

Church Hist. Bk.

HISTORY

OF ALL

THE RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS

IN

THE UNITED STATES:

CONTAINING AUTHENTIC ACCOUNTS OF THE

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

OF THE DIFFERENT PERSUASIONS:

WRITTEN EXPRESSLY FOR THE WORK,

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

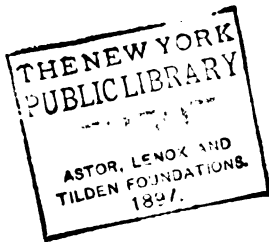
*J. S. Ebaugh
& Forsyth & others*

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tions of the official documents and records of the Presbyterian Church, and other reliable authorities, and in the arrangement and principal composition of that

part of the historical sketch which commences with the formation of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, and in the preparation of the statistical department.

HISTORY

OF

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

BY JOEL PARKER, D.D.

PASTOR OF THE CLINTON STREET CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA.

THE character and peculiarities of the Presbyterian Church, may be learned from the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America: containing the Confession of Faith, the Catechisms, and the Directory for the worship of God; together with the Plan of Government and Discipline as amended and ratified by the General Assembly at their session in the first Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, in May, 1840, and the annals of the church found in the published reports of the proceedings of its ecclesiastical judicatories. This church does not differ very materially in doctrine and worship, or in ecclesiastical government and order, from any of the great family of anti-prelatical churches that sprung from the Reformation, and which are commonly termed Calvinistic.

It acknowledges no authority in things pertaining to the doctrines and duties of the Christian Church, but the revealed will of God as found in the sacred Scriptures. It maintains—

That God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrine and commandments of men, which are in any thing contrary to his word, or, beside it in matters of faith, or worship;

that the rights of private judgment in all matters, that respect religion, are universal and inalienable, and that no religious constitution ought to be aided by the civil powers farther than may be necessary for protection and security, and at the same time be equal and common to all others.

That in perfect consistency with the above principle of common right, every Christian church, or union, or association of particular churches, is entitled to declare the terms of admission into its communion, and the qualifications of its ministers and members, as well as the whole system of its internal government which Christ hath appointed; that in the exercise of this right, they may, notwithstanding, err in making the terms of communion either too lax or too narrow; yet, even in this case, they do not infringe upon the liberty or the rights of others, but only make an improper use of their own.

That our blessed Saviour, for the edification of the visible church, which is his body, hath appointed officers, not only to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments, but also to exercise discipline, for the preservation of truth and duty; and, that it is incumbent upon these officers, and upon the whole church, in whose

name they act, to censure or cast out the erroneous and scandalous; observing, in all cases, the rules contained in the word of God.

That truth is in order to goodness; and the great touchstone of truth is its tendency to promote holiness; according to our Saviour's rule, "By their fruits ye shall know them." And that no opinion can be more pernicious or more absurd, than that which brings truth and falsehood upon a level, and represents as of no consequence what a man's opinions are. On the contrary, that there is an inseparable connection between faith and practice, truth and duty. Otherwise it would be of no consequence either to discover truth or to embrace it.

That while the above principle is highly important, yet it is necessary to make effectual provision that all who are admitted as teachers be sound in the faith. Nevertheless there are truths and forms, with respect to which men of good characters and principles may differ. And in all these cases it is the duty, both of private Christians and societies, to exercise mutual forbearance towards each other.

That though the character, qualifications, and authority of church officers are laid down in the holy scriptures, as well as the proper method of their investiture and institution; yet the election of the persons to the exercise of this authority, in any particular society, is in that society.

That all church power, whether exercised by the body in general, or in the way of representation by delegated authority, is only ministerial and declarative; that is to say, that the holy scriptures are the only rule of faith and manners; that no church judicatory ought to pretend to make laws to bind the conscience in virtue of their own authority; and that all their decisions should be founded upon the revealed will of God. Now though it will easily be admitted that all synods and councils may err, through the frailty that is inseparable from humanity: yet there is much greater danger from the usurped claim of making laws, than from the right of judging upon laws already made, and common to all who profess the gospel; although this right, as necessity requires in the present state, be lodged with fallible men.

