone of solemn earnestness, which carries to every heart the conviction of their sincerity, and of their sense of the importance, as well as the truth, of the sentiments which they advance. The fear of God, reverence for his truth, and love for his church seem clearly to have presided over the composition of this important document. In addition to these intrinsic claims to the respect of those to whom it is addressed, the fact that it has received the sanction of so large a number of the best ministers of our church, demands for it the most serious consideration. It is therefore natural that those, who feel the truth and weight of a great portion of the statements of this document, and yet withhold from it their signatures, should feel desirous of letting their brethren know the grounds on which they act. We believe that most of the sentiments of this Act and Testimony meet a ready and hearty response from the great majority both of our ministers and elders; and yet we presume it will not be signed by any thing like a moiety of either. Why is this? Is it because they fear to assume the responsibility of such an act? This is very easily said, but we believe that the number of those who are nervous enough to be influenced by such a consideration, is very small. There is often much more courage in not acting, than in acting; and still more frequently in moderation than in violence. It is generally easy and safe in cases of controversy, to take sides decidedly, and through good and evil, with one part or the other. If you are sure of decided opponents, you are equally certain of warm friends. The unfortunate individuals who belong to neither side, are cared for by neither, and blamed, if not abused, by both. Though there may be imbecility, indecision, and timidity, which prevent a man's knowing what to think, or saying

what he knows; there may also be firmness in standing alone, or in that unenviable position where neither sympathy nor approbation is to be expected. It is humbling to think of good men as being so deficient in the fear of God, and so sensitive to the opinions of their fellow men, that they withhold their approbation of the avowal of truth, from the base fear of man; we are therefore slow to attribute such a motive, or to believe in its extensive influence. There must be some other and better reason why such a document as the Act and Testimony has not received, and is not likely to receive the sanction of more than a small minority of our churches. We pretend not, of course, to know the reasons which have influenced the conduct of so many different individuals, but we know that the following considerations have had a decisive weight on the minds of many, and presume that these and similar views have influenced the course of others.

In the first place, this document has been perverted from its true and legitimate purpose, as a Testimony, into an invidious Test Act. This evil has resulted from two sources, partly from the form and nature of the Act itself, in some of its essential features; and partly from the use that has been made of it in some of our leading religious journals. It would seem to be a very obvious principle, that any individual member of a body has a right to address his fellow members on subjects affecting their common interests. If he thinks that errors and disorders are gaining ground among them, it is more than a right, it is a duty for him to say so, provided he has any hope of making his voice effectually heard. If such be the case with an individual, it is equally obvious that he may induce as many as he can to join him in his warnings and counsels, that they may come with the weight due to numbers acting in concert. Had the meeting in Philadelphia therefore been contented to send forth their solemn Testimony against error and disorder, and their earnest exhortation to increased fidelity to God and his truth, we are sure none could reasonably object. Their declaration would have been received with all the respect due to its intrinsic excellence, and to the source whence it proceeded. But when it is proposed to "number the people;" to request and urge the signing of this Testimony as a test of orthodoxy, then its whole nature and design is at once altered. What was the exercise of an undoubted right, becomes an unauthorised assumption. What was before highly useful, or at least harmless, becomes fraught with injustice, discord, and division. What right have I to publish a declaration on truth and order to the churches, and call upon every one to sign it on pain of being denounced as a heretic or revolutionist?

Surely, many sound and good men may well take exception at some of my modes of expression, or demur at some of my recommendations, without forfeiting all claims to confidence. It may be said that no one is required to sign this Act and Testimony against his own will; and that there is no denunciation of those who decline. It ought, however, to be considered, that this is a necessary result of the call, on the part of the meeting, and in the body of the act itself,\* for a general signing of this document, like a new League and Covenant, that it should act as a test. Such in fact, no doubt, was its design. The authors of this feature of the plan at least designed to make it the means of ascertaining the number and strength of those who thought with them, and of uniting them in a body capable of acting with concert. If such is the very nature and purport of the act, it necessarily follows, that refusing to submit to the test or to join the league, must be regarded as an act of hostility. The very design of the effort is to make neutrality impossible. And this design unfortunately it but too well attains. In a recent number of the Presbyterian the editor says, "We verily believe that every orthodox minister and elder, who refuses his signature under existing circumstances, will throw his weight into the opposite scale, and strengthen the hopes, and confirm the confidence of those who aim to revolutionize the church."† We are not surprised at such language; it is the natural result, as just stated, of the measure. Now, we say, no man, and no set of men, have the right thus to necessitate others of their own body to adopt *their* statements and recommendations, or be considered as the abettors of errorists and anarchists. Here is one of the most serious evils of the whole plan. It makes one a heretic, or an abettor of heresy, not for error in doctrine, not for unfaithfulness in discipline, but because he may be unable to adopt an extended document as expressing his own opinions on a multitude of facts, doctrines, and practical counsels. This is an assumption which ought not to be allowed. It is an act of gross injustice to multitudes of our soundest and best men; it is the most effectual means of splitting the church into mere fragments, and of alienating from each other men, who agree in doctrine, in views of order and discipline, and who differ in nothing, perhaps, but in opinion as to the wisdom of introducing this new League and Covenant. We confess we are more disheartened

\* "We recommend that all ministers, elders, church sessions, Presbyteries and Synods, who approve of this Act and Testimony, give their public adherence thereto in such manner as they shall prefer, and communicate their names, and when a church court, a copy of their adhering act."

† Presbyterian for Aug. 21, 1834.

by the effects which this untoward step is likely to produce, than by any thing which has occurred for a long time in our church. If it is doubtful, as the friends of the Act and Testimony suppose, whether a majority of our ministers are faithful to our acknowledged standards, what proportion are likely to adhere to this extra-constitutional confession? Had the ingenuity of man been taxed for a plan to divide and weaken the friends of truth and order in our church, we question whether a happier or more effectual expedient could have been devised. Our first leading objection, then, to this document is, that it is not what it professes to be, a Testimony, but a Test. Had it been signed only by the chairman and secretary of the meeting by which it was issued, or by the individual members, its whole nature would have been different. As it is, it is a Test, and must operate unfairly and injuriously, subjecting some to unjust suspicions, and dividing those who, on every principle of duty, ought to be most intimately united.

But leaving this objection out of view, and admitting that it was right to adopt this extra-constitutional method of ascertaining and rallying the friends of truth, we think there are specific objections against this document, which show that it is unfit to answer this purpose. We have already said, and said sincerely, that it is impossible to read this Testimony without being deeply impressed by the seriousness of its tone, the weight and truth of the great part of its sentiments, and the decided ability and skill with which it is drawn up. It evinces in every line the hand of a man accustomed to legal precision and accuracy of phrase. Yet it was necessarily prepared in a hurry, probably at a single sitting, and read at a general meeting, in which the careful weighing of every clause was out of the question. Considering these circumstances, instead of being surprised that there are instances of unguarded statement, or unwise recommendations, our wonder is, that the blemishes of both classes are not tenfold more numerous. But is it not obvious that a document that was to be put forth, not only as a Testimony, but a Test, which the friends of truth were to be required to sign, or forfeit their character as such, and which was designed to rally as large a number as possible of those who were of the same heart and mind, should be most carefully and solemnly considered, and every thing avoided which might cause the well affected to hesitate or refuse? Were we ever so much in favour of such a measure, we are free to confess, that there are statements in this Act and Testimony, in which we could not concur, and recommendations of which we highly disapprove. Of course, however anxious we might be to join in this enterprise,

we should still be obliged to submit to have our names cast out as evil.

It is not our purpose to go over this document, and criticise its various parts. We shall merely refer to a few of the passages, which we think must be stumbling blocks in the way of all but the most determined.

The very first paragraph is sufficiently startling. It stands thus: "BRETHREN IN THE LORD:—In the solemn crisis to which our church has arrived, we are constrained to appeal to you in relation to the alarming errors which have hitherto been connived at, and now at length have been countenanced and sustained by the acts of the supreme judicatory of our church." The first question suggested by this paragraph is, whether in fact such a crisis has arrived in our church, as to justify such avowedly revolutionary measures, as the present document recommends? If such is the state of the church, desperate remedies may be justified, if in themselves wise and well directed. This point, however, we must at present waive. The statement to which we would now call the attention of our readers, and at which we should hesitate long, and sign at last, if sign we must, with a slow and shaking hand, is the declaration, that the highest judicatory of our church has at length countenanced and sustained alarming errors. These errors, of course, are those specified in the document itself. Is it then true, that the highest judicatory of our church has "countenanced and sustained" the doctrine, that we have no more to do with the sin of Adam than with the sins of any other parent—that there is no such thing as original sin—that man's regeneration is his own act—that Christ's sufferings are not truly and properly vicarious? How serious the responsibility of announcing to the world that such is the case! How clear and decisive should be the evidence of the fact, before the annunciation was made and ratified by the signatures of such a number of our best men. Surely something more than mere inference from acts of doubtful import, should be here required. We do not pretend to be privy to the grounds on which this serious charge is made; but we are sure that no conscientious man would set his name to it, without having evidence to produce the painful conviction that such was the fact. Such evidence ought to have been detailed. We do not know, and we suppose the churches generally do not know, what this evidence is. How then can they sign this document? How can they be expected to take the responsibility of one of the most serious annunciations ever made to the churches? We do not believe it to be true. We have not the least idea, that one tenth of the ministers of the Presbyterian

church would deliberately countenance and sustain the errors specified above. And if not done deliberately and of set purpose, it should not be announced as having been done at all. We may put upon acts an interpretation very different from what they were intended to bear, and thus be led to assert as fact what is very far from the truth.

