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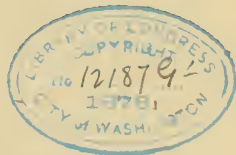
GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

In the United States of America.

WITH THE

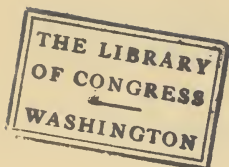
MODERATOR'S SERMON

BEFORE THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF 1876.



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THE PERIOD FROM THE
WAR OF THE REVOLUTION

TO THE

ADOPTION OF MEASURES FOR THE ORGANIZATION
OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

1775-1786.

BY THE

REV. SAMUEL M. HOPKINS, D.D.,

HYDE PROFESSOR OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY AND CHURCH POLITY,
AUBURN SEMINARY.

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FROM THE WAR OF THE REVOLUTION
TO THE
ORGANIZATION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

I.

CONDITION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AT
THE OPENING OF THIS PERIOD (1775).

THE storm of the Revolutionary war broke upon a people more universally peaceable, loyal, intelligent and Christian than any other in the history of the world. With few exceptions the entire population belonged, by voluntary adherence, to some one of the various fractions of the Christian Church.

Speculative atheism there was none; of subtle infidelity hardly a trace; and the coarse and brutal infidelity of Paine and his school was only beginning to make its way amid the lower stratum of society. Nowhere was education more universal; nowhere was the Bible more the book of the home, or the sanctuary dearer to the heart; nowhere were manners simpler, habits more frugal, domestic virtue and official integrity more sacred; nowhere were the minister and the

schoolmaster in higher esteem. Taking the colonies at large, the Church existed in as pure a state as had ever been realized in this her mixed and militant condition.

But she existed in the form of a multitude of sects—all the chief sects, at least, that had already originated in England, with the addition of a few transplanted from the Continent of Europe. Of these only the Congregationalists, the Presbyterians and the Episcopalians have any special significance in relation to the period we are now contemplating. And popularly the first two were regarded as one. The religious element involved in the rebellion was invariably spoken of, whether in or out of New England, as PRESBYTERIAN.*

* See Letter of Rev. Jacob Oel, Episcopal missionary among the Mohawks, to Sir William Johnson :

UIJT MEIN HAUSS
DE 8te Ao. 1762.

TO THE HON. SIR WM. JOHNSON :

That ij reit these letter en trouble you bij these ij be forced for it: the reason is because ij heard yesterday in the castle that the Bostoniers were designed to erect schools in everij castle by choosing uijt two jung boijs for to be send in nieu engelland to be instructed there and them should instruct the others in proper learning. now learning is good en is most necessarij amongs the haddens that cannot be contradicted but ij want to know what design as it is to introduce their own Presbijteren church than can it not be allowed en as it prejudice our church en church ceremonies &c.—*Doc. History of New York*, iv. 307.

Mr. Keith writes to the Secretary of the Venerable Society, etc., that "if a minister be not sent with the first conveniency, Presbyterian ministers from New England would swarm into these countries and prevent the increase of the Church."—*Episcop. Histor. Coll.*, 1851, p. xxiii.

The Baptists already existed in considerable numbers, having perhaps three hundred or more congregations. But they were without organization of any kind, without an educated ministry, their preachers being small tradesmen or mechanics and the flocks consisting of the more ignorant and enthusiastic classes in the middle and southern colonies. It is only toward the close of this period and in connection with the struggle for religious liberty in Virginia that they make any considerable figure.*

The Methodists in England and America still made a part of the Anglican Church, and throughout the Revolutionary period acted in sympathy with it. Mr. Whitfield, in writing from America to the bishop of Oxford and others, though commenting in very severe terms on the character of the Episcopal clergy in the colonies, yet invariably describes them as belonging to "our Church." During the war for independence they are in no way to be distinguished from other Episcopalians. In England, John Wesley at first employed his pen in defence of the measures of Parliament, and reproduced as his own, without acknowledgment, the arguments of Samuel Johnson's *Taxation no Tyranny*.† He afterward changed his views,

* See *History of the Baptist Interests in the United States*, by Rev. Rufus Babcock, D.D., Poughkeepsie, N. Y., in *Quart. Register* for 1841.

† Wesley's *Calm Address to the American Colonies*. The offensive

and in a letter to Lord North remonstrated against the war, declaring that "in spite of all his long-rooted prejudices as a churchman and a loyalist, he cannot avoid thinking, if he think at all, that the colonists are an oppressed people asking nothing more than their legal rights." He adds that it is idle to think of conquering America: "Twenty thousand British troops could not do it."

The Roman Catholics were still few in number and appear during this period in no ecclesiastical capacity. In 1775 they had no more than fifty congregations in the colonies, and half that number of clergy. Even in Maryland they constituted not more than one-twentieth part of the population.

Quakerism had been introduced into America early in the century, and had caught with great rapidity. The lofty pretensions and bold "testifyings" of the early preachers, and the punishment they brought upon themselves by their excesses, recommended their views to the loose religious radicalism which hung on the skirts of the New England churches. They throve for a while on "persecution." In the middle colonies the high character of the grantee of Pennsyl-

sentiments of this address, and its broad and subsequently confessed plagiarisms, exposed the author to very severe criticism. See Dr. Toplady's *Old Fox tarred and feathered, occasioned by what is called Mr. John Wesley's Calm Address to our American colonies.*—Toplady's *Works*, v. 441.

vania, not yet defaced by the sharp pens of later critics, and the pacific character and benevolent aims of his administration, attracted numerous adherents. Quakers swarmed on both sides the Delaware—disputatious, high-flying, theological Quakers, non-combatant as respects carnal weapons, but ever ready for dialectical brawl and battle. They were already broken up by schisms. George Keith, a busy, stirring, hot-headed brother, who subsequently conformed to the Anglican Church and became an ultra-zealous Episcopal missionary in the colonies, had a considerable following called Keithian or Christian Quakers. On the other hand, the Foxonian or Deistical Quakers, who are described by Messrs. Keith and Talbot as “no better than heathens,” were passionately enthusiastic for the “inner light” and against the authority of divine revelation. The two factions were destroying each other; and it is worth noticing that of all the sects extant in the colonies in the Revolutionary period, the Quakers are the only one that has not thriven; all the others have multiplied a thousand fold. They alone have dwindled till they are now arrived at the verge of extinction. As concerns the Revolutionary struggle, a few “Deistical Quakers,” like Benjamin Franklin, acted an influential part, but as a sect they had neither part nor lot in the matter.

When we speak of the Christian Church in connection with the struggle for independence, we have occasion, therefore, to notice only Presbyterianism and Episcopacy; always remembering that that imperfect form of Presbyterianism called Congregationalism existed exclusively in New England.

As introductory to the history of the Presbyterian Church during the Revolution period, it is necessary to consider briefly its condition at the opening of the scene. In all the provinces south of and including New York, except Pennsylvania, the Episcopal Church was either expressly established by law or at least peculiarly favored by the colonial governments. Episcopal churches and parsonages were built by the aid of the royal governors, and often by public tax. The clergy were salaried by assessments on the property of the citizens at large. Their stipends were fixed by law, and were collected, where it was necessary (and practicable), by execution and distress.

In New York the profligate Lord Cornbury—bankrupt in character and fortune—was a zealous friend of “the present happy establishment in Church and State.”* In New Jersey, by one of those retributions which often attend unhallowed

* See letter of Rev. Dr. Auchmuty to Sir William Johnson of date 20th May, 1770.

love, the natural son of Benjamin Franklin, the last royal governor of the province, was a bitter enemy of both the political and religious liberty for which his father contended. Maryland, originally a Roman Catholic proprietary grant, was organized ecclesiastically as a branch of the Church of England, containing in 1775 about 20 parishes. In Virginia, where the union of Church and State was closest, the clergy were "presented" to their "livings" by the governor, and the value of the benefice was calculated, as also in Maryland, in the great staple of the province. The salary was settled by act of legislature in 1721 at 16,000 pounds of tobacco, or a cash equivalent of eighteen shillings the hundred pounds.* To every parsonage was attached a glebe of not less than 200 acres. In fact, the "ancient dominion" exhibited nearly as perfect an example of a Church-and-State establishment as the mother-country itself. Virginia was simply a cis-Atlantic magnified Hampshire or Bucks, where the clergy and the squirearchy held carnival and royal governors made it their ambition to be nursing-fathers to "the Church."

* In Maryland the salary was, in some cases, much larger, amounting to thirty, and even forty, thousand pounds of tobacco. The cash value of the salaries was from £50 to £80 colonial currency, which was depreciated in the various colonies from 25 to 50 per cent. below sterling value.

The parish ministers came from England, and were mostly such as England could well afford to spare. The "Venerable Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts," chartered in 1701, exerted itself to send out chaplains and missionaries, but the name of the society represented a sentiment which was then only feebly nascent in England. The funds were small and the candidates few. Rather than send none, the society sent such as they could get; and what these were the complaints and remonstrances from the colonies too clearly indicate. "Many of them," observes Dr. Hawks, "were every way unfitted for their stations. The precariousness of the tenure by which they held their livings contributed not a little to beget in them an indifference to their duties, and the irregularities and crimes of an unworthy clergyman could not be visited effectually with the severities of ecclesiastical censure. Far removed from his diocesan, and standing in little awe of the authorities of the Episcopal commissary, he sometimes offended religion and morals with impunity, and still remained in the Church, a reproach to her ministry." *

* *Contributions to Ecclesiastical History, etc.*, pp. 88, 89.

Mr. Whitfield wrote to the "Venerable Society, etc.," under date of November 30, 1740: "The state of the Church of England in America is at a very low ebb, and will in all probability be much worse—nay, at last dwindled into nothing—unless care be taken to

“In numerous instances,” observes Rev. Dr. Babcock, “we have heard from the lips of old men lamentable descriptions of the immoral and profligate lives of their former rectors. Two or three days in each week during the season the parson spent in fox-hunting with his irreligious parishioners, and the hunt closed with bacchanalian orgies in which he usually bore the leading part. We have seen a manuscript volume of poetry composed by one of these Virginia shepherds that for amatory levity would have raised a blush on the cheeks of Horace.* Many came over, such as wore black coats and could babble in a pulpit, roar in a tavern, exact from their parishioners, and by their dissolute lives destroy rather than

send over missionaries that are better qualified for the pastoral office. It is too evident that most of them are corrupt in their principles and immoral in their practices, and many of them such as could not stand their trials amongst the Dissenters or were discarded by them for their profaneness and irregularities. Our Church seems to be their last refuge,” etc.—*Episcopal Historical Collection*, 1851, p. 129.