That if the preceding scriptural and rational principles be steadfastly adhered to, the vigor and strictness of its discipline will contribute to the glory and happiness of any church. Since ecclesiastical discipline must be purely moral or spiritual in its object, and not attended with any civil effects, it can derive no force whatever but from its own justice, the approbation of an impartial public, and the countenance and blessing of the great Head of the Church Universal.

These catholic and liberal views, are the basis upon which the structure of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, rests. It does not regard itself as *the* Church, but only as a particular *branch* of the Catholic or Universal Church of Christ, which consists of all those persons in every nation, together with their children, who make profession of the holy religion of Christ, and of submission to his laws. It regards Papacy and Diocesan Episcopacy as great usurpations of ecclesiastical power, and highly unfavorable to the dissemination of the pure gospel, and uncongenial with our republican institutions. Yet, while Presbyterians believe that the parity of the clergy, and a representation of the laity in the officers denominated ruling elders, are important features of the Apostolic Church, clearly discernible in the New Testament, they do not deny the validity of ordinances, because mixed with the errors and usurpations of prelacy. On the contrary they dare not disown any church which holds Christ the head, and which is by him made the instrument of edifying spiritual believers, and extending substantial Christianity.

The officers of the Presbyterian Church are bishops or pastors, ruling elders, and deacons. "The pastoral office is the first in the church both for dignity and usefulness." The person filling this office is designated by different names in the New Testament, names expressive of various duties. As he feeds the flock of God, he is called their pastor or shepherd. As he has the oversight of a congregation, he is called their bishop or overseer. As he is expected to exhibit the gravity and wisdom of age, he is called a presbyter or elder. As he is *sent* a messenger to the church, he is

termed an angel. As he is entrusted with means of reconciling sinners, he is spoken of as an ambassador. And as he dispenses spiritual blessings, he is called a steward of the mysteries of God.

Ruling elders are elected by the people as their representatives. In conjunction with the pastor they exercise discipline. They are designated in the scriptures under the title of governments, and of those who rule well, but who do not labor in the word and doctrine.

Deacons are also regarded as distinct officers in the church. Their official duty is the care of the poor, and the reception and disbursement of the charities of the congregation. These duties are often performed by the elders, and it is not deemed indispensable that deacons should be appointed, unless the interests of the congregation demand it.

The session consists of the pastor or pastors, and the ruling elders of a congregation, and is the primary judicatory of the church. The pastor is its presiding officer, called the moderator. This court, thus constituted, has power to watch over the spiritual interests of the congregation, to inquire into the Christian deportment of the members of the church, to call before them offenders, and also to investigate charges presented by others, to receive members into the church, to admonish, to rebuke, to suspend, or to exclude from the sacrament of the Lord's Supper those who are found to deserve censure, according to the different degrees of their criminality. It is the business of the session also to appoint a delegate from its own body to attend with the pastor, the higher judicatories of the church. It is required to keep a fair record of all its proceedings, as also a register of marriages, baptisms, persons admitted to the Lord's table, deaths and other removals of church members, and to transmit these records to the presbytery for their inspection.

A presbytery consists of all the ministers and one ruling elder from each church, within a certain district. Three ministers, and as many elders as may be present, are necessary to constitute a quorum. The presbytery has power to receive and issue appeals from church sessions, and references brought before them in an orderly

manner; to examine and license candidates for the holy ministry; to ordain, install, remove and judge ministers; to examine, and approve or censure, the records of church sessions; to resolve questions of doctrine or discipline, seriously and reasonably proposed; to condemn erroneous opinions, which injure the purity or peace of the church; to visit particular churches, for the purpose of inquiring into their state, and redressing the evils that may have arisen in them; to unite or divide congregations, at the request of the people, or to form or receive new congregations; and in general to perform whatever pertains to the spiritual welfare of the churches under their care. The presbytery also keeps a full record of its proceedings; and its doings are subject to the revision of the synod, which is a court of appeal standing in a similar relation to the presbytery with that of the presbytery to the church session.

A synod is a convention of the bishops with one elder from each church in a larger district; it must include at least three presbyteries. The synod is the court of the last resort in all cases of a judicial nature, so that the whole appellate jurisdiction of the church is limited to its final decision as a **PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY**; having supreme control in its own appropriate sphere, though subordinate to the General Assembly, as to the review and constitutional oversight of its acts.