We see that some, in adopting the Act and Testimony, apparently impressed with the solemnity of the step they were about to take in sanctioning this introductory paragraph, refer in justification of the charge which it involves, to the rejecting of a series of resolutions, calling upon the Assembly to denounce these and various other errors. But is the inference a necessary, or even a fair one, from declining to consider these resolutions, which required the Assembly to condemn certain errors, whether "held in or out of the Presbyterian church," to the sanctioning of these errors themselves? During the sessions of the last General Assembly in Scotland, a motion was made and rejected, relative to the devising of some measures for securing the better observance of the Sabbath. Must we infer from this rejection, that the body in question countenanced Sabbath-breaking?\* A few years ago, when petitions were circulated in reference to Sunday mails, many, especially after the failure of the first attempt, refused to sign them. Are such persons to be regarded as in favour of the desecration of the Lord's day? The mere rejection, or rather refusal to entertain, the resolutions referred to, cannot of itself, therefore, afford evidence of the disposition of the Assembly to countenance these errors. We do not know the history of the case, but there may have been something in the circumstances under which they were introduced, to account for their being set aside. We have heard, indeed, the warmest friends and advocates of the Act and Testimony regret exceedingly the manner in which they were brought forward. As far as our informant, a leading member of the minority in the last Assembly, knew, it was without consultation, to any extent, either as to their form or mode of being presented. Yet, what more difficult and delicate task, than the framing of doctrinal propositions, to be affirmed or denied by the supreme judicatory of a church? If these resolutions were hastily prepared, carelessly arranged, or loosely expressed, this alone would be reason sufficient to account for the Assembly's passing them over. As they have been published in the religious papers, the churches may judge on this point. For ourselves, we are not surprised at their

\* The rejection arose, we believe, from the wish to await the issue of the Parliamentary proceedings on the subject.

rejection. Instead of wondering that a majority of the Assembly did not vote for them, we wonder that any considerable number of voices was raised in their favour, so various are the errors they embrace, and so different in degree; some of them serious heresies, and others opinions (at least as we understand the resolutions) which were held and tolerated in the Synod of Dort, and in our own church from its very first organization. Is it to be expected that, at this time of the day, the Assembly would solemnly condemn all who do not hold the doctrine of a limited atonement? We do not believe that the penman of the Act and Testimony himself, whatever his private opinion on the doctrine may be, would vote for these resolutions. And it is too notorious that many of his most active and zealous co-operators deny this, and still more important points, to allow for a moment the supposition that they could intelligently have given such a vote. Surely then, the rejection of propositions, for which at no period of the history of the church, perhaps, a tenth of its ministers could have voted, is no adequate proof that the Assembly "countenanced the alarming errors" contained in this Act and Testimony. We are not now attempting to decide whether the Assembly did or did not countenance these errors, but we say, the evidence on which we could be induced to subscribe the solemn declaration that they did, must be very clear; and that no such evidence is exhibited to those who are called upon to join in the accusation. As before said, we do not believe that the errors quoted above from this document, or any others which it specifies, (unless it be that on the doctrine of imputation) are held or approved by one tenth of the ministers of the Presbyterian church. And we consider it a very serious affair to have the corruption of such a body of Christians asserted and proclaimed through both hemispheres.

As a proof of disregard of discipline, the Testimony refers to the treatment, by the Assembly, of a memorial sent up from several presbyteries, sessions and individual members. It may be supposed that the manner in which this paper was disposed of, furnishes evidence that the Assembly countenanced the errors abovementioned. This memorial, however, is not sufficiently known to make this the ground of a general signature of the Act and Testimony. We are very far from feeling called upon to justify all acts of the Assembly, or to apologize for them. Our feelings always, and our judgment generally, were with the minority in that body. There were things in the doings of the Assembly, which we disapprove of as much as any of the signers of this document. The manner in which this memorial was treated, is one of the acts which we think



much to be regretted. But the single point now is, whether this treatment furnishes evidence sufficient to authorize the authentication of the charge contained in the first paragraph of the Act and Testimony. Let any one look over this memorial, and ask, whether it was reasonable to expect the Assembly, in the present state of the church, to meet its demands. It is a long document, which concludes by requesting,

1. "That the plan of union between Presbyterians and Congregationalists in the new settlements" be wholly abrogated, &c.

2. That presbyteries be restrained from ordaining, licensing, or dismissing men, not to labour in their own bounds, but in the bounds of other presbyteries.

3. That the Assembly resume the sole direction of Missionary operations within the bounds of the Presbyterian church, to the exclusion of non-ecclesiastical associations.

4. That the Assembly bear solemn testimony against the many errors preached and published in the church.

5. That various points of order and discipline should be decided; as, 1. Whether one presbytery must admit a member coming from any other with clean papers. 2. Whether a judicatory may not examine and express an opinion of a book, without first commencing process against its author, when a member of their own body. 3. Whether in adopting the Confession of Faith as a system, the candidate "is at liberty to reject as many particular propositions as he pleases," &c.

6. That the Assembly disannul the act of the Assembly of 1832, dividing the Presbytery of Philadelphia, and disavow the principle that presbyteries may be founded on "the principles of elective affinity."\*

Here is matter enough to occupy a deliberative assembly for months. That all these points should be taken up, and properly considered, was therefore not to be expected. And as many of these requests are in direct opposition to measures carried with the full concurrence and approbation of the prominent signers of the Act and Testimony, who now request the Assembly to undo, what they themselves have done—it was as little to be expected, that, if considered, they could be granted. Though we think that the number and weight of the signatures to this memorial were such, that the Assembly ought to have paid more attention to their plea, and granted many of their requests, we are far from being convinced that it was a desire to countenance or sustain the errors specified in the Act and Testimony, which

\* For the sake of brevity we have not quoted these demands at length, but contented ourselves with giving the substance of each.

led to the course pursued. It is a very prevalent, and in itself a reasonable feeling, that church-courts should not legislate *in thesi*, or pronounce on doctrines in the abstract; that it is best to wait until the points come up for decision in the usual course of judicial proceedings. This feeling is so strong, in some of the soundest and best men in our church, as of itself to induce them to vote against many of the demands made in this memorial. It is not, however, possible to know the motives which influenced different individuals in taking the course which the Assembly pursued with this document. It is sufficient, that this course does not afford proof of the charge brought in the first paragraph of the Act and Testimony: and this point we think as clear as it can well be made. Were there no other reason, therefore, for not signing this document, the character of that paragraph we think sufficient.

There is another ground of serious objection to be found in the fifth of its eight recommendations to the churches. The signers say, "We would propose, that we consider the presbyterial existence and acts of any presbytery or synod formed upon the principles of elective affinity, as unconstitutional, and all ministers and churches voluntarily included in such bodies as having virtually departed from the standards of our church." This, it is to be observed, is not an expression of the opinion, that the existence and acts of such bodies are unconstitutional, but a recommendation that they be so considered, and of consequence, so treated. This is the only interpretation which we are able to put upon this passage. If this be its meaning, it must be seen at once, that it is a very serious step. For the members of any community, civil or ecclesiastical, to meet together, and recommend to their fellow members, to consider and treat the acts of the constituted authorities as unconstitutional and void, is an extreme proceeding, to be justified only by a necessity which authorizes the resolution of the society into its original elements. It is a deliberate renunciation of an authority which every member of the community has bound himself to respect. It is therefore the violation of a promise of obedience which can only be excused by proving that it is an extreme case, to which the promise was never intended to apply, and is not in its nature applicable. In civil governments this procedure is inceptive rebellion; in ecclesiastical governments it is the first step in schism. To take this step, is either a virtue, or a crime, according to the presence or absence of a justifying cause. That it must, however, be a very serious cause which will justify the disregard of obligations voluntarily assumed, and promises deliberately given, will of course be

admitted. That it is not competent for any individual, within the limits of the extreme cases just supposed, to judge for himself of the unconstitutionality or the constitutionality of the acts of the constituted authorities of the community to which he belongs, is too obvious to need remark. Every one sees that there would be an end of all government, if every member of a community were allowed to recognize or disregard a law at option; or by a simple assumption of its unconstitutionality to escape from the obligation to obedience. We cannot but regard, therefore, the recommendation of this document, that churches and ministers consider certain acts of the Assembly unconstitutional, as a recommendation to them to renounce their allegiance to the church, and to disregard their promises of obedience. Whether this recommendation be justifiable or not, depends of course on the exigency of the case. Those who do not think the act complained of, sufficiently heinous and destructive to dissolve the bonds of their allegiance, cannot sign this Act and Testimony; while those who regard it as a case of life or death, may feel at liberty to give the advice in question.

Though we are of the number of those who disapprove the plan of constituting presbyteries on the principle complained of, and think that it was, at least, never contemplated by the constitution, yet we are unable to discover so much evil in the measure as to justify the dissolution of the church, or the disregarding of the obligation we are all under to obedience. The plan recommended in this document necessitates a schism of the church, and perhaps was designed so to do. The Assembly have passed an act which these signers refuse to recognise. Either the Assembly must retract, or the signers must secede. One or the other of these results must take place, unless we are to have the confusion of two churches, with two sets of ministers and members, not recognizing each others acts or ecclesiastical standing, all included in the same body. How can such a state of things exist? The Assembly's second Presbytery of Philadelphia we will suppose, ordains a man to the ministry. As their constitutional existence is denied, the validity of this ordination, as a Presbyterial act, must also be denied. This leads to a denial of the candidate's ministerial acts, at least ecclesiastically considered. He is to those, who adopt this recommendation, a layman, and can do nothing which a layman may not perform. Will they recognise his baptisms? his introduction and dismissal of church members? This evil may be bearable, while there are but two or three individuals in this situation; but it must increase every month or year, until the whole church is a chaos. Such seems the necessary result

of acting on the plan recommended, unless schism be at once resorted to. This result, indeed, seems to have been distinctly in view when the act was prepared. The signers say, "If the majority of our church are against us, they will, we suppose, in the end, either see the infatuation of their course, and retrace their steps, or they will, at last, attempt to cut us off." That is to say, 'we have assumed such a position that things cannot remain as they are; the Assembly must either retrace their steps, or the church be divided.' Division, then, is the end to which this enterprise leads, and at which, we doubt not it aims;\* and division for what? As far as this document is concerned, it is division which is to result from not recognising the existence and acts of certain presbyteries and synods. This is the only effective provision in the whole act. All its other recommendations may be adopted, and no division occur; but if this be acted upon, division is inevitable. Is the church then prepared to divide, because one portion thinks that A. B. C. may lawfully be united into a presbytery, on the ground that they wish to be so united; and the other that A. B. C. and D. may be thus united, because they live within the same geographical lines? The motive for the wish, in the former case, does not affect the principle. It may be a corrupt motive, or a good one. Some individuals in Philadelphia wished to be set apart into a presbytery, it was said, because they differed from the standards to which the majority of their presbytery adhered. Other individuals in Cincinnati wished to be set apart in like manner, it was said, because they adhered to the standards, while the majority of their brethren were unsound. Admit both these suppositions to be correct, and both requests to have been granted, and we have two elective affinity presbyteries, the one formed from a desire to evade the operation of the constitution, and the other to give it its full force. We think the principle is a bad one; but it is clear that it may operate one way as well as the other, and that it is not to be viewed as a device designed to form a secure retreat for heresy. The fact is, that the members of our presbyteries are so much intermixed, especially in our cities, where not only ministers, but even churches frequently change their location, that the necessity of definite geographical limits has never been strenuously insisted upon. As the geographical is the obvious, and, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, the most convenient principle of division, and the one which the constitution directs