Colonel Heathcote takes a more cheerful view of the society's influence, so far, at least, as Connecticut was concerned. “I really believe,” he observes, “that more than half the people in that government think our Church to be little better than the Papist. But—I bless God for it—the society have robbed them of their best argument, which was the ill lives of our clergy that came into these parts, and the truth is I have not seen many good men but of the society's sending.”—*Doc. History of New York*, iv. 122.

But Mr. Whitfield calls even the society's missionaries “ungodly despicable ministers.”

* See *American Quarterly Register*, 1841.

feed their flocks.”* A great writer, who in statements of fact is as true to history as in his portraits of character he is true to nature, observes: “Unlike some of the neighboring provinces, Virginia was a Church of England colony. The clergymen were paid by the State and had glebes allotted to them; and there being no Church of England bishop yet in America, the colonists were obliged to import their divines from the mother-country. Such as came were not naturally of the very best or most eloquent kind of pastors. Noblemen’s hangers-on, insolvent parsons who had quarreled with justice or the bailiff, brought their stained cassocks into the colony in the hopes of finding a living.”† The condition of things was equally bad in Maryland, where Mr. Bancroft says, “Ruffians, fugitives from justice, men stained by intemperance and lust, dishonored the surplices they wore.”‡

Presbyterians, even in those colonies or parts of colonies where they composed the great majority, were “dissenters,” enjoying a precarious toleration. They could preach only by special license and in licensed meeting-houses. Nothing was more common than for them to be called before justices or governors and threatened or fined

* Dr. Hawks’ *Ecclesiastical History of Virginia*, p. 65, quoted from a contemporaneous writer.

† *The Virginians*, by W. M. Thackeray, chapter v.

‡ Bancroft’s *History*, iv. 129.

for illegally preaching the gospel. Such was the treatment that Francis McKemie, George Hampton and John McNish met with in the early part of the century; and down to the Revolution the experiences of the Presbyterian clergy were often of the same sort. In 1618 a law was passed in Virginia which enacted that every person "should go to *church* on Sundays and holidays, or lye neck and heels that night and be a slave to the colony the following day." For the second offence he was to be a slave a week and the third a year. In 1642 a law was passed that "no minister shall be permitted to officiate in the country but such as shall produce to the governor a testimonial that he hath received ordination from some bishop in England, and shall then subscribe to be conformable to the orders and constitutions of the Church of England; and if any other person pretending himself to be a minister shall, contrary to this act, presume to teach or preach publicly or privately, the governor and council are hereby desired and empowered to suspend and silence the person so offending, and upon his obstinate persistence to compel him to depart the country with the first convenience. Several of these laws were afterward repealed or the penalties mitigated, but they remained severe until the Revolution."*

It was quite in the natural order of things,

* Dr. Miller's *Life of Dr. John Rodgers*, p. 28.

therefore, that when the struggle broke out between Great Britain and her colonies the Episcopal and the Presbyterian clergy should take different sides. The former were entirely satisfied with the existing order and had nothing to gain by a change. They were, of course, the friends of a government which favored them, which gave them peculiar privileges, among others the privilege of looking down on and harassing all other Christians as dissenters. Their own instincts all tended the same way. They were English born or had been educated and ordained in England. They owed ecclesiastical allegiance to the English episcopate, or at near hand to the resident commissary of the bishop of London. The spiritual peers and the clergy "at home" all lent a zealous support to the measures of the Parliament for coercing the colonies. It was too much to expect that the Episcopal clergy here should separate themselves from the body to which they belonged. They simply stuck to the principles of loyalty and allegiance that were natural to them in the circumstances.

The Rev. Dr. Inglis, rector of Trinity church, New York, writing to the secretary of the "Venerable Society for the Propagation of the Gospel" in 1776, says, "I have the pleasure to assure you that all the society's missionaries, without excepting *one* in New Jersey, New York, Connecticut,

and so far as I can learn in all the New England colonies, have proved themselves loyal and faithful subjects in these trying times, and have to the utmost of their power opposed the spirit of disaffection. I must add that all the *other* clergy of our Church in the above-named colonies have observed the same line of conduct; and although their joint endeavors could not wholly prevent the rebellion, yet they checked it considerably for some time, and prevented many thousands from plunging into it."

He adds that very few of the *laity* who had either property or character joined in the rebellion.

This latter assertion had many and signal exceptions, or rather outside of New York and Connecticut had very little basis of fact. But the Episcopal *clergy*, at least in the breaking out of the Revolution, found themselves in broad and bitter antagonism with the spirit and views of the people. They could not reconcile themselves to read the service leaving out the prayers for the king, nor could they read them without subjecting themselves to interruptions, threats and a possible experience of tar and feathers. They took the safe course of demitting their functions, and shook off the dust from their feet as a testimony against their rebellious parishioners.

The Episcopal Church, therefore, which one

hundred years ago numbered about two hundred and fifty clergy of all sorts (except bishops), suddenly and universally disappeared. The temples were left, but the priests had departed. After the melancholy extinguishment of Mr. Duché, not one of them, with the exception of Dr. White, officiated as chaplain in Congress, and only Dr. Griffith and two or three more as chaplains in the army—a neglect with which it has been impossible to charge the Episcopal clergy in any period since. A few resolute parsons, like Mr. Beach in Connecticut and Dr. Inglis in New York, continued a while longer to pray for the king. Perhaps Dr. Inglis himself read the last collect for King George that was ever offered after the colonies developed into States. That distinguished and justly honored minister and (later) prelate, William White, states that he read the prayer for the king the last time on the Sunday preceding the 4th of July, 1776.

So it resulted that the Established Church and the colonial officials were on one side, and the AMERICAN PEOPLE on the other; just as, a few years later, it came to pass in France that the *nation* found itself struggling for freedom against the noblesse and the clergy.

Whatever may have been true in the history of earlier struggles between prerogative and liberty in England, it is quite unnecessary to

claim that there is any natural relationship between Episcopacy and monarchy, or any vital repugnance between it and popular institutions. It is even maintained by distinguished writers of that persuasion that there is a singularly close analogy between the constitution of their Church and the political Constitution of this country. Certainly no one will pretend that since the establishment of independence there have been any purer patriots or stauncher friends of liberty than the clergy and laity of the Episcopal Church. It is with no disposition, therefore, to cast reproach upon that large and intelligent Christian body, but simply because the truth of history requires it, that the fact is stated of the nearly universal as well as very bitter Toryism of the Episcopal clergy during the Revolutionary period. They continually wrote to England maligning the characters and ridiculing the efforts of the patriot leaders. They encouraged the ministry with assurances of certain and not distant success;* when the appeal was made "to arms and to the God of battles," they withdrew into obscurity, fled to Nova Scotia or returned to England.

We have all, perhaps, seen a coarse engraving purporting to represent the offering of "the first

* "I have not a doubt" (wrote Dr. Inglis in 1776) "but with the blessing of Providence His Majesty's arms will be successful and finally crush this unnatural rebellion."—*Doc. Hist. of New York*, iii., 1064.

prayer in Congress." The rotund and florid officiating chaplain in the front, clad in surplice, is the Rev. Jacob Duché, described by one of his brethren at the time as a "most amiable youth, of captivating eloquence."

The implication of the picture would seem to be that it was the Episcopal Church in the person of this patriotic and captivating "churchman" which pronounced her benediction on the opening struggle.*

The Rev. Jacob Duché was by birth a Philadelphian. His grandfather Anthony, a French refugee, had acquired property here, and on some occasion lent William Penn a little money. Thirty pounds of this remained unpaid. Penn offered Mr. Duché in satisfaction the entire square lying between Market and Arch and Third and Fourth streets, which he declined.

Jacob grew up a promising boy, and was sent to England to perfect his education. He studied at the University of Cambridge, in due time received episcopal ordination, returned home, and about 1770 became rector of Christ's church, Philadelphia.

In the Congress of 1776, on the nomination of Samuel Adams, he was elected chaplain. He

* On the celebration in Carpenters' Hall, Philadelphia, of the centenary of the First Congress, the portrait of Mr. Duché occupied a conspicuous position over the head of the chairman—with how little fitness the story here recited shows.

had previously acted in that capacity for the Continental Congress the year before; and now, robed in full canonicals, he came forward to offer the first prayer after the declaration of independence. The singularly appropriate lesson for the morning was the thirty-fifth Psalm: "*Plead thou my cause, O Lord, with them that strive with me, and fight thou with them that fight against me. Awake, and stand up to judge my quarrel; avenge thou my cause, my God and my Lord.*"

Having finished the lesson, the chaplain laid aside the prayer book, and stretching forth his arms broke out with great fervor of manner in the recitation of a highly-appropriate precomposed prayer: "*Look down in mercy, we beseech thee (he prayed), on these our American States, who have fled from the rod of the oppressor and thrown themselves on thy gracious protection. Give them wisdom in council and valor in the field; defeat the malicious designs of our cruel adversaries. Oh, let the voice of thine unerring justice, sounding in their hearts, constrain them to drop the weapons of war from their unnerved hands in the day of battle.*"

This glow of patriotic enthusiasm lasted for three months. Within that time New York was occupied and Philadelphia threatened by the British. Mr. Duché's faith, which apparently had in it little of the substance of things hoped

for, began to waver. He resigned his chaplaincy and withdrew into temporary obscurity. The following year the disasters of the patriot arms increased. Lord Howe defeated the insurgents at the Brandywine and occupied Philadelphia. Then Mr. Duché once more came forth upon the scene. Providence was evidently frowning on the rebel cause; and far be it from Mr. Duché that he should be found fighting against God! He hastened to renounce his rebellion and "throw himself on the gracious protection" of Lord Howe. All this might easily have been forgotten; but with a bold stroke for immortality, he had the sublime impudence to write to General Washington urging him to pursue a similar course. He alleges that the cause of the revolted colonies was as hopeless as it was godless, represents the army, both officers and men, as a vulgar and undisciplined rabble, and recommends Washington to disperse Congress at the point of the bayonet. Having thus given the highest possible evidence of recovered loyalty, Mr. Duché sailed for England. Washington laid the insulting letter before Congress and directed the bearer to inform Mr. Duché that if he had had any idea of its nature he should have returned it unopened.

I feel no hesitation in making this commentary on the pictorial fraud referred to, since this frivol-

ous renegade will be dismissed with equal contempt by the Church he dishonored as by Christians of every other denomination.

II.

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AND THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE.