The synod reviews the records of presbyteries, approving or censuring their proceedings, erecting new presbyteries, uniting or dividing those which were before erected, and taking a general care of the churches within its bounds, and proposing such measures to the General Assembly, as may be for advantage to the whole church. The General Assembly is the highest judicatory of the Presbyterian Church.

It is not necessary to Presbyterian government, nor is any court higher than the presbytery; but it has the advantage of representing all the congregations of this denomination in one body. It is constituted of an equal delegation of bishops and elders, in the proportion of one minister and one elder from each presbytery; and these are styled, *commissioners to the General Assembly*.

Since the session of 1840, the Assembly exercises no judicial power, as it had formerly done, the synod now being the highest court of appeal.

In other respects the General Assembly possesses powers analogous to those of the inferior courts, in reviewing the records of synods, and approving or censuring them. It also gives advice on subjects brought up to it in an orderly and consistent manner; and constitutes a bond of union among all the churches. To the General Assembly also, belongs the power of deciding in all controversies respecting doctrine and discipline; of reproving, warning, and bearing testimony against error in doctrine, or immorality in practice in any church, presbytery, or synod; of erecting new synods when it may be judged necessary; of superintending the concerns of the whole church; of corresponding with foreign churches, on such terms as may be agreed upon by the Assembly and the corresponding body; of suppressing schismatical contentions and disputations; and, in general, of recommending and attempting reformation of manners, and the promotion of charity, truth, and holiness, through all the churches under their care: *provided*, that all these powers and relations of the Assembly shall be construed as exclusive of all the proper appellate jurisdictions of the church, in cases of a judicial nature. No modification of the constitution, or of constitutional rules can be introduced by the General Assembly, till such modifications shall have been transmitted to the presbyteries, and written answers approving of the same shall have been returned by at least a majority of them. The sessions of the General Assembly are held regularly once in three years. The synods meet annually, and the presbyteries once in six months.

There are provisions also, in the form of government, for convening any one of these judicatories for a special meeting, if any special exigencies shall demand such a step.

The public worship of God in the Presbyterian Church is not conducted by a prescribed liturgy. This church thinks it obvious that no forms of prayer, no prescribed liturgies were used in apostolic times, and she dares not introduce human

inventions into the mode of her worship. It cannot be supposed that Paul kneeled down on the shore, when he parted with his friends at Tyre, and *read* a prayer from a book; or that Paul and Silas used a prescribed form when they prayed at midnight in the prison at Philippi. The Lord's Prayer forms no objection to these views, because it is not given in the same words by any two of the Evangelists. Besides, it contains no clause asking for blessings in the name of Christ, which our Saviour himself solemnly enjoined upon his church, before he withdrew his personal presence. In the subsequent inspired history we find no allusion to this form of prayer, nor any reference to either *saying* or *reading* of prayers, both of which modes of expression are natural for those who employ precomposed forms. Socrates and Sozomen, respectable ecclesiastical writers of the fifth century, both declare, that in their day, "no two persons were found to use the same words in public worship." And Augustine, who was nearly their contemporary, declares in relation to this subject, "There is freedom to use different words, provided the same things are mentioned in prayer."

In forming her "Directory for the Public Worship of God," the Presbyterian Church regards the holy scriptures as the only safe guide; therefore she does no more than to recommend a judicious arrangement of the several parts of the public service, throwing upon the pastor the responsibility of preparing himself for a proper and edifying performance of those acts of worship, which shall be suited to the ever-changing wants of the congregation.

The sacraments of the church are regarded as being two only: baptism and the Lord's Supper. The former is ordinarily performed by Presbyterians by applying the water to the subject, though they do not deny the validity of immersion. Baptism is administered to adult believers and their infant offspring; but none are admitted to participate in the Lord's Supper who have not given evidence of personal piety, and of understanding the significance of the ordinance.

No rite is looked upon as possessing any intrinsic influence. Presbyterians do not believe that an influence of a myste-

rious kind passes from the hands of the presbytery into the spiritual nature of one set apart by them to the sacred office. On the contrary they regard the call to the ministry as proceeding from God. The candidate professes to have been moved by the Holy Spirit to desire the sacred office. He declares that he does, as far as he knows his own heart, seek the office of the holy ministry from love to God, and a sincere desire to promote his glory in the gospel of his Son. When the presbytery is satisfied that these professions have been made sincerely, and understandingly, they impose hands upon the candidate as a solemn recognition of one, whom they believe God has by his providence and grace "put into the ministry."