\* Since writing the above we see that this intention is denied, in the Presbyterian. We have heard other signers of the Act and Testimony, however, very distinctly avow their desire to effect a division of the church.

to be followed, it is clear that it ought to be adhered to. But can any one prevail upon himself to say, that the church must be split to pieces, because, in a single case, another principle has been adopted? The fact is, that this matter is, comparatively speaking, altogether insignificant; and it never would have attracted the least attention, were it not for the supposed motive which led to the adoption of the elective affinity principle. Had a Synod constituted twelve ministers, resident in one city, all of them equally distinguished for soundness of doctrine and purity of life, six into one presbytery, and six into another, simply because it had been so requested, would the whole church be agitated, when it was ascertained that the members of the one body were not separated geographically from those of the other? This, no one can believe. It is not therefore the simple principle in question, however generally admitted to be incorrect, that is the cause of this deep and extended feeling. If this be true, it ought not to be thrust forward as a test principle. The church ought not to be called upon to deny the constitutional existence of bodies constituted on this plan, and by this denial, render schism unavoidable. Brethren agreed in doctrine and views of order and discipline, united in heart and effort, ought not to be thrust asunder, because, on such a point as this, they cannot agree.

We can hardly persuade ourselves that reflecting men can consider this matter viewed as an abstract constitutional point, of sufficient importance to justify schism. Yet this is really the issue made and presented in the Act and Testimony. Refusal to retract on this point was the great offence of the last Assembly. As soon as this refusal was known, preparation was made for issuing this manifesto. We do not doubt, as already said, that the real ground of offence, the true cause of the present excitement, is not this insignificant question, but the impression as to the motive which governed the decision of the Assembly. Still this is the question as here presented. It is not pretended that the Assembly formally sanctioned the errors enumerated in this document. It countenanced and sustained them, by the erection of the Second Presbytery of Philadelphia, and by the refusal to consent to its dissolution. These are the acts, therefore, which are the grounds of complaint, and which the churches are called upon to disregard. The issue therefore is on a constitutional point of very minor importance.

Our second specific objection, then, to this Act and Testimony is, that it recommends a disregard of the regular authority of the church which we are bound to obey; and that the ground of this recommendation is, in our opinion, altogether insufficient. The consequence of adopting the proposed course, must be either

to divide the church on a constitutional question of little comparative moment, or to produce a state of the greatest confusion and difficulty. A third objection, and the only other of this kind we shall mention, is founded on the eighth and last recommendation, viz. "We do earnestly recommend, that on the second Thursday of May, 1835, a convention be held in the city of Pittsburg, to be composed of two delegates, a minister and ruling elder from each presbytery, or from the minority of any presbytery, who may concur in the sentiments of this act and testimony, to deliberate and consult on the present state of our church, and to adopt such measures as may be best suited to restore her prostrated standards." The objections to this recommendation are nearly the same urged against the one already considered. It is essentially a revolutionary proceeding. It is an appeal from the constitutional government, to the people in their primary bodies. When this is done, merely for the expression or formation of a public sentiment, which may exert its legitimate influence upon the regular authorities, there is no ground of complaint. Analogy is to be found to such a course in the public meetings and conventions under our civil government, which are perfectly consistent, both with the theory and regular action of our institutions. But the case before us is very different. A large meeting first declare certain acts unconstitutional and resolve not to submit to them. They invite others to join in this refusal and to send delegates to meet in general convention to adopt ulterior measures. They first take a step which brings them necessarily into collision with the government, and then call on all of like mind to unite with them. The analogy is so complete between this case and that which recently convulsed our whole country, and threatened the existence of our political institutions, that none can fail to perceive it. There can, therefore, be no invidiousness in making the allusion. An act of the general government was pronounced, by the people of one of the States, to be unconstitutional and consequently void. They deliberately resolved to refuse to submit to it. Whether this was right or wrong, it was regarded by the country as creating a necessity for one of two things; either that the act should be repealed, or the union dissolved by secession or war. It was indeed, in itself, a conditional dissolution of the union. The condition was the repeal of the offensive act. If this was refused, the union was at an end. When under these circumstances, the State in question proposed to call a convention of all who agreed with her in opinion as to the grievance complained of, did not every one regard the proposal as a step in advance, as a measure designed and adapted to make the breach more certain and serious. Of this there can be no doubt. Public sen-

timent was overwhelmingly against the wisdom and lawfulness of the course of this aggrieved member of our union. The remedy, as extra-constitutional and revolutionary, was deemed disproportioned to the malady. Yet it was on all hands admitted that there might be evils, which, being intolerable, would justify this dissolution of political society, and the disruption of all existing bonds of political duty and allegiance. So in the case before us, if the evils complained of are such as justify the dissolution of the church, and the disregard of the solemn obligations by which we have bound ourselves together, then the case is made out. The propriety of the Act and Testimony is vindicated. The point now before us, however, is, the true nature of its recommendations. We say they are extra-constitutional and revolutionary, and should be opposed by all those who do not believe that the crisis demands the dissolution of the church. If such a crisis be made out, or assumed, then all the rest is a mere question of the ways and means.

We do not believe that any such crisis exists. That there has been much disorder of various kinds within our bounds, that there has been a good deal of erroneous doctrine preached and published, and that many judicatories have been criminally remiss in matters of discipline, we do not doubt. These are evils with regard to which the churches should be instructed and warned, and every constitutional means be employed for their correction. But what we maintain is, that there has been no such corruption of doctrine or remissness in discipline as to justify the division of the church, and consequently all measures having that design and tendency are wrong and ought to be avoided.

To exhibit fully the grounds of this opinion, would require us to review the origin and progress of the present difficulties, and consequently render it necessary for us to enter into historical details too extensive for our limits, and inconsistent with our present object. We must therefore be contented with the remark, that the burden of proof rests on those who assert that such a crisis does exist. This proof has not yet been exhibited. Until it is, we can only say, that we do not believe there is any call for the extreme measures proposed in the Act and Testimony.

We believe, indeed, that there are a number of men in our church, who hold doctrinal opinions, which ought to have precluded their admission, and who should now be visited by regular ecclesiastical process. But we believe this number to be comparatively small. We have never doubted that there was serious ground of apprehension for the purity of our church.

Considering the ease with which men are introduced into our communion, who, not being brought up among us, know nothing, and care nothing about Presbyterianism, it is very evident that we must have a constant accession of unsound, and even hostile men, if our judicatories are not faithful to their vows. We have often wondered, indeed, at the facility with which decided Congregationalists, so born and educated, become Presbyterians. We rejoice to see that there is a general Congregational Association formed in the State of New York. Those brethren who really prefer the Congregational system, may now indulge that preference, instead of being forced to submit to the painful necessity of joining a church, with whose distinctive organization they are unacquainted, or to which they are unfriendly. This is the main evil, which it requires nothing but honesty on the part of the presbyteries effectually to prevent. We are happy in knowing that at least one case has occurred, in which a presbytery, where there is not to our knowledge, a single adherent of the *old school*, has deliberately, and almost unanimously refused to ordain a candidate who held the popular errors on depravity and regeneration. There are not wanting other decisive and cheering intimations that the portentous union between the New Divinity and the New Measures, which threatened to desolate the church, has, at least for the present, done its worst. The latter, but scarcely the lesser, of this firm of evils is, to all appearance, dead. Its course doubtless will be marked by melancholy memorials for generations. But as the great mass of the wisdom and piety of the country (we are speaking of the north and east) were found decidedly arrayed against it, we trust the church will be spared such another visitation. And even as to the other member of the firm, we hope the shout of victory from its advocates was rather a mistake. If we may credit what we hear, the novelty being over, the wonder is on the decline. It is said, that out of the immediate sphere of the origin of the theory, its friends are very few and very far between.

But let it be supposed that in all this we are mistaken, that the corruption in doctrine, and remissness in discipline, are far more extensive than we imagine. Let it even be admitted, that the General Assembly, after having long connived at alarming errors, has at length countenanced and sustained them. Let every thing be admitted which we have endeavoured to disprove. Still, the case of the Act and Testimony is not made out. The necessity or propriety of schism does not appear. Is Christ divided? If the head be one, should the body so easily be separated? Is not the visible union of the people of God, as



the expression of their spiritual union to each other and the Lord Jesus, a solemn obligation? To what a lamentable condition would the church be reduced, if on every occasion of disappointment or excitement, or even of serious mistake, injustice, or error, her members were to separate into distinct communions! We are not about to advocate a spurious liberality, or defend a spirit of compromise with remissness or error. We merely wish to state, that the division of a church of Jesus Christ is a very serious thing, expressly forbidden in the word of God,\* and only to be justified by the most obvious necessity.