THE course of the Presbyterian clergy, both during the war and throughout the whole series of events leading to it, is so broadly written on the pages of history that did it not seem to make a necessary part of a story like this I should content myself with barely alluding to it. It was exactly seventy years before, that their first presbytery had been organized in the city of Philadelphia, with only seven ministers. During this period of "Babylonian captivity," discouraged as they had continually been by the royal governors, fined and shut up in jail under pretext of their preaching without a license, their churches wrested from them, their congregations doubly taxed to sustain their own clergy and those of the Episcopal Church also,—they had yet multiplied to about one hundred ministers and twice that number of congregations. At the breaking

out of the Revolutionary war they were distributed into eleven presbyteries. The presbyteries of New York, Dutchess and Suffolk, with about thirty ministers, were mostly in New York. New Brunswick, with nine ministers, in New Jersey. The First and Second Philadelphia and Lewes, with twenty members, in Pennsylvania. New Castle, with eight ministers, and Donegal, with thirteen, were in Delaware and Maryland, Hanover in Virginia, with perhaps twelve ministers, and Orange, with fifteen, in North Carolina. With absolute unanimity these pastors and their people committed themselves to the doubtful and desperate struggle for independence. Heterogeneous as they were in origin—part New England Congregationalists, part Dutchmen of New Amsterdam, part Scotch-Irish, part Huguenots, part Highlanders, exiles of “the '45”—the common element of a Presbyterian polity and a Calvinistic theology fused them into one patriotic mass, glowing with an intense passion for civil and religious liberty. They openly took the attitude, and consented to the name and the responsibility, of *rebels* against the British government.

It was no doubt a zeal for religious, quite as much as for political liberty, that impelled them into this position—a sentiment that did not operate with equal force in New England, where the

Congregationalists, instead of suffering as dissenters, were themselves an established Church, able and not wholly indisposed to lay a heavy hand on other denominations.

Dr. Inglis says, "Although civil liberty was the *ostensible object*, the *bait* that was flung out to catch the populace at large and engage them in the rebellion, yet it is now past all doubt that an abolition of the Church of England was one of the principal ends aimed at, and hence the unanimity of the dissenters in this business. I have it from good authority that the Presbyterian ministers, at a synod where most of them in the middle colonies were collected, passed a resolve to support the Continental Congress in all their measures. This, and this only, can account for the uniformity of their conduct, for *I do not know one of them*, nor have I been able, after strict inquiry, *to hear of any*, who did not by preaching and every effort in their power promote all the measures of the Congress, however extravagant."*

It was not, however, by any passionate impulse, or by any fraudulent representation of their leaders, that they were brought into an attitude so much at variance with all their principles as Christians and all their instincts as subjects. The spirit of the Presbyterian Church, like that of the Epis-

* *State of the Anglo-American Church in 1776*, by Rev. Charles Inglis, *Doc. Hist. of New York*, iv. 1048.

copal, though perhaps in a somewhat less intense degree, is conservative. Comprehending in its clergy a body of educated as well as profoundly religious men, and in its membership mostly the upper and middle classes, containing few poor and none ignorant, with a large stake, therefore, in the stability of society,—the Presbyterian Church is necessarily pledged to order, loyalty and the maintenance of existing institutions. Presbyterianism has always been in quick sympathy with constitutional government, but is by no necessity hostile to monarchy. If at one time, while fighting the battle of English liberties, it was found in deadly and fatal collision with the sovereign, it was also found, in its recoil from anarchy, forward in rebuilding the throne. It was the English Presbyterians who joined with the army to bring about the Restoration; and they are not otherwise to be blamed for the consequences than as men may be blamed who fly from petty tyrants to the throne, and in their zeal for order are too little on their guard against treachery. They bound the king, so far as oaths could bind so “universal a villain,” to the cause of religion and righteousness. They were, of course, betrayed; but it has taken several generations since to bring the world to a complete realization of the bottomless folly and faithlessness of the house of Stuart.

The Presbyterians of the American colonies

were imbued with a spirit of intense loyalty to the British government. In no part of the empire was there a more enthusiastic reverence for the throne. The provincials gloried in the title and claimed the rights of British subjects. They detested the brutal radicalism of John Wilkes and the English mob. In the admirable pastoral letter addressed to the churches by the synod of New York and Philadelphia on the breaking out of hostilities they say, "In carrying on this important struggle let every opportunity be taken to express your attachment and respect to our sovereign king George and to the revolution principles by which his august family was seated on the British throne. We recommend, indeed, not only allegiance to him from duty and principle, as the first magistrate of the empire, but esteem and reverence for the person of the prince who has merited well of his subjects on many accounts, and who has probably been misled into the late and the present measures by those about him. It gives us the greatest pleasure to say, from our own certain knowledge of all belonging to our communion, that the present opposition to the measures of the ministry does not in the least arise from disaffection to the king or a desire of separation from the parent state. We are happy in being able with truth to affirm, that no part of America would either have approved or

permitted such insults as have been offered to the sovereign in Great Britain. We expect you, therefore, to continue in the same disposition and not to suffer oppression or injury itself to provoke you into anything which may seem to betray contrary sentiments. Let it ever appear that you only desire the preservation and security of those rights which belong to you *as freemen ana BRITONS*, and that reconciliation upon these terms is your most ardent desire.”*

This was in May, 1775, a month after the slaughter at Lexington and the disastrous retreat of the British troops upon Boston.

This sentiment of affection for the person of the sovereign was with great difficulty rooted out from the hearts of the colonists. They wept with at least conventional tears the death of George II. and hailed with enthusiastic hopes the accession of his grandson to the throne.

That brilliant and too brief light of the American pulpit—the *Doctor Seraphicus* of the colonial ministry—Samuel Davies, in his sermon on the death of that profligate Hanoverian prince, George II., broke out into such strains as these :

“George is no more! George the mighty, the just, the gentle, the wise, George the father of Britain and her colonies, the guardian of laws and liberty, the protector of the oppressed, the

* See *Minutes of the Synod*, p. 468.

arbiter of Europe, the terror of tyrants and of France! George, the friend of man, the benefactor of millions, is no more. Britain expresses her sorrow in national groans. Europe re-echoes to the melancholy sound. This remote American continent shares in the loyal sympathy. The wide intermediate Atlantic rolls the tide of grief to these distant shores." And after pages more in this *maestoso vein* the strain changes to a joyful *allegro* as Mr. Davies turns to hail the newly-risen star of British monarchy. "*But I retract the melancholy thought (he says). George still lives, he still adorns his throne, he still blesses the world in the person of his royal descendant and successor; and if the early appearance of genius, humanity, condescension, the spirit of liberty and love of his people, if British birth, education and connections, if the wishes and prayers of every lover of his country, have any efficacy, George the Third will reign like George the Second. Hail, desponding religion! lift up thy drooping head and triumph. Virtue, thou heaven-born exile, return to court! Young George invites thee. George declares himself thy early friend and patron. Vice, thou triumphant monster, with all thy infernal train, retire, abscond and fly to thy native hell! Young George forbids thee to appear at court, in the army, the navy or any of thy usual haunts.*

What happy days are before us when RELIGION and GEORGE shall reign!" And then, soaring on the wings of Virgil's prophetic muse and contemplating the coming *Saturnia regna*, he exclaimed, "Such a presage renders the blessings we shall receive under the reign of George the Third almost as sure as those we have received under that of George the Second." This (may I reverently add) he spoke not of himself, but being a prophet he foresaw obscurely the benefits which the patriotic and conscientious stubbornness of the sovereign would be the means of conferring on the colonists; for surely, if the prophetic charisma has ever lighted on any of the sons of men since the days of the apostles, it was upon him who, twenty years before Braddock's only surviving aid was called to the command of the American armies, spoke of "that heroic youth, Colonel Washington, whom Providence seems to have preserved in so signal a manner for some important service to his country."*

Let us think kindly of that narrow-minded, obstinate, devout, exemplary man and king whom our fathers were reluctantly forced to defy and disown. His reign signalized the era of decency in the British court which has broadened into the

* *Religion and Patriotism the Constituents of a good Soldier*, a sermon preached to Captain Overton's independent company of volunteers, raised in Hanover county, Virginia, August 17, 1755.

high-toned morality of the present reign. "The improvement in public morals at the close of the eighteenth century," observes Lord Campbell, "may mainly be ascribed to George the Third and his queen, who not only by their bright example but by their well-directed efforts greatly discouraged the profligacy which was introduced at the Restoration, and which continued with little abatement till their time." *

"O brothers speaking the same dear mother-tongue," said that beautiful genius who recited here in our own ears with such unshrinking fidelity the story of the "Four Georges," "O comrades, enemies no more, let us clasp a mournful hand as we stand by this royal corpse and call a truce to battle. Low he lies to whom the proudest used once to kneel, and who was cast lower than the poorest. Dead—whom millions prayed for in vain! Driven off his throne, buffeted by rude hands, his children in revolt, the darling of his age, his Cordelia, killed untimely before him. Hush, strife and quarrel, over the solemn grave! Sound, trumpets, a mournful march! Fall, dark curtain, upon his pageant, his pride, his grief, his awful tragedy!"

Even down to the declaration of independence, through all the agitations, alarms and bloodshed-

* Campbell's *Lives of the Lord Chancellors*, vii. 182, American edition.

ding of the opening scenes of the great drama, and while engaged in deadly opposition to the British Parliament, the Presbyterian clergy continued to pray for the king and royal family. The explanation of this seeming anomaly is found in the very diverse views of constitutional allegiance entertained by the Americans toward the two parts of the British government. Not merely did they labor under the somewhat mistaken impression that George the Third was kindly disposed toward them, and was dragged reluctantly by popular enthusiasm into sanctioning the arbitrary measures against their liberties, but they also made a wide difference between the claims which the king and the Parliament had on their allegiance. The colonists had always insisted on the right of regulating their own affairs for themselves, of voting their own taxes, salarizing their own judges, raising and officering their own troops. The colonial legislatures were in their view co-ordinate Parliaments. They uniformly denied that the imperial Parliament had any right to make laws for them while they were unrepresented in it. As against the British *people*, therefore, they had no declaration of independence to make. It was as absurd, they held, for the burgesses and knights of the English shires to vote taxes on the colonists as it would be for the colonists to reverse the process. The people of England were not

their masters. They were self-governing by their own charters under the British constitution. The single point of union between them and the English people was allegiance in common to the same sovereign.

The great and difficult step to be taken, therefore, by the colonists, in 1776, was to cast off their allegiance to the throne. It was against the king that the impeachments of the Declaration were addressed, and not against the Parliament. It was the long series of acts, so impressively recited in the preamble of that great instrument as implying every attribute that can define a tyrant, which forced the long-hesitating and reluctant provincials at length to sever the last tie which bound them to the British government.