They deny also that any mysterious grace accompanies the water in baptism, or that the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper possess any new qualities after a blessing has been invoked by the officiating clergyman. They look for no other influence from religious rites than that, which results from a wise adaptation for enforcing truth, by striking symbols, and creating hallowed associations. They deprecate the doctrine of the transmission of a power to human hands to create ministers at will, or to convey certainly any grace to sinners, as tending to inflate the ministry with pride, to impart to them an influence which God never intended, and to sink the people into a degrading superstition.

From the same apprehension of the evils of superstition, and from the want of a warrant in the word of God, they reject Godfathers and Godmothers, and the sign of the cross in baptism, and holy days, and kneeling in the Lord's Supper and bowing at the name of Jesus, and the rite of confirmation, and the efficacy of consecrated grounds in the burial of the dead.

The doctrines of the Presbyterian Church are Calvinistic. They are so called, not because Calvin invented them. They were the doctrines of all the leading Reformers; of the Waldenses, for five or six hundred years before the Reformation; of Augustin and the primitive Church, and especially are they distinctly exhibited in the word of God. This system of doctrine is clearly set forth in the Westmin-

ster Confession of Faith, and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms.

Without pretending to expound fully the great principles, more amply unfolded in the standards of the church, we may say, briefly, that the Presbyterian Church maintains that, since the fall of Adam, and in consequence of his lapse, all men are naturally destitute of holiness, alienated entirely from God, and justly subject to his eternal displeasure. The plan of man's recovery from this state is, from first to last, a system of unmerited grace. The mediation of Jesus Christ, including his instructions, his example, his sacrifice on the cross, his resurrection, ascension, and intercession, are the means of bringing men back to God. Yet these means would be without efficacy, if there were not revealed to man a gratuitous justification through the merit of our Saviour's sacrifice, and if the Holy Spirit did not by his own invisible agency cause sinners to accept a free pardon and salvation. Hence the provisions of mercy are gratuitous, not only depending on the sovereign grace of God, but the disposition to accept these provisions is produced by a sovereign interposition of the divine Spirit. It is evident, from scripture, and from daily observation, that all are not saved; and, consequently, that it was not the original purpose of Him who never changes his plans of operation, to bring all to repentance and faith in the Redeemer. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. All the dispensations of his grace, as well as of his providence, and among the rest the effectual calling and salvation of every believer, entered into his plan from all eternity." "Yet so as that thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established."

It is undeniable that these views may be perverted and misrepresented, and rendered odious by drawing inferences from them which Presbyterians do not allow. For such perversions those of no creed are responsible. If we might refer to a single argument in which the distinguishing peculiarities of the doctrines of the Presbyterian Church are most triumphantly

maintained, it should be that masterly homily of the Apostle Paul, or rather of the Holy Spirit, dictated to the apostle as his amanuensis, comprised in his Epistle to the Romans.

Whatever odium has been cast upon the Presbyterian Church for holding Calvinistic doctrines, it ought to be remembered that the honor of bearing it does not belong to them. It belongs to all the Reformers, to the symbols of the Synod of Dort, the Heidelberg Confession and Catechism, and the Thirty-nine Articles of the Established Church of England, and of the Episcopal Church in this country. If the English Church has fallen into such a spiritual state that the Earl of Chatham was justified in saying, "We have a Popish liturgy, a Calvinistic creed, and an Arminian clergy;" and if the churches on the continent of Europe have sunk to a lower condition, because a vigorous dissent has not infused a little spiritual life into the establishments: surely the Presbyterians of Scotland and America are not worthy of very severe censure for keeping alive, at the same time, the doctrines of Calvinism and the spirit of piety.