What then constitutes a necessity for schism, and makes that crime a virtue? We venture to answer, that no man is at liberty to labour for a division of the church to which he belongs, unless he and others are called upon either to profess what they think erroneous, or to do what they think wrong. As the duty of preserving the unity of the church is obvious and admitted, the seceders must make out that they are free from this solemn obligation. But what can free them from the obligation of duty, but the interference of some stronger obligation? So long as the standards of any church remain unaltered, its members profess the same faith which they avowed when they joined it. I do not profess to hold or to teach what A. B. or C. may be known to believe, but I profess to believe the confession of faith of the church to which I belong. It matters not, therefore, so far as this point is concerned, how corrupt a portion, or even the majority, of the church may be, provided I am not called upon to profess their errors. Instead of my mere ecclesiastical connexion with them being a countenancing of their errors, it may give me the best opportunity of constantly testifying against them. Who have done so much to render conspicuous and odious the errors and unfaithfulness of the clergy at Geneva, as the orthodox and pious portion of their number? The individuals who previously seceded, left the body in quietness behind them, and lost in a great measure their ability both to promote the truth and to oppose error. As another illustration, let us refer to the church of Scotland. Every one knows the long controversy between the Orthodox and the Moderate parties in that body. Had Dr. Witherspoon, and the faithful men who acted with him, lifted the standard of division, what would have been the present state of that church? In all probability it would be little better than that of Geneva. All the resources of the body, all its institutions, its corporate existence and privileges, would have been basely (shall we say?) delivered up to the enemy as a contribution to his means of

\* 1 Cor. i. 10.

promoting and perpetuating error. By the faithful adherence of these men to their posts, after one defeat had followed another in rapid and long succession, the church has been saved. The pious and orthodox portion have gained the ascendancy, and are now shaking off the trammels of patronage and other antiquated corruptions, and wielding the whole of her resources for the advancement of the truth. Blessings will rest for ever on the memory of Witherspoon, because he was not a preacher of secession. If others in that land of our ecclesiastical fathers had been equally wise; if the numerous body of evangelical men split up into the sects of Burghers, Anti-Burghers, &c. were now united with their former brethren, what an army would they form! Would any one be so infatuated as to urge the pious and devoted members of the Protestant church in France to secede from their brethren, and give up their institutions at Strasburg and Montauban, to be perpetual nurseries of error? Or would any one counsel the orthodox Germans to forsake their stations on the plain, where they can meet their enemies on equal terms, and go down into the deep and narrow valley of dissent?

What has become of the Morristown Presbytery? What has become of the True Reformed Dutch Church, which not only seceded from their highly respectable and orthodox brethren, but had well nigh excommunicated them? How completely has the wave of oblivion blotted them out! They have disappeared from the visible ranks, at least, of the hosts of the church. Are they doing more good, or preventing more evil now, than in their former connexion? We think their example should serve at once as a warning to any who are disposed to secede from among us, and as a rebuke to those who appear anxious to precipitate a similar crisis in our church.

We cannot see, then, how any thing is to be gained, for the cause of truth, by secession; but we see how much will be lost. We shall gain no advantage in opposing error; but only lose our facilities for promoting truth. Instead of manifesting fidelity to the cause of the Redeemer, we shall deliver up the post committed to our keeping. Until, therefore, the standards of the church are altered, or its members are in some way called upon to profess error, or to do wrong, their motto should be, "STAND FAST; HAVING ON THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD."

We have now performed a painful, though, as we think, an imperative duty. We have come out openly against brethren in whose doctrinal views we coincide, whose persons we love, whose character and motives we respect, with whom we have ever been associated, and fondly hope ever to continue united. The grounds on which we have felt constrained to bear this testimony, may be very briefly stated.

As we have already said, it is at all times the privilege, and often the duty, of the members of a community, to spread their views on important practical subjects before their fellow members. How constantly is this done in political matters. If such be the privilege of every individual, it is especially incumbent on those who are connected with the periodical press. The very end and object of that press is the diffusion of practical knowledge, and the discussion of important points of truth and duty. We confess, however, that we have had other motives for the course which has been taken. We, in common with that large class of our brethren who do not belong to the number against whom the Testimony is directed, and yet have not joined in the act, have felt annoyed by the urgency which has been used to obtain signatures, and the serious censure lavished on those who refuse their names. It was necessary, as a matter of self vindication, that the grounds of this refusal should be publicly stated. It should be known, that it was not fear for the consequences of the act, nor insensibility to the evils complained of, but disapprobation of the nature and tendency of the measure. It is with a sincere desire to cooperate in the prevention of the evils, which we think must ensue from the prosecution of the course proposed, that we have lifted up our voice against it. Let the facts and reasons here presented pass for what they are worth. Let brethren give them a candid consideration. Let them ask themselves, if when, as they suppose, error and disorder are coming in like a flood, they should turn their backs on the enemy, and leave a weakened and discouraged remnant to continue the battle. What if they are defeated, not once or twice, but many times? Constancy and truth always ultimately prevail. Let us only be careful that it is for truth we struggle, and that our weapons are not carnal, but spiritual; and there is no ground for apprehension. In every church there are fluctuations. Sometimes truth and piety predominate, at others, error and irreligion. When darkest, it is nearest light. In a church like ours, we think, there is no excuse for abandoning the regular constitutional methods of proceeding. Every man can free himself from responsibility for the errors of his brethren, if he cannot have them corrected. He has all the means that others have to secure predominance for his own views, and if they are correct, he may confidently hope for their success. Let but the friends of truth be humble, prayerful, faithful and active; let them adhere to each other and to the church, and then, whether in the majority or minority for the time being, they will be most effectually serving their Master and his cause.

THE  
BIBLICAL REPERTORY.

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JANUARY, 1835.

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No. 1.

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*Archibald Alexander*

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

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

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

*Charles Hodge*ART. VII.—*Act and Testimony.* No. II.

SOON after the publication of the last number of the *Repertory*, we received a letter from the author of the first draft of the *Act and Testimony*, inquiring whether we would admit a defence of that document. We promptly answered that letter in the affirmative. After the defence was prepared, it appeared to its author desirable to have it presented to the public, at an earlier period than the regular time for the publication of this work. This, and perhaps some other considerations, decided him to have it printed in the columns of the *Presbyterian*. We have hesitated a long time whether it was expedient for us to take any formal notice of this paper, and have at last concluded not to allow it to pass entirely unnoticed. It is true this defence does not purport to be an answer to the article on the *Act and Testimony*, in our last number, and perhaps was not designed to be considered exactly in that light. Still every one of the objections stated in our article are taken up, and, if not answered, are commented upon, and declared to be of no account. This and other more formal refutations have been pronounced triumphant; the *Act and Testimony* is said now to stand forth fully vindicated; or, to use the figure employed, to lift itself up as the enduring rock in the ocean defying all assault. If this is so, it becomes us and all other dissentients to acknowledge the fact, to withdraw all opposition to the measure, and to join in cheering on the great movement in contemplation. We should either do this, or show cause, if any we have, why we remain unconvinced. We view this as a very serious matter; as the most ominous occurrence within our church for a long series of years. It is either nobly right, or ruinously wrong. And it becomes every man to know which; and to be fully conscious of the grounds of his opinion. This being the case, it may be excused in the conductors of a work devoted to the promotion of truth and order, according to the standards of our church, if they depart in some measure from a rule which they have endeavoured generally to observe; that is, not to discuss in their pages questions of policy which may be agitating the church. This however is not an ordinary occasion, nor is this a party question. A measure is proposed and urged which contemplates great results; which all the friends of truth and order are required to aid, or to forfeit the confi-

dence of the churches; with regard to which no man is allowed to be neutral; which its friends pronounce the last hope of the church, and its opposers as obviously ruinous. Surely, then, those who take one or the other side on such a question, should be allowed to say why they take the one and not the other. And especially those who are all but excommunicated for their dissent, may be permitted to show that it is not groundless; that it is no want of zeal or courage, but strong conviction of duty which influences their conduct. The principles involved in this question are of permanent interest and importance, and therefore raise it very far above the ordinary questions of passing strife. This being the case, we regret very much any thing adapted to give the discussion of this subject a personal cast. On this account we were very sorry to see the author of the paper called the *Act and Testimony*, undertaking its vindication in his own name, as though the authorship of the document had any thing to do with its wisdom or propriety. This course seems to us entirely uncalled for. We are not aware that the measure has been either recommended or decried on account of the author.\* And even if it had, such a ground of recommendation or censure, could have no influence with any sensible man, and should therefore have been disregarded. The writer says, "He sees not how he can be silent, whether reference be had to his own character, to the mighty interests involved, or to the great respectability of some of those who have made the origin of this paper a fact of some importance in determining their action in regard to it. He believes he has a right to complain, of the indelicacy of some of those with whom he usually acted, and of a still worse feeling on the part of many openly opposed to him and to the truth, who have, in numberless ways, implicated him in discussions which should have proceeded on grounds unspeakably more elevated and enduring." All this is new to us. We did not know that there was any person of great or little respectability, weak enough to make the origin of the paper a fact of some importance in determining their action in regard to it. It is obviously as much a matter of indifference who wrote the *Act and Testimony*, as who wrote the *Minutes of the Assembly*. The document, from the nature of the

\* The only thing of this kind that we have seen, is the coarse assault on the writer, quoted with just reprehension in the *Presbyterian* from the *Philadelphian*, which of course needed no answer:

case, derives no part of its importance from its author. His signature gives it his sanction, and this is given by the signature of all others who have adopted it. The responsibility of the drafter is not a whit greater than that of any other signer. It is in fact so perfectly absurd, that a man should give or withhold his name from such a document, because penned by one person rather than another, that we can hardly persuade ourselves that the gentleman is not entirely mistaken on this point. At any rate, it is so insignificant, it should have been disregarded; and certainly created no adequate call for the personal appearance of the drafter. How "his character," more than that of any of his associates, is implicated in this business, we are at a loss to conceive. There is a sentence connected with this subject, which we are not sure we understand. After complaining of not being allowed to occupy his humble position in the ranks of those who had, by adopting it, made the Act and Testimony their own, he says, "Henceforth no one had a right to call it his, or to brand it with a doubtful or unworthy paternity: least of all had any friend the right to follow its reputed author to his privacy, (and there 'condemn with faint praise' both his work and himself,) after the manner that the possessed girl at Philippi followed the apostles of the Lord." What the point of comparison is, in this illustration, is not very clear. But who is this friend, who followed the author to his privacy, and there condemned both him and his work with faint praise? Can it be ourselves? Friends of the author we surely are, and gladly recognise the relation—but can he think himself authorized to complain of our "indelucacy" for any thing said in our last number? Is it faint praise to say, "It is impossible for any man to read this document, without being deeply impressed with respect for its authors. It is pervaded by a tone of solemn earnestness, which carries to every heart the conviction of their sincerity, and of their sense of the importance as well as the truth of the sentiments which they advance. The fear of God, reverence for his truth, and love for his church, seem clearly to have presided over the composition of this important document." We know no higher praise than this. Again, "We have already said, and said sincerely, that it is impossible to read this Testimony without being deeply impressed by the seriousness of its tone, the weight and truth of the great part of its sentiments, and the decided ability and skill with which it is

drawn up. It evinces in every line the hand of a man accustomed to legal precision and accuracy of phrase." This is the only passage in which, to the best of our recollection, the author is referred to as an individual, we constantly used the plural form, "its authors," when referring to its origin, and always respectfully. The expression "legal precision" is the only one which contains the slightest personal allusion; an allusion so slight and in a context so commendatory, that we fear we are doing the writer great injustice in supposing that these passages could be the foundation of a charge of "indelicacy," and the complaint of faint praise. However this may be, we regret very much the appearance of the writer in his own name, as though this was in any form or degree a personal concern. Names ought not to be mixed up with matters which can be properly decided only by reference to great important principles. On this account we were very sorry to see, according to the report of his remarks in the public papers, that this gentleman, who seems to dislike so much any allusion to himself, referred in debate on the floor of a large ecclesiastical body, by name, to one individual, as the author of a remark in private conversation, relative to the prevalence of heresy in the church—and which, by the way, that individual never made; to another, as the author of a certain presbyterial document; and to a third, as the writer of an anonymous paper in a periodical Review. All this is wrong. It destroys the confidence of social intercourse, it destroys the peculiar character of a document emanating from a public body or private association of men, and it introduces feelings and considerations entirely foreign to the point to be decided.