It was with no insincerity, therefore, that the Presbyterian clergy, for more than a year after we were actually at war with Great Britain, continued to pray for "our sovereign and rightful lord, King George." They owned him as their legitimate prince, though they denied that the Parliament was their master. No doubt, also, the simple, domestic and religious character of the king and the various stories told of his kindly, frugal life had greatly endeared him to the colonists, with whom such virtues were prized at their full value. The last sound of prayer for George the Third died out of Presbyterian pulpits in the

month of June, 1776, and in its stead came a new collect, *sine monitore, quia de pectore*, for "the Congress of these United States and for His Excellency the commander-in-chief of the American armies."

It was just at this time that there swam into the ken of a distinguished British watcher of the skies a new planet, which, with perhaps a pardonable loyalty, he called the *Georgium Sidus*. Astronomy herself, who seldom stoops to flatter kings, has since called it after the name of the finder, "Herschel," or, more commonly, Uranus. The tidings of the discovery came to us through the French savans; and the data were so complete that our own Rittenhouse—himself, I may add, a devout Presbyterian—was able at the first sweep to fix his glass upon that outlying member of our solar system.

We have quite recently been informed, also from France, of the discovery of another planet of a certain magnitude, with so many hours and minutes right ascension, so much south declination, and some three degrees, perhaps, of daily motion north.* The *Georgium Sidus*, though certainly a star of the first political magnitude, had unfortunately so little right ascension in this continent and so many degrees of northern mo-

* Communicated by Professor Henry of the Smithsonian Institution to the *New York Tribune* in May, 1876.

tion that it soon set in clouds beyond the lakes, and was never able afterward to send its rays south of the St. Lawrence.

That increased fervor and importunity was given to the prayers which now went up for all those in authority might reasonably be presumed, and is illustrated by well-known facts. There had been for some time maintained in the city of New York by the Presbyterian and other clergy a weekly ministers' meeting for devotion and mutual improvement. Eminent among this band of Christ's servants was Dr. John Rodgers, previously of St. George's parish, Delaware, subsequently the first moderator of the General Assembly. He was an eloquent preacher, a firm and unwavering patriot, the friend and counselor of George Washington. No sooner had the clock struck the fated hour of liberty than on his motion the meeting was resolved into a concert of prayer for God's blessing upon the Revolutionary struggle, and was regularly attended as such until the British troops took possession of the city. The same sentiment pervaded our entire Church. From every Presbyterian pulpit in the land, from every Presbyterian hearth, went up the unceasing voice of intercession for the suffering country.

But the Presbyterian clergy of the period by no means confined themselves to the duty of

prayer for the cause of freedom. In the fluctuations of the war our own churches, like others, were frequently laid waste. They were burned by accident or design. They were occupied by the British troops for riding-schools, hospitals, jails or barracks. The congregations were dispersed or consisted only of non-combatants. The young, the middle-aged, in many cases the hale old men, were following after Washington, in those brave marches amid the sands of New Jersey, over the rocks and snows of Pennsylvania, till they stood at length—all that was left of them—in the trenches about Yorktown. The displaced pastors in many cases went with their people to the field. They served as army chaplains. They shouldered the musket or bore the spontoon in the actual shock of battle. Of more than one of them it may be said, as of Ulric Zwingle, *Pro Christo et pro patria etiam cum fratribus, fortiter pugnans, immortalitatis certus, occidit.*

The records of the synod mention the death of Rev. James Caldwell, whose sufferings and death make one of the darker scenes in the drama of the Revolution, and of the Rev. John Rosburgh, of Allentown, New Jersey, who “was barbarously murdered by the enemy at Trenton on the 2d of January, 1777.”*

* *Minutes of the Synod of New York and Philadelphia under May*

It was by such experiences as these for our Church and our country that we came *per ardua ad astra*—through the stripes to the stars.

The elders of our Church were equally forward in the cause of freedom—so much so, indeed, that if we should judge from numerous facts we might almost conclude that our entire eldership during that period was divided into *teaching elders* and *fighting elders*. A highly significant illustration of this is the fact that the five officers who commanded regiments or parts of regiments at the severe fight of King's Mountain, Cols. Williams, Shelby, Campbell, Sevier and Cleveland, were every one elders of Presbyterian churches.*

The part played in the course of this struggle by Dr. JOHN WITHERSPOON has been so much the theme of remark throughout these Centennial services that it is something more than superfluous to go into any detailed account of him. Yet a sketch of this kind would be too defective if he were wholly left out. He came to America in 1768, an adult and thoroughbred Scotchman, in consequence of his election to the presidency of the College of New Jersey. He had already been distinguished as a vigorous polemic, a keen satirist, a staunch though not always prudent defender of evangelical religion and Christian morality.

21, 1777. This cruel act was not committed by the Hessians, as commonly stated, but by a party of British dragoons.

* Smyth's *Eccles. Republicanism*, p. 145.

His *Ecclesiastical Characteristics*, dealing as it does in sarcasm, irony and personal caricature, is among the more doubtful methods by which a good cause may be defended. It was an anonymous exposure of the theological system and moral and religious character of the *low and slow* "moderates" of the Church of Scotland.

The work fell like a bombshell into the camp of the philosophizing, theatre-going, semi-deistical clergy, the friends of Hume, Lord Kames and Robert Burns. An outbreak of wrath followed. Dr. Witherspoon was a member of the presbytery of Irvine, and had just been "presented" to the living of Paisley. The presbytery of Paisley took up the book, pronounced it false and libelous, and lodged a complaint of it and its reputed author before the synod of Glasgow. Dr. Witherspoon defended himself in a firm and ingenious speech, challenging the proof of his authorship of the offensive publication and charging the presbytery of Paisley with a gratuitous and unauthorized attempt to destroy him indirectly, instead of coming manfully forward and tabling charges against him.

The result was his acquittal and triumph. But he fared less successfully in a subsequent collision with the civil courts. He was indicted for attacking certain persons by name from the pulpit, found guilty of libel and sentenced to the pay-

ment of a considerable fine. In his defence before the synod of Glasgow, Dr. Witherspoon had observed that if he had spoken of the Scottish Kirk with half the severity that many English writers had employed toward their own clergy "he should need to keep a ship always ready to flee to another country." The ship arrived now just at the critical moment, bringing to Dr. Witherspoon an invitation to accept the presidency of the College of New Jersey. He embarked and sailed away, leaving his sureties to settle as they could with the justices of the quorum.*

The *Ecclesiastical Characteristics* made an impression by its severity and personality much beyond what can be explained to the modern reader by its literary merits. The irony is too broad and coarse, and leaves the reader too little opportunity for the exercise of his own penetration in discovering the application. Another essay of the author's, an allegorical history of the Christian Church, and particularly of the Church of Scotland, under the figure of a "corporation of servants," is both far wittier than the *Characteristics* and much freer from objectionable personalities.

In all Dr. Witherspoon's miscellaneous writings

* Sprague's *Annals of the American Pulpit*, article JOHN WITHERSPOON.

the influence of his familiarity with the writings of Dean Swift is very observable. The treatise last named is evidently modeled on the *History of John Bull*, and while wanting in the grotesque humor of Swift's dialogue carries out the allegory with almost as grave and consistent an irony. With far less genius than the dean of St. Patrick's, he had the same literary audacity, the same plain, nervous English style, the same passion for dabbling in politics, and perhaps a little too much of the same willingness to indulge in coarse jests and allusions.

John Witherspoon was as true a type of the average Scotch Presbyterian mind as John Knox himself, from whom he is said to have descended. Hard, resolute, pugnacious, his mission was to fight the battles of religious liberty under what standard soever; and it may be regarded as probable enough that had he come to America at an earlier age he would have been as ready to draw the sword as to wield the pen in the cause of independence. While quite a youth his tastes led him to look on at the field of Falkirk, where the Highlanders of Charles Edward routed the royal army, and where, though a non-combatant, he remained a prisoner in the hands of the rebels. The bright blossoming of his piety and culture was guarded by the spines of a high temper and

a formidable logic. He bore on his very front the legend of his country's thistle, *Nemo me impune lacessit*.

Such a man, though but a recent immigrant, was as valuable as he was a ready champion of the rights of the colonies. His sentiments rapidly grew up to the height of those of the most advanced patriots. In his letter "On conducting the American Controversy" and his "Thoughts on American Liberty," while continuing to profess affection and loyalty to the British throne, he exposed with great clearness the actual situation of affairs and sketched with the hand of a statesman the steps the colonies should pursue for the vindication of their rights. In the pulpit he was equally outspoken. On the 17th of May, 1776, appointed by Congress as a day of fasting and prayer, he preached a sermon (afterward published with a dedication to John Hancock) on the text, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee, and the remainder of wrath thou shalt restrain." The theme was "God's dominion over the passions of men," and was drawn out into the proposition that "the ambition of mistaken princes, the cunning and cruelty of oppressive and corrupt ministers, and even the inhumanity of brutal soldiers, shall finally promote the glory of God; and in the mean time, while the storm continues, his mercy and kind-

ness shall appear in prescribing bounds to their rage and fury."

In the course of this sermon Dr. Witherspoon said, "You shall not, my brethren, hear from me in the pulpit what you have never heard from me in conversation: I mean railing at the king personally, or even his ministers and Parliament and the people of Britain as so many barbarous savages. Many of their actions have been worse than their intentions. That they should desire unlimited dominion if they can obtain or preserve it is neither new nor wonderful. I do not refuse submission to their unjust claims because they themselves are corrupt or profligate, though many of them probably are so, but because they are *men*, and therefore liable to all the selfish bias inseparable from human nature. I call this claim unjust of making laws to bind us in all cases whatsoever, because they are widely separated from us, are independent of us and have an interest in oppressing us. This is the true and proper hinge of the controversy between Great Britain and the colonies."

A few days after this sermon was preached Dr. Witherspoon became a member of the provincial Congress of New Jersey, and on the 22d of June was chosen one of the representatives to the general Congress. Only four days elapsed between his taking his seat in this august body and

the 2d July, when the declaration was adopted. He had not heard the debates; and though his own mind was irrevocably made up and he came, indeed, under instructions to vote for independence, yet to satisfy his own sense of self-respect he desired to hear the whole argument in the affirmative presented. To satisfy him and one or two others similarly situated this was agreed to; and, by the choice of his colleagues, Samuel Adams came forward and went over the whole ground.