The genius and character of the Presbyterian Church, in the United States of America, has been modified by a union of churches possessing some varieties of feature, while agreeing in the great leading principles of Presbyterian government and Calvinistic doctrine. In 1689, the Presbyterian and Congregational denominations in Great Britain consummated a union of the two denominations, adopting what they call the Heads of Agreement, embracing a few cardinal principles which were to govern them in their fraternal intercourse. This Presbyterian and Congregational union, sent over one of their number, the Rev. Francis McKemie, as a missionary to the new settlements in America. This devoted missionary, who had previously labored here with apostolic zeal, and who has been properly styled the father of Presbyterianism in America, in connection with six others, viz., Messrs. McNish, Andrews, Hampton, Taylor, Wilson, and Davis, in 1704, or 1705, formed the first presbytery in this country, the Presbytery of Philadelphia. This presbytery was formed upon the princi-

ples that governed the London association, and was composed partly of Presbyterian and partly of Congregational churches. The Presbyterianism was that of the Church of Ireland, and was more flexible in its character than that of the Scottish Kirk. It more easily coalesced with the Congregationalism of the English Puritans. The Rev. Mr. Andrews, the first pastor of the first Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia, was a Congregational Presbyterian. That church was under the care of the presbytery sixty-four years before they elected ruling elders. Presbyterianism gradually extended itself till, in 1716, the Synod of Philadelphia was formed out of the Presbyteries of Philadelphia, New Castle, Snow Hill, and Long Island. The Church of Scotland, instead of imbibing these principles which resulted in the Union of 1689, and in the establishment of a modified Presbyterianism in America, solemnly bore their testimony against religious toleration. In 1724, those ministers from Scotland who, in the language of Dr. Miller, "were desirous to carry into effect the system to which they had been accustomed, in all its extent and strictness," began to insist that the entire system of the Scottish Church be received in this country. The collisions thus occasioned at length subsided in the Adopting Act of 1729, the liberal principles of which were embodied in the following language: "Although the synod do not claim or pretend to any authority of imposing our faith on other men's consciences, but do profess our just dissatisfaction with, and abhorrence of such impositions, and do not only disclaim all legislative power and authority in the church, being willing to receive one another as Christ has received us to the glory of God, and admit to fellowship, in church ordinances, all such as we have ground to believe that Christ will at last admit to the kingdom of heaven; yet, we are undoubtedly obliged to take care that the faith once delivered to the saints be kept pure, and uncorrupt among us, and do therefore agree, that all the ministers of this synod, shall declare their agreement in, and approbation of the Confession of Faith, with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms of the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, as

being in all essential and necessary articles, good forms, and sound words and systems of Christian doctrine, &c. And we do, also, agree that the presbyteries shall take care not to admit any candidate, but what declares his agreement in opinion with all the essential and necessary articles of said Confession. And in case any minister or any candidate shall have any scruples with regard to any article of said Confession or Catechisms, he shall declare his sentiments to the presbytery or synod, who shall, notwithstanding, admit him to the exercise of the ministry within our bounds, if they shall judge his scruples or mistakes to be only about articles not essential and necessary in doctrine, worship, and government. And the synod do solemnly agree, that none of us will traduce or use any opprobrious terms towards those who differ from us in those extra-essential and not necessary points of doctrine, but treat them with the same friendship, kindness, and brotherly love, as if nothing had happened."

After some years this spirit of conciliation and charity gave place to a determination on the part of some, to enforce the more rigid forms of the Scottish Church. This led to the first great schism of the Presbyterian Church in 1741, and to the formation of the Synod of New York, in 1745.

In 1758, which was fifteen years after the separation, the Synods of New York and Philadelphia were united. No cause of disunion had been removed, except that greatest cause of division: ambitious men and evil tempers; for when the reunion took place, they agreed to adopt the Confession of faith, Catechisms, and Directory, as they had been adopted in 1729. In 1766, eight years after the union of the synod under the name of the Synod of New York and Philadelphia, that body proposed a convention of delegates of the pastors of the Congregational, Consociated, and Presbyterian Churches in North America, which was held annually for ten years, when it was interrupted by the American Revolution. In 1788, the General Assembly was organized, and in 1790, the Assembly "being peculiarly desirous to renew and strengthen every bond of union between brethren so nearly agreed in doctrine and forms of

worship, as the Presbyterian and Congregational Churches evidently are, do resolve that the Congregational Churches of New England, be invited to renew their annual convention with the clergy of the Presbyterian Church." This resolution led to the adoption of the plan of correspondence with the Congregational bodies of New England, which is still in existence, and according to which "every preacher travelling from one body to the other, and properly recommended, shall be received as an authorized preacher of the gospel, and cheerfully taken under the patronage of the presbytery or association, within whose limits he shall find employment as a preacher."