A second feature in this Defence, which we think worthy of animadversion, is the tone of confidence and superiority by which it is pervaded. It is very well for every man to be fully persuaded in his own mind; but there is no necessity, and sometimes no propriety, in placing himself and associates so far above all others. We cannot, in the present instance, perceive any good reason for the writer speaking of himself and fellow-signers of the Act and Testimony, as though they alone were men of real courage—"the most faithful followers" of God,—called to act amidst "the scorn of opposers and trembling of friends;" while those who dissent from their measures are represented as cowards, as the *vis inertix* of the church, &c. &c. This spirit runs through the whole defence, and cannot be ade-



quately presented by the quotation of detached phrases. The exercise of this feeling may be very pleasant, but its exhibition is very unbecoming, and not very agreeable to those who do not happen to belong to the most faithful few. The dissentients are not to be cast into one body—nor are they, indeed, by the writer—but even the class which he designates as trembling friends—as the *vis inertię*—the “brothers of charity”!—are not disposed to admit that they are so very timid. Wait until they refuse to act up to their own principles, or violate their own sense of duty for the sake of any unworthy end, before you denounce them. We cannot see the propriety of condemning one set of men for timidity, in not acting upon the principles of another—when the wisdom of those principles is the very point in debate. We think the whole strain of the Defence in the particular just referred to, unfortunate. There is no occasion for assuming that the original authors of the Act and Testimony were actuated by the spirit of heroes and martyrs, because the occasion did not call for it. “While the same sense of inability,” says the author, “which would have shrunk from the preparation of this important paper, makes the present duty of defending it oppressive; yet the same confidence in God, and the same readiness to lose all things rather than his favour, which sustained our fainting hearts in the dark hour of trial, which preceded and attended the issuing of the Act and Testimony, amid the scorn of our opposers and the trembling of our friends, will not now forsake us, when he whose best occasion to aid us is in the greatest extremity of our affairs, has led us gloriously forth in the face of his enemies, setting our feet in large places, and giving us favour in the eyes of his most faithful followers.” This language appears too strong. We can perceive nothing so very trying in the circumstances of the case. We are rather disposed to applaud those, whom the writer would designate as trembling friends, for not allowing themselves to be carried away by the impulse of zeal and heroism, which animated those around them, and which of all things is the most catching. The feeling which gave rise to the sentence just quoted, runs through the defence—and leads the author to present himself and associates as a noble heroic band, determined to reform the church or to perish in the attempt, and of consequence to regard all others as either enemies or unfaithful friends; unfaithful to the cause of truth and God. This they feel to be unjust.

They claim to be tried by some other standard than adhesion to the Act and Testimony. They profess to be as sincerely, and, it may be, as boldly attached to the church to which they belong, and to its doctrines and discipline, as the foremost of those who decry all who stand aloof from their present proceedings. It should be remarked, that all the questioning of motives, all the assumption of excellence, all the imputation of cowardice, trimming, and unfaithfulness, are upon one side, in this discussion. We, at least, so far from either questioning or condemning the motives of the authors and signers of the Act and Testimony, have from the first, and openly, given them full credit for purity of purpose and elevation of object. We have acknowledged their worth, and fidelity. We question nothing but the wisdom of their present movement, and their right to denounce those who differ from them, as abettors of heresy, as unfaithful and cowardly, as "brothers of charity" who love ease more than truth or duty. We question the propriety of such denunciations, and the good taste of those who pick up any cant phrases, or nick-names, which may be voided in debate by some unfortunate dyspeptic, and endeavour to affix it to a large and respectable class of their fellow Christians and brother ministers. What good feeling such a course can gratify, or what good object it can attain, we are at a loss to conceive.

Thirdly. We are constrained to say that, after all that is said in this defence, and in more formal refutations, our objections to the Act and Testimony remain precisely where they were before. We cannot honestly say that they appear to us to be even obscured. There they are, worth little or much, unanswered, and unclouded. With regard to some points, every thing is admitted; with regard to others, this writer and others, content themselves with a simple and easy denial—and in respect to others, they seem to have escaped notice, or to have been passed over as not deserving it. We must endeavour in a few words to make good what we have now said.

The objections urged against the Act and Testimony, not merely in this Review, but from various portions of the church, are resolvable into these three. First, That it is not what it professes to be, a Testimony, but a test, designed to ascertain the number and strength of the friends of certain views and measures, and to organize them into a body capable of separate and combined actions. Secondly, That,

admitting the necessity of the extreme remedy thus proposed, this document was unfit to be adopted as such a test, because it contained statements of facts and recommendation of measures, which it was not to be expected all those who agreed in every essential point of doctrine and discipline, could sign. And consequently a paper which was designed to unite all, by failing of this object, must necessarily, if pressed to its result, divide the body which it proposed to unite. Thirdly, That the *modus operandi* of this wonderful document has never been explained. It is asserted that it "will reform the church," but how it is to effect this desirable object has never been made to appear. It is like mustering an army for a night attack. No one knows whither he is going, although there is abundance of noise and martial array. We humbly ask, have these objections been ever plausibly answered? They are objections which it requires no great ingenuity to detect, or clearness to prevent, but which demand more strength or labour than has yet been expended on them, to remove out of the way.

With regard to the first, it is not denied. It is even exultingly admitted and tauntingly affirmed. "Brethren were not alike," the writer says; "and therefore to quiet a distrust nearly universal, we devised a plan which put an end to distrust, by revealing the precise naked truth; a plan, which as it regards himself merely, no man of integrity ought to object to for one moment. It may be very painful to submit to a general search; but he who refuses to do it, must be utterly above suspicion, or he thereby greatly confirms it; and he who, while he refuses, acknowledges that he had been often suspected before, establishes at once guilt and folly. Hence, all that is said about our having established an odious test can excite nothing beyond a smile in men of reflexion.(!) The truth is, every bond of union, of whatever kind, is necessarily a test at first, and just in proportion as it answers the ends of a thorough test (call it odious, if it so please you,) will it fulfil the design of a perfect bond of union." We are glad to have this undisguised avowal of this feature of the plan from one who has so much right to speak with authority on the subject. It will be received with surprise, no doubt, by a large number of the Act and Testimony. We know that many of these brethren considered themselves as joining their testimony with that of others, against certain errors and disorders prevalent in the church. They never supposed they were instituting "a

general search, or adopting a plan which would force them to denounce (calumniate) as heretical, all who, for any reason should think fit to decline submission to the operation. It has commonly been supposed that the application of such tests should be made by competent authorities alone; that it was neither expedient nor proper for any individual, or set of individuals, of their own accord, to commence a general search and prescribe exactly what should, and should not be allowed to pass. It is too clear to need illustration, that the proceeding is essentially different from the mere declaration on the part of any number of men of their own opinions in the form of a Testimony for or against particular doctrines or measures. This latter course may be taken without offence or injury by any man or body of men on any subject or occasion; but the former no man or body of men has a right to take, except in those extreme cases which set all ordinary rules at defiance, and which justify a recurrence to measures in their nature revolutionary. We said in our last number, that no one could have felt any disposition to object to the publication of the Act and Testimony, had it not been for the requisition of a general signing, which necessarily changed its whole character, and converted it from a testimony into a test. To this it has been answered, and called a refutation, that "if it was right for ten, twenty, or a hundred to sign and issue this document, it must be right for any other number—How can the mere number of the signers alter the case?" It is admitted that an individual has a right to address others on subjects affecting the interests of the church, and that he has a right to solicit the concurrence of others. "The precise point," says the Presbyterian, "at which this admitted and unquestionable right is transformed into an unauthorized assumption, we cannot perceive, except it may be, at the moment when these individuals assert their right under their own signatures. The sum of the argument appears to be this,—that which is right when exercised by unknown persons, becomes an assumption when exercised by persons well known. As the writer intimates, if the framers of the document had signed it by their chairman and secretary, it might have been 'useful, or at least harmless,' but the moment they reject the proxy and give their own signatures, the document 'becomes fraught with injustice, discord and division.' All this sounds to us surpassingly strange."\* No wonder. It must

\* PRESBYTERIAN for Oct. 23, 1834.

sound strange to any one to hear such a statement attributed to any sane man as an argument. We must stand exceedingly low in the estimation of the writer of the above sentence, if he really supposes us to have reasoned in the manner stated; if the sum of our argument is, that if the framers of the Act and Testimony had signed it by their chairman and secretary all would have been right, but putting their own names to it makes it very dreadful. Happily for us, however, he had just before quoted our language, so that the reader may have his own opinion as to the correctness of his apprehension of our meaning. We had said, it was calling for a general "signing of this document as a test of orthodoxy, which at once altered its whole nature and design."