Witherspoon no longer pretended any hesitation. He had not been willing to vote on so momentous a question without both hearing and giving reasons. He declared himself fully satisfied, and urged that the declaration should be passed without delay. He thought the country was ripe for it, and more than ripe: it was in danger of *spoiling* for the want of it. Besides this single dictum and the fragment of a speech traditionally imputed to him, we have no means of knowing what particular services he rendered the country on the floor of Congress; but his published "speeches" are a monument of his enthusiasm in the cause of liberty. In successive pamphlets he laid open before the world the causes and character of the war, warned the British people of the consequence of persisting in it, and in the name of his adopted countrymen

avowed that they infinitely preferred extermination to the surrender of their liberties. From this high flame of heroic argument he could descend to pillory a renegade parson or lampoon a tory printer. James Rivington, besides his other claims to notoriety, had "the fame to be lashed by his pen." In the cause of independence he fought with "what trivial weapon came to hand." *Libertati* (for liberty, he thought, as well as for necessity) *quodlibet telum utile*. For some enemies of freedom he scorned a sword. It was honor enough if he mauled them with a bludgeon or even defiled their faces with dirt. His sun both rose and set partly in clouds; but its middle course at least was resplendent with the light of heroism as a patriot, zeal and success as an educator of youth and faithful testimony as a preacher of the gospel.

The formal histories of our Church relate how many others of our clergy helped on the struggle for independence by brave words and brave deeds, by valiant service in the field or wise counsel in the senate. The whole weight of the only body of clergy and churches which, out of New England, enjoyed any appreciable prestige or influence, went undivided in aid of the cause of liberty. The schism in the Presbyterian body had been happily healed seventeen years before. The Church was absolutely harmonious and at peace within

herself, and acted as a unit in the struggle. There were a few instances, like the famous and witty Mather Byles, of Congregationalist tories, not one of a Presbyterian. The social status, the education and culture, the eloquence, the faith, the prayers of our Church fathers were enlisted on the side of independence; so that, as that staunch friend of the colonies, Horace Walpole, said, "There was no good in crying about the matter. Cousin America had run off with a Presbyterian parson, and that was the end of it."*

It is a circumstance of interest connected with this history that our struggle with Great Britain had nothing whatever of the character of a religious war. When, twenty years earlier, the provincials fought by the side of the British regulars for the mastery of the continent, it was against aliens and papists, with a legitimate horror of wooden shoes, frogs and the whore of Babylon. "Virginians, Britons, Christians, Protestants!" exclaimed Samuel Davies in 1756, "if you would

* Letter to the Countess of Ossory, August 3, 1775.

He was never tired of launching his indignant witticisms at the parliament and the conduct of the war. "The Americans, at least, have acted like men. Our conduct has been that of pert children: we have thrown a pebble at a mastiff, and are surprised it was not frightened."—December 15, 1774. "A great majority in both houses is as brave as a mob ducking a pickpocket. They flattered themselves they should terrify the colonies into submission in three months, and are amazed to hear there is no such probability. They might as well have excommunicated them and left the devil to put the sentence in execution."—February 18, 1775.

save yourselves and your families from all the infernal horrors of popery, if you would preserve your estates from falling a prey to priests, friars and hungry Gallic slaves, if you would preserve the pure religion of Jesus from superstition, idolatry and tyranny over the conscience, strike home in such a cause!"

But *here* we were arrayed against our brethren of the same Anglo-Saxon race, speaking the same "dear English tongue," and professing the same evangelical faith of the Reformation. Even those unfortunate Hessians, who were sold by the greed of their prince to kill and be killed in battles in the result of which they had no interest, were our fellow-Protestants and, I may say with a little allowance, our fellow-Presbyterians, formidable to our grandmothers by their outlandish speech and their bear-skin caps much more than to our grand-sires by any forward or ferocious valor in the field. They were the subjects of Frederic II. of Hesse-Cassel, himself a pervert to Romanism, while the great majority of his people were of the Reformed or the Lutheran confessions. It is pathetic to be told that when nine hundred of these poor "driven cattle" laid down their arms at Trenton, and were formed into columns to be marched off to their prisoners quarters, they lifted up their sad voices in the old familiar strains of a Vaterland's hymn, "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott" or some other.

Their own "wehr und waffen" had proved, indeed, but a poor reliance in their ignorant struggle against liberty. But God was their refuge and their strength, a very present help in trouble. The war was neither carried on, therefore, with that ferocity which characterizes religious wars, nor did it leave legacies of unsatisfied vengeance behind. Many of the Hessians remained as voluntary settlers when the royal armies finally withdrew, and became a valuable element in the composition of American society.

If we examine the records of the synod of New York and Philadelphia during the war, we find frequent evidence of the intense interest with which the struggle was viewed and the hearty patriotism of the Presbyterian clergy. In the pastoral letter already referred to, issued to the churches the 22d of May, 1774, the synod urges, "Be careful to maintain the union that at present subsists through all the colonies. In particular, as the Continental Congress now sitting in Philadelphia consists of delegates chosen in the most free and unbiased manner by the body of the people, let them not only be treated with respect and encouraged in their difficult service, not only let your prayers be offered up to God for his direction in their proceedings, but adhere firmly to their resolutions, and let it be seen that they are

able to bring out the whole strength of this vast country to carry them into execution."

Repeatedly the synod appointed days of fasting and humiliation in view of those sins which had brought down the "just judgment" of God in so destructive a war upon the colonists; and they made the last Thursday of each month "a monthly concert of prayer" for its early and successful termination. They felt no difficulty, as devout students of God's word and providence, in reconciling the unjust and wicked character of the war on the part of Great Britain with its righteousness as a part of the divine administration towards an ill-deserving generation. As subjects, indeed, they were the victims of oppression and misgovernment; but as sinners, they laid their hand upon their mouth and acknowledged that they received no more than the colonial iniquity deserved.

In 1779 the synod, "taking into consideration the great and increasing decay of vital piety, the degeneracy of manners, want of public spirit, and prevalence of vice and immorality that obtains throughout our land, and that the righteous God, by continuing still to afflict us with the sore calamity of a cruel and barbarous war, is loudly calling the inhabitants to repentance and reformation, and as a means thereto deep humiliation and frequent and fervent prayer," appointed the 17th of August to be observed for that purpose, and renewed the

recommendation for the patriotic monthly concert. Identically the same action, in the same words, seems to have been taken by the synod the year following, and the same month and day fixed upon for public humiliation and prayer. In 1777 the Continental Congress having appointed a general fast to be kept on the 17th of May, the moderator, by his own authority, postponed the meeting of synod till after that day; which was allowed to pass *pro hac vice* under protest. Louis XVI., whose throne was already beginning to totter, had become our ally; and on the 17th of May, 1782, the synod appointed a committee, of which Dr. John Witherspoon was chairman, to prepare an address to the French minister, congratulating him on the birth of a Dauphin, "son and heir to the crown of his royal master;" that unhappy "Bourbon" who died in the prison of the temple, but whom it is still believed by some we had "among us" disguised under the alias of Eleazar Williams, and in the shape of an Episcopal missionary to the St. Regis Indians.

III.

STRUGGLE FOR RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.

THE Presbyterian Church came out of the war whose success she had done so much to ensure, depleted indeed in her churches, many of which had been destroyed, and in her membership, which had left large contingents on every battle-field of the war, but with her organization intact, her machinery all in working order, and with a vigorous salient life that fitted her for an immediate career of growth and influence. That she stood far in advance of any other denomination in the land cannot be doubted. During all the preceding eight years of distraction and suffering, her ministry had steadily increased. The work of home evangelization had been systematically prosecuted. Pastors were detailed by order of the synod to supply occasional services to vacant congregations. Books of "practical religion" were purchased "for distribution among the frontier inhabitants;" missionaries were despatched to plant and nurse churches in the feebler colonies; chaplains were commissioned for the army; frequent cases of licensure and installation occurred; the work of discipline was faithfully attended to. The Indian fund, the widows' fund, the fund "for the education of poor and pious young men for the ministry,"—all these were carefully ad-

ministered. In every month of May during the war the synod held its regular "sederunt;" though the disturbed state of the country often prevented whole presbyteries from attending. Day after day during the sessions the quaint record informs us that "the synod met according to adjournment, *ubi post preces sederunt qui supra;*" an expansion of the cabalistic letters U. P. P. S. Q. S. found in the earlier minutes.

Particularly deserving of mention is the wise and firm policy of the synod in respect to the qualifications of candidates for the ministry. The urgent need of ministers in various parts of the country led to the natural suggestion, so often renewed in later times, that young men of suitable gifts and piety might be introduced to the ministry after only brief intellectual discipline. Such an overture was made to the synod in 1776 by the Presbytery of New Castle. The synod replied that "the superior advantages attending an education in public seminaries render it highly expedient to encourage the young men to finish their academical studies in such institutions, as means of securing a learned ministry; and presbyteries are ordered to promote this end by warmly recommending it to those who have the ministry in view. Yet as presbyteries are the proper judges to determine concerning the literary and other requisite qualifications for the

ministerial office, it is not intended to preclude from admission to trial those who have not had the opportunity of obtaining public testimonials or degrees from public seminaries."

To the same effect was a brief and positive deliverance of the synod in 1785. "An overture having been brought in in the following terms, viz., 'whether, in the present state of the Church in America and the scarcity of ministers to fill our numerous congregations, the synod or presbyteries ought therefore to relax in any degree in the literary qualifications required of intrants into the ministry,' it was carried in the negative by a great majority."

This was in noble harmony with the doctrine of the Kirk of Scotland as set forth in the first book of Discipline. "Neither for rarity of men, necessity of teaching, nor for any corruption of time, should unable persons be admitted to the ministry. Better it is to have the room vacant than to have unqualified persons, to the scandal of the ministry and hurt of the Kirk. In the rarity of qualified men we should call unto the Lord, that he of his goodness would send forth true laborers to his harvest."