These conciliatory proceedings led to unexampled success in extending the Presbyterian Church, and in 1801, the General Assembly devised some new "regulations to promote harmony in the new settlements."

These regulations were proposed to the General Association of Connecticut, and met with their cordial concurrence. They may be found under the title of "A Plan of Union," &c., in the Assembly's Digest, p. 297, as follows, viz.:

"Sec. 5. A plan of Union between Presbyterians and Congregationalists in the new settlements, adopted in 1801.

"The report of the committee appointed to consider and digest a plan of government for the churches in the new settlements was taken up and considered; and after mature deliberation on the same, approved as follows:

"Regulations adopted by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, and by the General Association of the State of Connecticut, (provided said Association agree to them,) with a view to prevent alienation, and promote union and harmony, in those new settlements which are composed of inhabitants from these bodies.

"1. It is strictly enjoined on all their missionaries to the new settlements, to endeavor, by all proper means, to promote mutual forbearance and accommodation, between those inhabitants of the new settlements, who hold the Presbyterian, and those who hold the Congregational form of church government.

similar invaluable Christian productions, throughout the Republic, and especially among the *Household of Faith*, far transcends our utmost imagination; and the exhilarating anticipation cannot be otherwise expressed, than in the Psalmist's urgent petition, "O Lord, we beseech thee, send now prosperity!" Amen.

Missions.—This portion of the philanthropic labors of the Presbyterian churches is conducted by two distinct agencies and boards of managers.

Domestic.—The primary arrangements for Home Missions, under the committee appointed by the General Assembly, were comparatively restricted in extent and languid in their operations; until in 1828, the present efficient system was adopted, through which "there has been a gradual but constant increase in the number of missionaries, the amount of funds collected, the interest excited, and the good accomplished." Three hundred missionaries are now employed, while the prospect of usefulness in spreading the gospel never was more promising than at the present period. Signal success already has attended the work under the divine blessing; and every heart must exult in the glorious prospect, that "the righteousness" of Zion "shall go forth as brightness," and "the salvation" of Jerusalem "as the lamp that burneth."

Foreign.—"The first mission to the heathen, established by the Presbyterian Church, was among the Indians on Long Island, in the year 1741. David Brainard was the second missionary. His ordination took place in the year 1744, and the fields of his remarkable labors were at the forks of the Delaware, on the borders of the Susquehanna, and at Crossweeks in New Jersey. From that period, increasing attention was given to this great subject, and various missionary societies were formed in which Presbyterians largely participated. This was particularly the case in the United Foreign Missionary Society, which after a brief career was eventually merged in the 'American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.'"

Notwithstanding, many Presbyterians were solicitous that their own churches should separately engage in the mission-

ary work. In consequence of which, "In the year 1831, a determined and active effort was made by the Synod of Pittsburg, to awaken the church to a sense of her duty in this respect, by the organization of the 'Western Foreign Missionary Society.' This society met with so much favor, that the General Assembly in 1835, resolved to engage the whole church in an enterprise worthy of her character and resources. The 'Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions,' was organized in the year 1837, under favorable auspices, and to it was made an entire transfer of all that pertained to the Western Foreign Missionary Society."

"The experiment has succeeded, and the smiles of God have rested on that institution. Flourishing missions have been established among various tribes of American Indians, in Western Africa, Northern India, and China, and all the operations are carried on with great ability."

In Northern India, there is a synod of American missionaries in connection with the General Assembly; comprising the Presbytery of Allahabad, of six ministers—the Presbytery of Furrukabad, of four ministers—and the Presbytery of Lodiana, of five ministers. The Board of Missions issues two monthly periodicals, the "Missionary Chronicle," and the "Foreign Missionary;" which are extensively dispersed, and effectually sustain the solicitude that is experienced to "send out the light and the truth."

The foregoing article claims to be but little more than an authentic compilation. The writer has freely copied and incorporated with his own language, the language of such of his authorities as suited his purpose, without specific notice. He takes this place to acknowledge his obligations of this sort to the authorities on which he has thus drawn, viz: The Confession of Faith; Edinburgh Encyclopædia; Miller's Christian Ministry, and Presbyterianism; Histories of the Westminster Assembly, by Hetherington, and by the Presbyterian Board of Publication; and Hodge's Constitutional History of the Presbyterian Church. He has also received very essential aid from the Rev. George Bourne, in the sedulous explora-

tions of the official documents and records of the Presbyterian Church, and other reliable authorities, and in the arrangement and principal composition of that

part of the historical sketch which commences with the formation of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, and in the preparation of the statistical department.