Cannot the writer see the difference? It is evident that his desire to have a fling at the supposed timidity of "trembling friends," who would be satisfied beneath the concealment of a proxy, but dared not venture into open view, has betrayed him into a statement of our argument, which makes it so weak as to be ridiculous. For the sake of proving us cowards, he will even make us idiots. We should not think this worthy of a single remark, if we did not know that there are some men, and they too high in character and office, who never having read the article in the *Repertory*, and deriving all their knowledge of its arguments from this refutation, pronounce with great decision on its character. Our only wonder is, that the editor of the *Presbyterian* should have thought such arguments as he makes ours to be, worthy of a square in the last column of the last page of his valuable paper. They might safely have been left to die of inward weakness.

For the sake of those who may need it, we will endeavour to make a plain case still plainer. No one, we presume, has ever questioned Dr. Miller's right to address his letters to Presbyterians. These letters contain an exhibition of his views on a variety of interesting subjects: voluntary associations, ecclesiastical organizations, revivals of religion, and new measures, errors in doctrine, and disorders in discipline. They abound in counsels to his brethren and children in the ministry, and earnest recommendations as to the course, which, in his opinion, they ought to pursue. There is nothing in all this which the humblest member of our church might not, without arrogance or evil, have performed; and which, coming from one so ex-

perienced, so universally known, could not be otherwise received than with the kindest feelings. But suppose Dr. Miller had drawn up and issued a paper containing his views on all the subjects just mentioned, and his advice on all the points of duty contemplated, and called upon every friend of the church, every man who had the courage to avow his sentiments, or who was not a secret heretic or revolutionist, to sanction his views and adopt his recommendations, by affixing to them their names, what would have been thought of it? Would this course be identical with the one which he actually pursued? Would not, on the contrary, the public mind have been revolted from the presumptuous arrogance of the proceeding, and pronounced it at once adapted to divide, rather than to unite; to produce discord instead of harmony? The arrogance of such a measure is diminished, indeed, in proportion to the age and general claims to respect of the individual from whom it proceeds, or the number and weight of those who may set it in motion; but to say there is no difference between issuing a declaration, and calling for the general adoption of a long paper abounding with statements of facts, opinions, and recommendations, needs no contradiction. We do not hesitate, therefore, to repeat that it was an unwarrantable and arrogant assumption on the part of the original framers of the Act and Testimony, to put it forth as demanding the concurrence of all the "real followers of Christ" in our church; an assumption which is not palliated or excused by the pressure of the necessity, nor by the unexceptionable character of the document itself. On both these grounds it is utterly indefensible. There is no necessity or call for these extra-constitutional and revolutionary measures of reform. The church is pronounced "substantially sound," by the highest authority on this point.\* Then where is the danger of leaving it to the natural and healthful action of our system? Is Presbyterianism a failure? Are all the constitutional methods of redress and reform of our much vaunted platform of doctrine and discipline proved to be worthless? Must recourse be had to measures which the constitution never contemplated, and can never sanction? Are these brethren aware that they are making our church government a reproach throughout the land? And justly too, if their inca-

\* PRESBYTERIAN for December 18, 1834.

tures are either wise or necessary. Is it not the language of their whole course, that a difficulty has arisen which the constitution cannot master—which no presbyterial, synodical, or General Assembly action can reach; but which demands the combination, under a new standard and test, of all sound men, and their convocation in a separate body? All this in a church “substantially sound”! What then is Presbyterianism worth? No enemies are so much to be dreaded as over-zealous friends. We do not doubt that the men who consider themselves as the exclusively faithful few, and who cast off all others, are doing more than they can well estimate, to weaken our form of government in the confidence and affection of our own members, and in the respect of the Christian community.

We repeat with increasing confidence, that this document is not what it purports to be. It is not an Act and Testimony. It is not a declaration of opinion as to certain errors and abuses, and recommendation for their correction. Such were Dr. Miller’s letters, such were the pastoral letters and public declarations of the Presbyteries of Albany, New York, New Brunswick, and others, and of the Synods of Pittsburg and Kentucky. Against these and similar declarations, who has raised, or feels disposed to raise the slightest whisper of complaint? But had either of these bodies called on all others to adopt their paper, or be spurned at as unsound or unfaithful, the complaint would have been loud and just. It is admitted then by its advocates, that this document is a test. “So far as the Act and Testimony will *try* the state of opinion in the church, we have no objection that it should be called a test act,” says the Presbyterian. “But the test should be alarming only to errorists. That it may become offensive to others, arises from the anomalous fact, that there is a party in the church, which professing orthodoxy, opposes orthodox measures. And while it denounces error, casts its protecting shield over errorists. That it should place this party in a dilemma, is unjustly placed to its account, as a fault.” There you have it, in plain English. The Act and Testimony is offensive to errorists and the abettors of errorists alone. Here are the three parties in the church, according to the modest statement of these brethren. Themselves the only faithful ones—the heretics, and those who defend and protect them. If this classification be adapted to promote harmony and confidence, if this, the appropriate working of the misnamed Act

and Testimony, be not adapted to alienate and offend, we are ignorant of the human heart. This assertion is made in face of the fact, that not one-sixth of the ministers in a church admitted to be substantially sound, have signed the document in question, and so far as is yet known, only one solitary synod out of the whole two-and-twenty, has lent it its sanction!

As there is no exigency to call for, or to justify, the extraordinary measure under consideration, so, did such exigency actually exist, this document is not adapted for the purpose designed. This was the second general objection to the Act and Testimony; and how has it been answered? It will scarcely be denied, that where men are called upon to affix their signature to a document containing statements of facts, declarations of opinion, and urgent recommendations, they must have good evidence that these facts are true, these opinions correct, and these recommendations wise. The obligation to be satisfied on these points is great in proportion to the importance of the declarations which they are called upon to sanction. In this view we stated that the Act and Testimony was not adapted for general signature as a test of orthodoxy. It contained assertions implicating the character not of individuals only, but of the highest judicatory of the church, which no conscientious man could sign without believing to be true, or believe to be true, but on the exhibition of the most satisfactory evidence. In reference to this point the writer of the defence pursues a most extraordinary course. He, in the first place, in a great measure confounds two very different things, the existence of errors in the church, and the charge that the General Assembly, after having long connived at these alarming errors, has at length countenanced and sustained them. The former of these positions may be true, and the other not so. Evidence therefore in favour of the one, is not evidence in favour of the other. In the second place he assumes the strange position, that personal knowledge of the fact asserted is not necessary to justify an individual in making it. After saying that the Jewish law required two witnesses to establish a fact, that Christ chose only twelve apostles to bear witness to what he said and did, he says that there are now about fifteen hundred men, who having signed the Act and Testimony, bear testimony to the truth of its allegations in the very form in which they are made, which are thereby proven beyond dispute.



This is very extraordinary reasoning. The objection is that we have not evidence to justify us in testifying to a specific fact. The answer is, that fifteen hundred men have testified to it, and therefore others may. Others do. And then the number of witnesses is so much the greater. Thus it may go on, and two thousand or two hundred thousand witnesses might all sign upon the original personal faith of the first two individuals; and yet the whole be brought forward as a great cloud of witnesses. What is it to my conscience when called upon to testify to a fact, that another man believes it to be true? Unless I have personal knowledge of the fact what is my testimony worth? Or how can it be honestly given? If we understand the writer, he would have us believe all the allegations of the *Act and Testimony*, because the signers assert them to be true; and not only believe them, but on the ground of the testimony of these signers, affix our own names to the list. We surely think that a man ought to know for himself that what he testifies is correct, and not be contented thus to go shares in the faith of others.

There is another obvious fallacy in this statement. The assertions complained of are founded on opinion. They consist in the ascription of motives, and from the nature of the case, are not susceptible of proof by testimony. We would readily believe the assertion of any two, or any one of the signers of the *Act and Testimony* as to a plain matter of fact within his knowledge; and yet we do not believe the whole fifteen hundred when making the assertions contained in the *Act and Testimony*. That is, we do not agree with them in opinion. They put construction on certain acts which we think they will not bear; and ascribe motives to men, which we do not believe influenced their conduct. There being fifteen hundred, or fifteen thousand men, who think differently, cannot alter the case, or present the slightest rational foundation for the change of our opinion, much less for joining in their assertion. To present these numerous signers, therefore, as witnesses to the facts, thus involving matters of opinion, and founded on particular construction of certain acts, asserted in the *Act and Testimony*, is a mere fallacy, "which can excite nothing beyond a smile in men of reflexion." The number and character of the signers of this document, therefore, afford no relief to the difficulty. When I am called upon to testify to all the world the solemn fact, that the highest judicatory of the church has be-

come corrupt, that it has deliberately countenanced and sustained alarming errors; errors which are pronounced to be radical, affecting the very foundations of religion, I must have some better evidence of the truth of the charge than that such is the construction put upon certain of their acts by a number of good and respectable men. Some of the most offensive of these acts were proposed, or carried through, by men who have ever stood, and do now stand, high in the respect of the churches, for some of whom, at least, the writer of the Defence professes almost unabated confidence, and who have frequently, and of late, denounced these very errors, which the signers of the Act and Testimony are made solemnly to affirm before God and the world that they countenance and sustain. This charge was designed beyond doubt to impute the sin of deliberate and intentional countenancing of the evils in question; for this is the only construction the language will bear, and the only thing that could be the ground of complaint. Accordingly, the writer of the Defence says, that the doings of the Assembly for four years “had strongly set in such a way as to make heresy respectable, to make it secure, to make it praiseworthy, to organize it, to protect it,—and finally, to engraft it in a permanent establishment as a part of our organization.” On the other hand, these doings tended to bring the truth into disrepute, &c. &c. “And these truths,” he adds, “the very doctrines of grace, and these errors, the very errors condemned in the Act and Testimony.” In another paragraph, he says, “that the urgent motive for the exertion of the new Presbytery of Philadelphia, was the protection of these errors on doctrine and discipline.” That Presbytery is declared to be in a great measure unsound, and the Assembly, it is said, “is believed to have taken it into special favour for that very reason.” The principal acts thus complained of as evidence of the corruption of the Assembly, and which are said to have arisen from the desire to protect the errors condemned in the Act and Testimony, were sustained and advocated by men who abhor those errors, who have openly and solemnly testified against them, and who have some right to have their solemn affirmations with regard to their motives and designs believed. Yet these, and other men, the signers of the Act and Testimony, are made, blind the matter as you please, to declare and certify over their own signatures, deliberately countenanced and sustained them. We venture with all deference

to repeat that such a paper is not exactly the one which ought to be submitted to the churches for universal signature as a test of orthodoxy and bond of union. We do not believe that one-fourth of the Assembly was actuated by any deliberate purpose to countenance the errors condemned by the Act and Testimony, and we are very glad the responsibility does not rest on our conscience of having affirmed the contrary.