The Presbyterian Church in America thus maintained her hereditary character for a thoroughly trained and cultured ministry. Her clergy at the close of the war were few in num-

ber, not exceeding probably one hundred and fifty; but they were men who had borne the test of fire; the peers for talent and accomplishment of the foremost in the State. They wore the prestige of a suffering and triumphant martyr-Church, fully identified with the spirit of the country. If any sect of Christians in the newly-founded republic could reasonably have claimed special favors from the State it was the Church of Rodgers and Caldwell, of Davies and Witherspoon, of Stanhope, of the Alisons and Blair Smiths, and the others whose conspicuous zeal had given the war the popular character of a "Presbyterian rebellion;" men whose lives had proclaimed before England and the world,

"We must be free or die, who speak the tongue
That Shakespeare spake; the faith and morals hold
Which Milton held. In everything we are sprung
Of earth's first blood, have titles manifold." *

It is not strange that other sects, conscious of this fact, looked upon her with some jealousy and alarm. Not the slightest effort did our fathers make to avail themselves of these advantages. They desired nothing but equal rights *for* all and *with* all Christians. In 1781 and again in 1783 they adopted this declaration: "It having been represented to synod that the Presbyterian Church suffers in the opinion of other denominations from

* Wordsworth, sonnets dedicated to Liberty, I. xv.

an apprehension that they hold intolerant principles, the synod do solemnly and publicly declare that they ever have and still do renounce and abhor the principles of intolerance, and we do believe that all peaceable members of civil society ought to be protected in the full and free exercise of their religion."

These just as well as generous sentiments were by no means universally entertained at that time. No sooner did the sun of peace illumine the land than Episcopacy, which had wholly disappeared from view, came forth again and with a singular lack both of modesty and justice endeavored to reclaim its lapsed colonial prerogatives. Our Church fathers were obliged to engage in a new struggle for religious equality.

This struggle took place chiefly on the soil of Virginia, in which, as already observed, Episcopacy had been most thoroughly established. On the 5th December, 1776, after a debate lasting for two months, in which Thomas Jefferson and other great men of the Old Dominion took part, the assembly of the State, *against the remonstrances of the Episcopalians and Methodists*, repealed all laws either requiring attendance on Episcopal services or levying taxes for the support of Episcopal worship; but all churches, chapels, parsonages, glebe lands, etc., originally the property of a people full two-thirds of whom belonged to

other denominations, were still left to the Episcopal Church. This was only an imperfect disestablishment, and the adherents of that Church by no means relinquished the hope of regaining the exclusive privileges they had lost.

Strong demonstrations were made toward suppressing "unlicensed preachers," punishing the irregularities of "*sectarian*" worship, and confirming the Episcopal Church in the unequal privileges it still retained.

That great patriot and broad Christian, Patrick Henry, brought forward in the Virginia legislature a bill for the incorporation of all Christian societies and the support of public worship by general tax. The splendid eloquence and immense popularity of the author gave dangerous advantages to the measure, and he urged it for two or more sessions with characteristic vehemence. The resistance to this bill—a bill which embodied in fact or in clear prospective all the evils of a union of Church and State—was led by the Presbytery of Hanover in Virginia, and it here becomes proper to give a brief history of the origin of that presbytery.

Previous to the year 1740 there was but a single Presbyterian church, so far as is known, in Eastern Virginia. The few who were not Episcopalians were Baptists or Quakers. In that year there was living in Hanover county (a

district made famous as the birthplace of Patrick Henry and Henry Clay, and "blazed broader yet in after years" as the scene of some of the fellest conflicts of the civil war) a well-to-do planter named Samuel Morris. He by no means belonged to the upper class of Virginia society, but was a plain man, working with his own hands, and, according to a MS. statement, joined the business of a mason to that of a planter. His soul had famished under the ministrations of the fox-hunting, tavern-haunting parish clergy. But the Spirit of God had touched his heart, and the providence of God strangely brought the truth of the Gospel within his grasp. Reaching blindly in the dark for some one to guide him in the way of life, he met the hand of Luther stretched out across two centuries, and bearing the commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, that most individual and subjective of all commentaries, "wherein is set forth most excellently (as the title page reads) the glorious riches of God's grace, and the power of the gospel, to the joyful comfort and confirmation of all such as do hunger and thirst for justification in Christ Jesus." Full as it is of Christ, and of redemption through his blood alone, it would scarcely now be considered the fittest work to present to an inquiring soul. But in Hanover county books were few and scarce then; and of the dilute, sugared and illustrated books contain-

ing salvation made easy, there were none. The awakened mind of the tobacco-planter grappled with the strong, vigorous exhibitions of gospel grace contained in the commentary on what Luther fondly called *his* epistle, and was led by it to a clear and solid peace in believing. He hardly thought or knew that he was a converted man; but he felt the love of Christ in his heart, and that love constrained him to try and do good to the souls of his neighbors. He invited them to come to his house on Sundays and hear him read passages from a book which had exerted so marked an influence on his own feelings. They attended, and he read to them chapter after chapter of the Bible and Luther on the Galatians.

That was all, absolutely. They knew nothing about extemporaneous prayer, and none of them durst attempt it. They had neither books nor culture for devotional singing.

Dull service, we might think, to bring together the people of a county! But such a famine of the word had been bred by the "Honeymans," the "Hagans" and "Sampsons" who had been sent over to evangelize the "Virginians"—so hungry were the people for the bread of life—that to enjoy this meagre worship they came trooping from a circuit of twenty, thirty or fifty miles. The gentleman planter rode out through his long

avenue, with his wife *en croupe* or ambling on her palfrey beside him ; the humbler farmer drove along his mule team or his ox-cart loaded with his family ; from the rude shanty and from the old English-like manor-house on the banks of the Pamunkey or the Chickahominy came the eager throng ; and on the outside hung a dusky fringe from the "quarter," to catch what they could of that free gospel which proclaims liberty to the captive and the opening of the prison doors to them that are bound.

The meetings increased in interest, and conversions began to follow. The planter's house became too small for the congregation. Mr. Morris and some of his neighbors agreed to club together and put up a building—they had no thought of calling it a church—to accommodate the worshippers. It was known as MORRIS' READING-HOUSE. The attraction of this service was such that other neighborhoods desired to enjoy the same privilege. Mr. Morris became a lay reader at several different and distant stations ; and the inquiry began to grow into a general awakening.

In 1743 an improvement of the spiritual fare came in the shape of Whitfield's *Sermons*, then lately published, a copy of which was sent over from Scotland, and presented by the owner to Mr. Morris. The parish churches were neglected, and

the people thronged to hear the simple story of the cross recited by these unauthorized lips.

The clergy took the alarm and called on the courts to visit the offenders with the prescribed penalties for absence from public worship. Mr. Morris and his friends were summoned before the justices, interrogated and fined; he himself twenty different times. The laws of Virginia frowned as sternly on all *religiones illicitas* as did the laws of the twelve tables. To secure any toleration a worship must be at least that of some "national religion."*

The dissentients were summoned to declare what denomination of Christians they belonged to. The question puzzled them not a little. They knew nothing of any sect besides the Quakers, and they were certainly not Quakers. They asked leave to consult together before replying to His Honor's inquiry. What they knew of gospel truth they had learned mostly from Martin Luther. The vanity of all outward services and formal rituals when the troubled conscience is crying out for peace, and the solid ground of hope presented in free justification through the grace that is in Christ Jesus, commended itself

* On the subject of Samuel Morris and the Presbyterians in Virginia, see Foote's *Sketches of Presbyterian Churches*, p. 119; Dr. Miller's *Memoir of Dr. John Rodgers*, p. 27, sqq.; Dr. Rice's *History*, p. 113, 186, 330, sqq.; Bishop Meade's *Old Churches and Families of Virginia*, vol. i. p. 426.

to their own experience. They came into court and answered that "they were Lutherans." Lutheranism was a national religion, and though the respondents only meant that they agreed with Luther in his views of the gospel, they escaped under this cover the punishment denounced against "sectarians."

Two English statutes respecting religious worship bore, or were alleged to bear, on the condition of the "Dissenters" in America. One was the Act of Uniformity of Queen Elizabeth, as further modified and extended in the reign of James I. and Charles II., making all dissent from the worship of the Established Church penal. The other was the Toleration Act of the Revolution government of 1688, which made cautious provision for the relief of dissenters. It did not, in terms, apply to the colonies. Indeed the specific mention of "England, Scotland, Ireland, Berwick-upon-Tweed and the islands of Jersey and Guernsey" as the scope of its operation might seem to exclude them; and the king's attorneys in Virginia always denied the right of the Presbyterians to avail themselves of its protection. It was at best a meagre and ungracious concession, and left the freedom of worship hampered with vexatious conditions.*

In the varying and unsettled state of judicial

* See the act in *Neal's History of the Puritans*, Appendix XIII.

decisions on this point, colonial dissenting preachers were treated with more or less rigor according to the tempers of royal governors or county justices; sometimes indulged on clearing themselves by oath of all suspicion of Unitarianism, popery or jacobitism; sometimes fined and driven out of the country.

While Mr. Morris and his friends were passing through this ordeal it happened that the Rev. William Robinson came, preaching as an evangelist, into the Valley of Virginia. He was the son of a wealthy English Quaker, but himself a Presbyterian, a member of the presbytery of New Brunswick and a zealous, rousing preacher of the gospel.* He was heard on some occasion by persons who had been accustomed to attend on the reading services of Mr. Morris. The latter was informed of this new evangelist and of the harmony of his doctrines with those of Luther and Whitfield. The result was an invitation to Mr. Robinson to preach on a set day in Morris' Reading House.

Notice was widely given and great crowds came together at the appointed time. But highly recommended as Mr. Robinson was for his evangelic zeal and faithfulness, these simple souls were jealous for the purity of the gospel. While the congregation waited they took the evangelist

* *Annals of the American Pulpit*, iii. 92.

aside and put him through a course of thorough examination on the leading doctrines. The result was satisfactory, and Mr. Robinson preached on that and several following days with great acceptance and a manifest blessing. They found themselves in perfect accord and sympathy with him. After a while it occurred to them somehow to ask him to what denomination of Christians he belonged. He said he was a Presbyterian. They then said that they believed *they* were Presbyterians.*

This was the germ of that strong vigorous Presbyterian Christianity which filled up and overflowed from that district, and of which the presbytery of Hanover was the first organized representative. Mr. Robinson's preaching made a profound impression. The people wished to express their gratitude by presenting him a considerable sum of money. He declined to receive it. They urged it upon him, but still he refused. They then placed it secretly in his saddle-bags the evening before he was to leave. Detecting the kindly fraud, he no longer resisted, but informed the donors that he would appropriate the money to the use of a young man of his acquaintance who was studying for the ministry under embarrassed circumstances. "As soon as he is

* It is not pretended in this brief historical sketch to give all the particulars, but merely to seize on the more salient points of the story.

licensed," said Mr. Robinson, "we will send him to visit you. It may be that you are now by your liberality providing a minister for yourselves."