HISTORY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

BY JOEL PARKER, D.D.

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That in perfect consistency with the above principle of common right, every Christian church, or union, or association of particular churches, is entitled to declare the terms of admission into its communion, and the qualifications of its ministers and members, as well as the whole system of its internal government which Christ hath appointed; that in the exercise of this right, they may, notwithstanding, err in making the terms of communion either too lax or too narrow; yet, even in this case, they do not infringe upon the liberty or the rights of others, but only make an improper use of their own.

That our blessed Saviour, for the edification of the visible church, which is his body, hath appointed officers, not only to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments, but also to exercise discipline, for the preservation of truth and duty; and, that it is incumbent upon these officers, and upon the whole church, in whose

"2. If in the new settlements, any church of the Congregational order shall settle a minister of the Presbyterian order, that church may, if they choose, still conduct their discipline according to Congregational principles, settling their difficulties among themselves, or by a council mutually agreed on for that purpose: but if any difficulty shall exist between the minister and the church, or any member of it, it shall be referred to the presbytery to which the minister shall belong, provided both parties agree to it; if not, to a council consisting of equal numbers of Presbyterians and Congregationalists, agreed upon by both parties.

"3. If a Presbyterian church shall settle a minister of Congregational principles, that church may still conduct their discipline according to Presbyterian principles; excepting that if a difficulty arise between him and his church, or any member of it, the cause shall be tried by the association to which the said minister shall belong, provided both parties agree to it; otherwise by a council, one-half Congregationalists and the other half Presbyterians, mutually agreed on by the parties.

"4. If any congregation consists partly of those who hold the Congregational form of discipline, and partly of those who hold the Presbyterian form, we recommend to both parties that this be no obstruction to their uniting in one church, and settling a minister: and that, in this case, the church choose a standing committee from the communicants of said church, whose business it shall be to call to account every member of the church who shall conduct himself inconsistently with the laws of Christianity, and give judgment on such conduct; and if the person condemned by their judgment be a Presbyterian, he shall have liberty to appeal to the presbytery; if a Congregationalist, he shall have liberty to appeal to the body of the male communicants of the church: in the former case the determination of the presbytery shall be final, unless the church consent to a further appeal to the synod, or to the General Assembly; and, in the latter case, if the party condemned shall wish for a trial by a mutual council, the case shall be

referred to such council. And provided that the said standing committee, of such church, shall depute one of themselves to attend the presbytery, he may have the same right to sit and act in the presbytery as a ruling elder of the Presbyterian Church.

"On motion, resolved, that an attested copy of the above plan be made by the stated clerk, and put into the hands of the delegates of this Assembly to the General Association, to be by them laid before that body for their consideration; and that if it should be approved by them, it may go into immediate operation."

This plan was acceded to by the General Association of Connecticut, and its practical working was remarkably harmonious for more than thirty years. During this period, the Presbyterian Church was extended with unexampled rapidity. "The Plan of Union" operated in forming churches of the mixed character contemplated by this scheme. But the clergy were generally favorable to Presbyterian government; and as its representative feature agreed so well with the nature of our civil institutions, and secured all the substantial advantages of Congregationalism, the churches almost uniformly became Presbyterian in full, at no distant period from the date of their formation. In 1803, the Synod of Albany was constituted from the Presbyteries of Albany, Oneida, and Columbia. Through this synod the Plan of Union extended its united forces with the rolling flood of population over the beautiful regions of western New York. Within a few years the Presbyteries of Onondaga, Cayuga, and Geneva, were successively organized, constituting an extended western limb of the Synod of Albany.

The last named three presbyteries were then, by a division of the Synod of Albany constituted into the Synod of Geneva.