A second consideration urged as a reason why the Act and Testimony is not adapted to be received as a test, was, that it recommends that the existence and acts of certain Presbyteries be considered as unconstitutional and void. The grounds of objection to this recommendation were, 1st. That it is inconsistent with the obedience promised and due to the General Assembly. 2. That it must necessarily produce the greatest confusion in the church, by organizing two sets of ministers, judicatories, and churches not recognizing each others ecclesiastical existence or acts. We have heard it gravely said by a member of the First Presbytery of Philadelphia, that he did not consider the pastor of the Walnut street congregation as a Presbyterian minister—or as the pastor of that church, or any of his acts as such ecclesiastically valid. 3d. That this measure is on the face of it extra-constitutional and revolutionary, and that its direct tendency, if not its design, is to divide the church. It was argued that a document containing recommendations of such serious consequences, and of such doubtful wisdom is not fit to be a test act, and a bond of union among the orthodox. It was supposed that some very good and very sound men, might have scruples about recommending such measures as these, who should not, on that account, have their names cast out as evil.

The only answer we can find to these objections, appears to us to amount to an admission of their validity, but a denial of their importance. The Presbyterian says, in reference to this point, "We answer, that no conscientious man has pledged a blind and unintelligent obedience; the pledge is given to the constitution; and obedience may be righteously withheld where there is a manifest infringement of the letter and spirit of the instrument, &c." He afterwards says, That every man living under the constitution has a right to judge whether it is rightly interpreted or not, and in case of infringement, it is his right and duty to resist. The Defender takes the same ground. He argues, that be-

cause the Assembly is a delegated body of limited powers, created by the Presbyteries which are composed of elders and pastors elected by the people, all power is ultimately vested in the people. And therefore to the people it is right to appeal. "So that God's people are the ultimate tribunal upon earth," is his conclusion, "and there we have lodged our appeal. And let him who fears to meet us there, know assuredly that his cause is rotten." It requires but little reflection on the part of the reader to perceive, that there is nothing in all this inconsistent with any thing he had said. It was readily and clearly admitted that the Assembly, being a body acting under a constitution, was bound to obey it, and when in any case the constitution was infringed, the question was of course presented whether resistance was not a duty. That there were cases, on the one hand, of such minor importance, that for every individual who might doubt or disbelieve the constitutionality of the acts in question, to refuse acquiescence, would be both unwise and wicked; and on the other, there were cases in which the unconstitutionality was so apparent, and the importance so manifest, that resistance becomes a duty as obvious as it is imperative. If illustration of so plain a point be necessary, let it be supposed that congress should enact a law requiring every man in the country, under severe penalties, to attend mass once a week. There is not an individual in the land who would not laugh such a law to scorn. But does it follow from hence, that any man who chooses may openly refuse obedience himself, endeavour to combine others in resisting a law creating a bank, imposing a tariff, or directing an internal improvement? These gentlemen are abundant in proving what no one denies, but are profoundly silent as to the only point in debate. No one pretends that the Assembly is omnipotent, nor that its acts may not be such as to make resistance the most obvious of duties—but the question is, are the acts creating the Second Presbytery of Philadelphia, and the Synod of Delaware, such acts? Are they so obviously unconstitutional, and so vitally important, as to call for a resistance which renders, and is designed to render, the division of the church, or the annulling of those acts inevitable? This is the question—and on this point we have not a slip of argument, nothing beyond declamatory assertion. Let it be borne in mind that this question is to be decided from the nature of the acts in question—apart from the motives which lead to their adoption. These motives

cannot be ascertained, they were very various, different in different individuals, some good and others bad. The motives, therefore, cannot properly be the ground of resistance. One man may vote for a tariff in congress for the sake of the revenue, another to promote a particular home manufacture, another to advance the interests of a political favourite, another to secure his own re-election—how then, is the constitutionality of the act to be determined by the motives of the legislators unless these motives be avowed? It will not do, therefore, to say that the acts creating the bodies just mentioned were designed to protect heresy and heretics, and therefore ought to be resisted. This design is denied, and cannot be proved. The motives and objects of those who voted for these acts were doubtless very numerous and various. Some of them of purest and most elevated kind, and others of the very opposite character. In such a case, it is vain to make the motives the ground of resistance. It is the nature of the act. The creation of such bodies by the Assembly, and on the ground of elective affinity. It matters not as to the point in hand, whether the protection of truth, or the security of error, or the peace of the church, had most weight in producing the decision. Some doubtless were influenced by one, and some the others of these motives. The question, therefore, presented by the Act and Testimony to the churches is, whether the creation of ecclesiastical bodies without other than geographical limits, is a sufficient reason for the open and organized resistance to the Assembly designed to necessitate the retraction of the offensive acts, or the division of the church? Instead of saying this is the question which the Act and Testimony submits, we should rather say that this is the question which it decides in the affirmative. Every signer of that document is made to declare that this is a point of such importance as to call for open and organized rebellion—the disruption of all ecclesiastical bonds, and the separation of our beloved church. We say again that a document which takes this ground, and earnestly recommends this course, is not fit to be a test of orthodoxy, and a bond of union between the real followers of Christ in the Presbyterian church.

It should be noticed that the correctness of the representation made in the Repertory of the character of this recommendation is not denied. It is admitted to be a case of resistance to the regular authority in the church; it is de-

clared to be an appeal from the Assembly to the people; it is on the face of it extra-constitutional and revolutionary. The ground of defence is not that the course proposed is one of the regular and constitutional modes of redress, but the urgency and importance of the case. A case in which obedience is not due, but organized resistance, be the consequences what they may, a duty. Let then those who think the abstract constitutional principle involved in this question, one on which such interests depend as to call for the measure proposed, sign the recommendation, but let not those who think differently be on that account denounced and rejected.

We have more than once remarked that this recommendation was designed to necessitate either the annulling of the acts of the Assembly complained of, or the division of the church. It was designed to make a case from which there could be no escape; to assume such a position as would produce a state of confusion and difficulty perfectly intolerable, in order that the Assembly should be forced either to retract or submit to have the church divided. We are authorized in making this remark—1. Because such is obviously the tendency of the measure in question. 2. Because such is almost, in so many words, the avowal of the document itself.\* 3. Because such we have repeatedly understood from its friends and advocates was the purpose which they had in view. 4. And because the author declared upon the floor of Synod, that such was not only the design which its framers had in view, but which they stood solemnly pledged to see accomplished. “The Act and Testimony,” he said, “would restore the purity of the church. It was a covenant which would either exclude those from the church who were unsound, and restore peace, or restore its advocates. One party must be cut off. Either the old or the new school must be excluded; and until such a result is had, the friends of the Act and Testimony stand pledged to each other never to rest, but adhere firmly, manfully, and temperately to the stand taken, and the gates of hell would not prevail against them.”

There may be some inaccuracy in the language of this report, but the sentiments are so accordant with the spirit

\* “If the majority of our church are against us, they will, we suppose in the end, either see the infatuation of their course, and retrace their steps, or they will, at last, attempt to cut us off.”

and tendency of the document in question, that we cannot doubt its substantial correctness. Whether all the signers of the Act and Testimony have contemplated it in this light or not, we cannot presume to say; but they certainly have been led to put their hand to a recommendation which demands a concession which it is almost beyond the bounds of possibility should be granted as the only alternative to a division of the church.

The third specific objection to the Act and Testimony was founded on the recommendation of the convention at Pittsburg. The grounds on which this measure was considered inexpedient, are nearly the same as those presented in reference to the preceding point. There are many other weighty considerations which might be urged against the convocation of such an assembly under such circumstances, but this subject has already been referred to in a previous article. We have been informed that many highly respectable brethren of the west have, to use the language of the Presbytery of Ohio, *acquiesced* in the holding of this convention, on the principle that if it is to be held, it is desirable that as many moderate men, friends of order as well as orthodoxy, of union as well as purity, should attend. By so doing, however, they are sanctioning the principle of appeal, from the regular and authorized tribunals of the church, to the people in their primary assemblies—a principle which must lead to strife and division. We verily believe, if that convention were attended by those only who enter heartily into the spirit of those who suggested the measure, it would prove to be so small an affair, that the failure would administer a most salutary lesson. What that convention is to do, the author of the scheme seems himself at a loss to determine. The plan, as at first marked out and understood, was sufficiently intelligible. The Act and Testimony was to ascertain and to combine all the really sound members of the church. These were to meet by their delegates at Pittsburg, and propose to the Assembly the alternative of submission or division. This was a plain, obvious and sensible plan. Such, we gave the actors in this scheme the credit of supposing, they designed it to be. But it seems there is nothing now very definite for this convention to do. There are indeed two subjects suggested by the writer, which may profitably employ their time. The first is, “the formation of some new Act and Testimony, that all the followers of Jesus Christ in our church can cordially

adopt; and which yet, like the refiner's fire, separate the dross from the gold; a plan that will unite all the orthodox and separate all the heterodox." "The Act and Testimony was designed to be, itself, or to lead to the formation of such a thing." We have here a clear statement of the design of the Act and Testimony, which, as we understand it, was to unite all the orthodox, with a view to separation from all the heterodox, *i. e.* with a view to a division of the church, by other means than the regular exercise of discipline.—How far it will be possible to devise a new Act and Testimony, which shall be able to rally all the friends of truth, it is not for us to predict; but we venture to prophesy, that if it calls for a general adoption and signature as a test act, and contemplates extra-constitutional methods of reform and redress, it will be as much a failure as the one which it is designed to supersede. Do let a church "substantially sound," with a scriptural creed, and admirable form of government, alone, to work her own reform, and advance her own interests. What better or stricter test can the convention frame, than what we have already in our confession of faith and catechisms? If men will sign these with reservation or insincerity, what is to hinder their adoption of a new creed in the same manner? Are we to have this process over every few years? When through or over the newly constructed hedge, others than those intended shall have made their way, must the whole be again broken up; a new division, and a re-inclosure made? We doubt exceedingly whether so many brethren would have agreed to this convention, had they imagined this was to be the main object of the convocation.