They little knew the splendid result to which they were contributing, for that poor young man was Samuel Davies, the alpha in that southern cross of flaming evangelists who poured the light of the gospel on the "Ancient Dominion." Feeble in health and with the prospect, too surely realized, of an early death, he preached literally as a dying man to dying hearers. A more burning zeal, a more intense devotion to the work of saving men, a more heroic fidelity to truth and duty has never signalized the American pulpit. Four years after the events just related, in company with his intimate and equally distinguished friend, John Rodgers, he made his way to Hanover county, where he entered into and superseded the work of the friends who had helped in his education. It was only after an energetic struggle that he succeeded in vindicating his right to preach the gospel in Virginia, while his associate, notwithstanding the friendly disposition of Governor Gooch, was rudely refused a license and driven out of the colony.*

* Soon after Mr. Rodgers reached Williamsburg, one of the Established clergy of Hanover, who had followed him, appeared before Sir William Gooch and complained that this young gentleman before going to Williamsburg had preached one sermon in Hanover

Throughout this region Samuel Davies continued to preach with apostolic zeal, wearing out his frail body by extraordinary fatigues and exposures, till called for the short remainder of his brilliant career to succeed Jonathan Edwards in the presidency of the College of New Jersey.*

contrary to law, urging Sir William to proceed against him with rigor. Sir William's reply did equal honor to his religious sentiments and his official liberality: "Mr. —, I am surprised at you. You profess to be a minister of Jesus Christ, and you come to me to complain of a man and wish me to punish him for preaching the gospel! For shame, sir! Go home and mind your own duty. For such a piece of conduct you deserve to have your gown stript over your shoulders."—Dr. Miller's *Life of Dr. John Rodgers*, p. 54.

See the noble vindication of himself by Mr. Davies, addressed under date 11th May, 1751, to the bishop of London, in the *Princeton Repertory* for 1840.

* The just and elegant inscription on his tombstone in the Princeton cemetery, perhaps from the classical pen of Samuel Finley, who succeeded him so soon in the presidency and was so soon laid beside him in the grave, is as follows:

"Sub hoc marmore sepulchrali, mortales exuviæ reverendi perquam viri Samuel Davies, A. M., collegii novæ cæsariensis præsidis, futurum Domini adventum præstolantur. Ne te, viator, ut pauca de tanto tamque dilecto viro resciscas, paulisper morari pigeat. Natus est in comitatu de New Castle juxta Delaware 3 Novembris, anno salutis reparatæ, 1724. S. N. Sacris ibidem initiatus, 19 Februarii, 1747, tutelam pastorem ecclesiæ in comitatu de Hanover Virginiensium suscepit. Ibi per 11 plus minus annos ministri evangelici laboribus indefesse et favente numine auspiciato perfunctus, ad munus præsidiale collegii novæ cæsariensis gerendum vocatus est, et inauguratus, 26 Julii, 1759, S. N. Sed, proli rerum inane, intra biennium febre correptus, candidam animam cælo redidit, 4 Februarii, 1761. Heu! quam exiguum vitæ curriculum! Corpore fuit eximis; gestu liberali, placido, augusto. Ingenii nitore, morum integritate, munificentia, facilitate, inter paucos illustris.

Rei literariæ peritus; theologus promptus, perspicax. In rostris,

Other Presbyterian missionaries followed Mr. Robinson into Virginia. Congregations were gathered and churches organized; and on the 3d of October, 1755, the Synod of New York, reaching *over* into Virginia, ordered the erection of a new presbytery by the name of the Presbytery of Hanover. The original members were Rev. Samuel Davies, John Todd, Alexander Craighead, Robert Henry, John Wright and John Brown. The first meeting was appointed to be held in Hanover, and opened with a sermon by Mr. Davies.

This was the presbytery that now came forward to maintain against the eloquence of Patrick Henry and the zeal of Peyton Randolph the imperilled cause of religious liberty. In the most energetic terms they rejected for themselves, and reprobated for all others, any share in the proceeds of so ill-omened and illegitimate a partnership. They drew with a firm hand the line of demarkation between the functions of the Church and the State; showed the uselessness as well as the danger of attempting to support public worship by compulsory taxation; and insisted that any such measure was but the beginning of a usurpation, the end of which no man could deper eloquium blandum, mellitum, vehemens simul et perstringens, nulli secundus. Scriptor ornatus, sublimis, disertus. Præsertim viro pietate ardente in Deum zelo et religione spectandus."—Alden's *American Epitaphs*, Pentade I., vol. i., Art. 155.

termine. "These consequences," they said in conclusion, "are so plain as not to be denied; and they are so entirely subversive of religious liberty, that if they should take place in Virginia we should be reduced to the melancholy necessity of saying with the apostles in like cases, 'Judge ye whether it is best to obey God or men,' and also of acting as they acted."

"Therefore, as it is contrary to our principles and interest, and as we think subversive of religious liberty, we do again most earnestly entreat that our legislature would never extend any assessment for religious purposes to us or to the congregations under our care."

This vigorous protest decided the question for the time, and on the third reading the bill was rejected.

One other brief struggle remained. The idea of the necessity of a union of Church and State in some form had been so wrought into the Virginia mind, and the members of the old dominant Church reconciled themselves with so much difficulty to a simple equality with other sects, that on the conclusion of peace they came forward with a new attempt to recover their lost prerogatives. The project for a general assessment for religious purposes was revived, and a bill was introduced in the Legislature for securing to the Episcopal Church all the property, glebe lands,

&c., it had received from the State before the Revolution. This involved the rebuilding by public tax of all decayed or destroyed parish churches, the restoration of all sequestered church effects, and possibly also the payment of all arrears of clerical salaries.

The legislature of Virginia was, to a considerable extent, a system of pocket boroughs. The old hereditary legislators, the Nicholases, Randolphs, Lees, Pendletons, &c., had all been connected with the Established Church. They received the bill with great favor, and there was danger of its being rushed through in advance of any resistance. But the ever-vigilant presbytery of Hanover again came to the front and threw themselves into the breach. They had grown into veterans in the service of religious liberty, and shrunk from no conflict. A prompt, decided remonstrance from them brought the legislature to a pause.

The Presbyterian clergy seized the opportunity to act in mass. They came together in convention, adopted a new memorial and sent Dr. John Blair Smith, one of the most honored names in the history of the Church, to lay it before the House of Delegates. His argument of three days' duration settled the question finally and for ever. The bill was dropped, never to be revived.

This sounded the death-knell of all Church

establishment in America. Other States followed or walked *pari passu* with Virginia in the work of reform. With comparatively little resistance the union of Church and State was swept from the statute books of Delaware and Maryland, of New York, of North and South Carolina and Georgia; and religion, released from all trammels of human imposition, walked free and majestic in our emancipated States.

I cannot but lament that the name of that heroic presbytery, which stood foremost in the battle by which this victory was won, has, for the present, disappeared from our roll. Well may we be proud of a church that walked upright and unfaltering in the path of freedom when Patrick Henry stumbled.

With this defensive victory the presbytery of Hanover was content. The Episcopal Church indeed still retained a large amount of property, real and movable, which had been acquired by the proceeds of a general tax on all the inhabitants; particularly the glebe lands, of which most of the parishes in Virginia were possessed to the extent of not less than two hundred acres each. The first General Assembly of Virginia, after the adoption of the State Constitution in October, 1776, ordained "that there shall in all time coming be saved and reserved to the use of the Church by law established, the several tracts

of glebe lands already purchased, the churches and chapels already built, and such as were begun or contracted for before the passing of the said act for the use of the parishes; all books, plate and ornaments belonging to or appropriated to the use of the said church, and all arrears of money or tobacco arising from former assessments or otherwise."

This act recognized the Episcopal Church as still "established by law," and preserved to it in perpetuity the ownership of the glebe lands and other church property possessed before the Revolution. Being simply an act of the legislature, it was of course liable to repeal by any subsequent assembly; and considering their previous experience, it is not strange that other denominations should view with jealousy the slightest appearance of any concession of peculiar advantages to the Episcopal Church.

But it was not the Presbyterians who came forward to prosecute the quarrel against her. It was another body of Christians, the Baptists, who in their previous unorganized condition had suffered even more than Presbyterians from the laws against sectarian and unlicensed worship, that now, in their hour of triumph, turned against their late persecutors.

It was the "Baptists and their abettors" who urged the resumption by the State of the Church

lands. This object they prosecuted year after year with unabated determination, until, in 1801, success crowned their efforts and the glebes were publicly sold.

Dr. Baird maintains that this act of confiscation was unconstitutional, and adds that "the opposition to the Episcopal Church towards the end of the century was marked by a cruelty which admits of no apology."*

Not throwing any doubt whatever on the correctness of these opinions, we may yet observe that none of the melancholy consequences apprehended by the Episcopal clergy followed this spoliation. The glebes had been of little or no value to them. They consisted often of wild and unproductive lands. The advantage of being relieved from the odium of depending in any way on State bounty greatly overbalanced the small material loss. The laity came up to the demands of the voluntary system and assumed, no doubt cheerfully, the support of their own clergy. The character of the latter underwent a great and beneficent revolution. Purified by trials and led (after 1827) by their excellent prelate, Bishop

* Baird's *Religion in America*, I. iii.; *Collections of the Protestant Episcopal Historical Society for 1851*, pp. 166-181.

The *Address of the Rector of Antrim Parish*, on the proposed sale of the glebes in Virginia, is a modest and pathetic document, and serves to show how sweet are the uses of adversity for churches as well as for individuals.

Meade, they took on that devout, exemplary, evangelical type which has always since characterized the Virginia clergy.

IV.

INTERNAL VIEW OF THE CHURCH FROM THE CLOSE OF THE WAR TO THE ADOPTION OF THE NEW CONSTITUTION, 1783-1786.

It remains to add a brief outline of the history of the synod from the close of the war to the close of its own career as the chief court of the Presbyterian Church.

Articles of peace between Great Britain and her revolted colonies were signed at Paris, November 30, 1782. The war had virtually terminated a year before by the surrender at Yorktown of the last British army on the soil of America. The synod of 1783 met in the city of Philadelphia, undisturbed by any apprehensions of being abruptly adjourned to Bedminster or elsewhere by the approach of hostile forces. The attendance was small. The pastors were like men who had just escaped a great disaster, and were busied in gathering together their scattered effects and studying to repair the ruin. Money was wanting for the expenses of travel. The irredeemable paper currency had sunk to only a nominal value. It may be mentioned in illustration that the janitor

who waited on the synod received for his services three dollars in specie, which seems to have been regarded as equivalent to two hundred dollars continental currency, the amount that was paid the janitor the year previous.

The synod at once applied itself to the work of repairing the spiritual desolations caused by the war. They passed the emphatic disclaimer, already referred to, of any wish for advantages over their brethren of other denominations. They sent out to the churches a pastoral letter of congratulation and warning on the success of the American arms.

“We cannot help congratulating you,” they say, “on the general and almost universal attachment of the Presbyterian body to the cause of liberty and the rights of mankind. This has been visible in their conduct, and has been confessed by the complaints and resentment of the common enemy. Such a circumstance ought not only to afford us satisfaction on the review, as bringing credit to the body in general, but to increase our gratitude to God for the happy issue of the war. Had it been unsuccessful, we must have drunk deeply of the cup of suffering. Our burnt and wasted churches, and our plundered dwellings, in such places as fell under the power of our adversaries, are but an earnest of what we must have suffered had they finally prevailed.

“The synod, therefore, request you to render thanks to Almighty God for all his mercies, spiritual and temporal, and in a particular manner for establishing the independence of the United States of America. He is the supreme Disposer, and to him belong the glory, the victory and the majesty. We are persuaded you will easily recollect many circumstances in the course of the struggle which point out his special and signal interposition in our favor. Our most remarkable successes have generally been when things had just before worn the most unfavorable aspect, as at Trenton and Saratoga at the beginning, in South Carolina and Virginia toward the end, of the war.” They specify among other mercies the assistance derived from France, and the happy selection “of a commander-in-chief of the armies of the United States, who, in this important and difficult charge, has given universal satisfaction, who was alike acceptable to the citizen and the soldier, to the State in which he was born and to every other on the continent, and whose character and influence, after so long service, are not only unimpaired but augmented.”*

The scarcity of copies of the Bible had long been felt as a serious evil. The colonies had been accustomed to depend on the mother-country for a supply, and during the war this source had

* Hodge's *History of the Presbyterian Church*, ii. 495.

been cut off. An edition of the Scriptures was, for their feeble typographical resources, an immense undertaking. But in 1781 an enterprising Philadelphia printer, Robert Aitkin, had successfully accomplished it, and both religious and patriotic motives led the synod warmly to second the effort. "Taking into consideration the situation of many people under their care who, through the indigence of their circumstances, are not able to purchase Bibles and are in danger of perishing for lack of knowledge," they ordered contributions to be made for this purpose in all congregations, and appointed a committee to receive and apply them. "And as Mr. Aitkin, from laudable motives and with great expense, hath undertaken and executed an elegant impression of the Holy Scriptures, which on account of the importation of Bibles from Europe will be very injurious to his temporal circumstances, synod further agree that the said committee shall purchase Bibles of the said impression and no other; and earnestly recommend it to all to purchase such in preference to any other."

Whatever brings appropriately into view the character of that illustrious chief whom Providence had indeed preserved, as Davies prophetically saw, "for some important service to his country," and who had shown in his own example "how noble a virtue is patience, and how sure,

when rightly exercised, of its own reward," will be regarded as suitable for these pages.

Dr. John Rodgers had served during a part of the war as chaplain of Heath's brigade. The Christian philanthropy and the resources of more recent times have provided that no soldier, even of such vast armies as those which crushed the French empire in 1870, shall be unfurnished with at least the New Testament Scriptures. But beyond the preaching of the chaplain, the revolutionary troops enjoyed no means whatever for religious instruction. As the disbanding of the army was at hand, Dr. Rodgers earnestly desired that each soldier should receive as a parting gift from his country a copy of the Word of life. The 12mo edition of Mr. Aitkin, just before issued, furnished the opportunity, and Dr. Rodgers addressed a letter to General Washington congratulating him on the restoration of peace and soliciting his co-operation in carrying out this scheme. General Washington replied as follows:

HEADQUARTERS, 11th June, 1783.

"DEAR SIR: I accept, with much pleasure, your kind congratulations on the happy event of peace, with the establishment of our liberties and independence.

"Glorious indeed has been our contest—glorious if we consider the prize for which we have

contended, and glorious in its issue. But in the midst of our joys, I hope we shall not forget that to divine Providence is to be ascribed the glory and praise.

“Your proposition respecting Mr. Aitkin’s Bible would have been particularly noticed by me had it been suggested in season. But the late resolution of Congress for discharging part of the army, taking off near two-thirds of our members, it is now too late to make the attempt. It would have pleased me well if Congress had been pleased to make such an important present to the brave fellows who have done so much for the security of their country’s right and establishment.

“I hope it will not be long before you will be able to go quietly to New York. Some patience, however, will yet be necessary. But patience is a noble virtue, and when rightly exercised, does not fail of its reward.

“With much regard and esteem, I am, dear doctor,

“Your most obedient servant,

“GO. WASHINGTON.”

The synod also entered on measures for securing uniformity in the public praise of the Church. A committee was appointed to compare all the extant versions of psalmody and

digest from them "one more suitable to our circumstances and taste than any we have got;" a scheme which has only been successfully carried out in our own immediate times.

Action in regard to marriage within the prohibited degrees, as supposed to be defined by the Levitical law; in regard to slavery and the baptism of slave children; in regard to the demission of the ministry (refusing to permit the names of secularized ministers to be dropped from the roll); in regard to the pastoral visitation of common schools (inviting other churches to co-operate in this work); catechetical instruction in families, etc.,—was taken during these years.

The formation of new presbyteries broadened the geographical area of the Church; and it was found impossible in the condition of peace, as it had been during the disturbance of war, to secure the attendance of the remoter members. So long as it was made the business of no one in particular to attend, whole presbyteries were not infrequently absent.

It was quite natural, therefore, that attention should now be directed to the necessity of perfecting the organization of the Church, by providing for a representative assembly to be constituted of elected delegates. The thirteen States were occupied with this question at the same time with the thirteen presbyteries; and the

preliminaries for a General Assembly and a Federal Congress went on *pari passu*. This measure was first brought before the synod by an overture in 1785, and was made a special order for the year following, all the presbyteries being notified and expressly charged to attend.*

At the time fixed—viz., at the sederunt of the 19th of May, 1786—after full discussion it was resolved that, “considering the number and extent of the churches under our care, and the inconvenience of the present mode of government by one synod, this synod will establish out of its own body three or more subordinate synods, out of which shall be composed a General Assembly, synod or council, agreeably to a system hereafter to be adopted.”

At this point the present chapter closes. The successful carrying out of this important measure, the new impulse given by it to the growth of the Church, her subsequent trials and triumphs, fall to be related by another hand.

A few miscellaneous remarks may be allowed in conclusion.

The Presbyterian clergy of the Revolutionary

* The thirteen presbyteries at that time were New York, New Brunswick, First Philadelphia, Second Philadelphia, New Castle, Donegal, Lewes, Hanover, Orange, Dutchess, Suffolk, Redstone and South Carolina.

period were well-educated men. Almost without exception they were graduates of American or foreign colleges. The era of modern science had not yet dawned, and a far larger proportion of the college curriculum than now consisted of drill in the elements of the Greek and Latin languages. French and German were almost entirely unknown. The Latin was still to a considerable extent the common language in which educated men of different nations did or might communicate with each other. Latin epistolary correspondence was still not wholly obsolete. Latin epitaphs were still almost universal for scholars, and the official proceedings at college commencements were conducted entirely in that language. The ability to read and write Latin was therefore a necessary part of the culture of a Presbyterian clergyman, and it was with justice and reason that candidates for the ministry were required to present among other "trial-pieces" a Latin exegesis on some common head in divinity. This they were quite competent to do with integrity and with reasonable correctness of style. The surviving Latin compositions of the time are not inferior to those of the contemporaneous English or Continental scholars. The very different distribution of the students' time in our present academical and college course, and the introduction of the modern languages as

media of communication between alien scholars, sufficiently explains the decay of Latin scholarship among us. That few candidates for the Presbyterian ministry are now able to compose correctly in the Latin language, and that the exegesis still required of them furnishes no test whatever (except a negative one) of their acquaintance with that language, is notorious; yet out of regard to the supposed requirement of the Form of Government, and in oversight of the alternative permission to employ "*these or other similar exercises*" as tests of the candidate's literary fitness for the ministry, it is still commonly insisted on. Surely the time has come for dispensing with a measure which is both futile and fraudulent, and tends to throw ridicule on the serious business of licensing candidates to preach the gospel.

The pulpit style of the Presbyterian clergy of a hundred years ago presents generally a good example of strong, plain, undefiled English. It was wholly free from those affectations and tricks of speech by which feebleness of thought is sometimes attempted to be disguised. The prose of Dean Swift, of Addison and the English divines of the 17th century was their standard. When Samuel Johnson, with his customary suavity, said to Dr. John Ewing, "Sir, what do *you* know in America? You never read. You have no

books there," "Pardon me, sir," was the reply, "we have read the *Rambler*;" which was doubtless true to a limited extent; but the inflated periods of that writer were no more to the taste of American scholars than his exaggerated toryism. During the hundred years that have since passed, the language has undergone no change. In the works of Dr. Rodgers, Stanhope Smith, Samuel Finley and their brethren, not a word will be found that is not now in good pulpit use. The sermons of Samuel Davies might be preached to-day, and only excite surprise for the somewhat elaborate eloquence of the style, and the extraordinary force and pungency of their dealing with the conscience. Indeed, it was only in the colonial pulpit that the evangelical preaching of Howe and Baxter found an uninterrupted succession. The English language in its higher purity of written and spoken use, and evangelical preaching in its fullest development, came across the sea with the colonists, and domiciled themselves here by the altars of liberty.

The church architecture of the Revolutionary period in America was of course of a rude and simple character. The natural arches of the forest, from which the churches were hewn by the axes of the worshippers, as well as the heavy pressure of snow which the roofs were each winter required to sustain, would naturally have

suggested Gothic form. But scientific knowledge of architecture was wholly lacking in the colonies; with each new settlement the demand for a sanctuary was immediate, and the people satisfied their need by the same hasty carpentry by which the sons of the prophets enlarged their accommodations at Gilgal. The first rough log churches had mostly given place a hundred years ago to plain white-painted structures, with straight-backed pews, lofty galleries and a pulpit perched halfway between the floor and the ceiling. Stove, upholstery, organ, they had none. Church spires were by no means common, and bells were almost unknown, except in the larger cities. Even in New York an Episcopal congregation was indebted to the Lutherans for the loan of a church bell.

The day of peace and freedom had begun. The ploughshare of war had broken up the public insensibility; the sowers went forth to sow. Divine influences came down as rain upon the mown grass, and the beneficent fruits of revivals of religion, missions, and church enterprise of every kind began to appear.