The second topic suggested for the consideration of the meeting is, either the erection of a new theological seminary, or the selection of some one of those already existing, to be under the control of the orthodox synods. This we admit is a very important subject, but one on which we shall be silent. We have only to remark, that it is evidently an after-thought. This project had no part in the original designs of the framers of the Act and Testimony, nor in the call of the convention at Pittsburg. Whether wise or unwise, it cannot fairly be adduced as evidence of the expediency and wisdom of assembling that body.

The third of the general objections to the Act and Testimony mentioned above is, that the *modus operandi* of the measure has never been explained to the satisfaction of the



churches. It is asserted with the greatest confidence that it will reform the church; but how it is to produce this result has never been explained. As remarked above, there was one mode of its operation sufficiently intelligible and efficient. It is proposed to ascertain and combine all the friends of truth in one body, and when thus organized, to propose to the General Assembly the choice between acquiescence and the division of the church. But when this mode of its operation is denied or relinquished, what remains for it to accomplish? It cannot be that the mere testifying against certain errors and abuses, was expected to have these important results. Because, in the first place, the cause is altogether inadequate to the effect. The declaration, on the part of any number of individuals, that error exists in the church, is not sufficient for its extirpation. Did not the last obnoxious General Assembly itself, deliberately profess unabated attachment to our excellent standards? But what did this amount to in the estimation of the signers of the Act and Testimony? To nothing at all: yet it contained of course a denunciation of all the errors which they denounce. Secondly, because no testifying against error would satisfy the friends of that measure. When the Presbytery of New Brunswick, and subsequently the Synod of Pittsburg, instead of adopting the Act and Testimony, bore witness in their own way against the existing errors and abuses, although they went further (at least the former body did) and were more explicit than that document itself, it was far from giving satisfaction. There was a rebuke of the middle course of the Synod, put forth in no very measured terms, by the official paper of the movement party. It is not therefore by testifying, that the good was to be done. How then was it to be accomplished? This has always been to us a mystery, and is so to this moment. That is, since it was denied that the measure was merely preparatory to a division of the church. Viewed in any other light it appeared entirely inefficient, and therefore on that ground alone obviously inexpedient. When all the churches are solemnly appealed to and aroused; when they are called upon to sign a certain document, and to organize themselves in a new form, they naturally ask, for what? The answer is, to reform the church. How?—To this we find no reply. Unless therefore the signers are prepared to come out boldly and say what it is they desire, and how they design to accomplish their object, how can they com-

plain that the churches are not prepared to follow them perfectly blindfolded? If, on the other hand, the original purport (as it was generally apprehended) be adhered to; if, when the signers are organized, they mean to drive the wedge home; if they are determined to force the Assembly to retract or divide, then it becomes every man involved in the scheme to understand and avow its object and mode of operation, or to have no part or lot in the concern.

In concluding our remarks on this defence of the Act and Testimony, there are a few supplementary remarks, which we deem it expedient to make. In the first place there are many of the assertions of the writer which appear to us very inaccurate as to matters of fact; many of his assumptions altogether unauthorised. As to this point, we cannot do more than give an example. He asserts, for instance, that the Act and Testimony has been adopted by the three powerful Synods of Kentucky, Pittsburg, and Philadelphia. This is surely a mistake. This honour belongs to the Synod of Philadelphia alone. The course pursued by the other bodies is no more an adoption of the Act and Testimony, than that taken by the Presbytery of New Brunswick. This was so obviously the case, that, as remarked above, the Synod of Pittsburg was pointedly rebuked by the Presbyterian, for its half-way measure. The truth is, a large part of that Synod was decidedly opposed to the whole measure, another portion approved of it only as a general testimony against error; a third, and, as we are informed, very small portion, was disposed to embrace the whole. The moment, however, there was discussion on the subject, and a measure proposed which satisfied the consciences of those who desired to raise their voice against the prevalent errors and disorders in the church, all cordially embraced it, and it was passed with the full approbation of some of the most strenuous opposers of the Act and Testimony, within our bounds. These brethren will be surprised to be informed that they have adopted a document which they thought they were successfully opposing. The same remarks substantially might be made in reference to the Synod of Kentucky. The subtraction of those two important bodies makes a considerable alteration in the state of the case.

Again, it is assumed by this writer that the whole thirteen, or fifteen hundred signers of the Act and Testimony, sympathize with him and his immediate associates in their

feelings, and approve of their plans. We know this to be a great mistake. We know that many, very many, of the brethren who have put their names to that document, regarded it merely as a general declaration in behalf of truth and order, and never contemplated its being used for the purposes, nor with the spirit of the Defender and his friends. This we know from the declaration of many of these signers themselves, from the testimony of men of the highest respectability and extensive information from different parts of the church, and from the conclusive fact, that although most of the presbyteries constituting the Synod of Pittsburg had adopted the Act and Testimony, yet these very brethren, when met in Synod, virtually avowed that all their objects were attained by the general declaration issued by that body. We think this should satisfy the writer that he is greatly deceived as to the state of feeling in the church, and prepare him to find himself in a very lean minority if he is determined to abide by the stand which he has taken. It should also, we think, quiet his apprehensions. The Synod of Pittsburg has been always, and justly, regarded as the spine of our church, firm and trust-worthy as their own enduring mountains. If then this, the most homogeneous, orthodox, consistent and independent body within our bounds, pronounces in terms not to be mistaken, the Act and Testimony unnecessary, unwise, and injurious, it will demand but a slight measure of self-distrust in the earnest advocates of that measure, to doubt its policy, and to consent to have it deposited quietly in the tomb of the Capulets. A second remark is on the following sentence:—“Whether it has been wise in Princeton to stay us in our efforts to reform the church, and by consequence the Assembly, and thereby save and sustain Princeton itself, let those who have driven us to the wall, judge.” In reference to this sentence we wish to say, first, that Princeton has nothing, and wishes to have nothing to do with this or any similar matter. By Princeton, we mean the six or eight Presbyterian ministers dwelling in that place. We think we may say, without impropriety or mistake, that there is not an equal number of clergymen in the church, less disposed to meddle in affairs which do not belong to them, or more inclined to attend in quietness to their own peculiar and special duties. As members of ecclesiastical bodies they have of course their rights and duties, and have not been backward in performing their part in the transactions

of such bodies. And as connected, as is the case with several of them, in conducting a Quarterly Review, it is their privilege and duty to express their sentiments to their readers, on the subjects which appropriately fall under their notice. But we do not think it either delicate or proper, that Princeton, as such, should be brought forward as taking this or that course, or as mixing itself with every question which may be discussed in the Repertory. Let the papers inserted in that journal be received with just so much prepossession and favour as the Review has fairly earned for itself, and no more, and let their arguments and views be allowed to pass for just what they are worth, without being cried up or down, on account of their origin. Secondly, in reference to this sentence—Is it fair to say that Princeton has stayed these brethren in their efforts to reform the church? Has ever the Repertory done this? We have simply expostulated and argued against a measure which we believed threatened to ruin the church. As to being opposed to reform, nothing is farther from the fact. We wish reform, but let it come in a way consistent with fidelity to our engagements, with the integrity of the church, and the preservation of our form of discipline and government, and not at the expense of all these interests.

A third remark. The Act and Testimony is confessedly a failure. It is announced that its object was to unite all the orthodox. This it has not done. It has received the sanction of but one synod in the Presbyterian Church. It has not, even as a general declaration, been adopted by one-sixth of the ministers in our communion. It has, therefore, failed in its avowed object. More than this. By failing to unite, it must of necessity divide. If a certain portion only of the sound part of the church adhere to this document and its policy, of course the remaining portion is separated. Whose fault is this? The fault of those who proposed and urged the signing of a paper as a test of orthodoxy, which few, comparatively, can conscientiously sign. It is no longer a matter of conjecture or opinion, but a matter of fact, that the Act and Testimony has divided the ranks of the old school men. It has filled the hearts and mouths of their most open opponents with rejoicing. It is to them the certain presage of triumph; the most welcome of all services. What then is to be done? Is the wedge to be driven home? Is the only hope of the peace and purity of our church—the cordial union of all really sound and moderate

men—to be destroyed by the ultra zeal and anti-presbyterial measures of a comparatively small portion of the church?

We are not without hopes that this cloud will soon blow over; that God will bring good out of evil; that he will make the misguided zeal, as we think it, of his people, the occasion of arousing the careless, and of directing the attention of his church to real evils, and to the proper method of their correction. If the Act and Testimony is the means of letting its friends see, what others were so happy as to know before, that the church is “substantially sound,” and of leading even those who oppose it to declarations of opinion adapted to restore confidence, we shall not regret its having been issued. When a ship is tossed by a tempest upon the ocean, her safety, under God, depends upon every man doing his own duty. If, in over anxiety for her welfare, first one and then another rushes to the helm, and presses it now hard-a-port, and now hard-a-starboard, the peril is imminent. Yet even this alarm, by rousing all on board, and leading to the determination to see that, while volunteer helmsmen are kept quiet, the regular authorities are watchful and faithful, may be conducive to ultimate safety. We have so much respect for the constitution and discipline of our church, and so much hope in God, that we believe nothing is wanting beyond the regular action of our system, to make the Presbyterian body harmonious, pure, and efficient.

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*J. A. Alexander*

ART. VIII.—*Sketches of Society and Manners in Great Britain and Ireland.* By C. S. Stewart, M. A. of the U. S. Navy. Author of “*A Visit to the South Seas,*” &c. &c. Philadelphia. Carey, Lea & Blanchard. 2 vols. 12mo. 1834.

MR. STEWART'S opportunities of access to English society of elevated rank were greater, we believe, than those of any other tourist from America, whose observations have been given to the public. He did not merely catch a glimpse of aristocratic splendour upon certain great occasions, or come into casual contact with the “nobility and gentry” by a hap-hazard invitation to some festive board. He was the domesticated guest of many high-born families.