This body extended itself to the shores of Lake Erie and the Niagara river. In 1805, this extensive synod was divided by the General Assembly, and the Synod of Genesee was erected from the western portion. Thus the Synod of Albany, where the Plan of Union first began to operate, became three large synods, including thirty-four presbyteries before

1837. Congregationalism was rapidly declining over all that region, and some whole presbyteries scarcely contained one church on the principles contemplated by the Plan of Union. This scheme for promoting harmony had accomplished the work for which it was designed; it had moulded the mixed mass into a comparatively homogeneous Presbyterian community. It was perhaps well that the Plan of Union should be abrogated. Presbyterianism was so thoroughly established, that no other consequences could well result from the change, except perhaps, the falling back of a few churches to pure Congregationalism.

Yet the very success of this plan became the occasion of separating the Presbyterian Church into two great bodies of nearly equal numerical force. But while the Plan of Union became the occasion of this rent, it was by no means the cause of it.

There were two parties in the church. There always had been from the time that McKemie and his associates formed the Presbytery of Philadelphia in 1705. The English Puritan and the Scotch elements that were commingled in the association formed in England between the Presbyterian and the Congregational denominations, were transplanted into America.

In this compound the Puritan influence was at first predominant. But a large share of the English immigration fell naturally into the Congregational Churches of New England, while nearly all the Scotch as naturally dropped into the Presbyterian Church. Hence the Scotch element became more and more influential, as it came to bear a greater proportion to the whole body. Hence too the "old side" and the "new side," and the division of 1741. These parties possessed in their common symbols of faith, and in their common attachment to free non-prelatical principles, affinities of sufficient force to draw them together in some system of Christian co-operation. Yet there were differences, which like the repulsion existing between the particles of matter, when brought near to one another, resisted any thing like a complete coalescence.

The appellations "old side" and "new side," and "old school" and "new school,"

have been justly complained of as an arrogant claim for themselves on the part of those terming themselves "old school," and as evincing an attempt to cast odium upon their brethren as having less reverence for scriptural teaching, and the ancient paths of Christianity.

The terms Scotch party, and Puritan party, cannot be reasonably objected to, because each party glories in its own ancestry in this respect.

The differences of these two parties in their native characteristics, are pretty well understood. The Puritan is satisfied with maintaining the great leading truths of the Calvinistic faith, and is ready to waive minor differences, and to co-operate with all Christian people in diffusing evangelical piety. Hence, though the mass of our Puritan people preferred Congregational government, they looked calmly on, while hundreds of their ministers, and thousands of their church members were becoming thorough Presbyterians. The Scotch, on the contrary, were of a more inflexible character. They too loved Calvinistic doctrines, and if they had less zeal than the Puritans in diffusing our religion, and in acting for the regeneration of our country and the world, they were second to no other people on earth in these respects.

The differences in doctrine between the two had respect mainly to three points of explanation of great facts in the Calvinistic system. They both agreed that the whole race of Adam were sinners by nature. Many of the Scotch school maintained that sin was literally infused into the human soul prior to any moral agency of the subject.

Many of the Puritan party alleged that this was not the mode by which all men became sinners, but that it was enough to say that there were certain native propensities in every descendant of Adam, which naturally and certainly induced sinful action with the commencement of moral agency.

Many of the Scotch party maintained that the atonement of Christ is intended as a provision for the elect alone. The Puritan party asserted that the atonement is made for the race as a whole, so that it may be truly said to every lost sinner, after he shall be shut up in the eternal

prison, "You might have had salvation; Christ purchased it for you, and proffered it to you in all sincerity."

The Scotch party maintained, that unconverted sinners were perfectly unable, in every sense, to comply with the requirements of the gospel. The other party alleged, that "God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty, that it is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature, determined to good or evil." Many individuals were found, on both sides, that pushed these views to an extreme; but far the greater proportion of the clergy, in each party, were content to preach the gospel faithfully to their respective flocks, with so little of the controversial spirit, that the greater part of their intelligent hearers, did not understand that there was any perceptible difference in the theology of the two schools. Indeed, the division cannot be said to have taken place on theological principles.

Nor did the difference of measures for promoting religion exert any influence directly in producing the separation. The people of western New York were a staid New England population. When some irregularities sprung up among them, strong remonstrances were called into exercise in their own community, by this infringement of the uniform and long established order to which they had been accustomed. But, the same irregularities that produced unhappy excitements there, are, at this day, exceeded, by far, in many portions of the Presbyterian Church, that have been wholly moulded by the Scotch party. We have known a church, in a village of western New York, thrown into great excitement, because a member was admitted to the communion of the church, with only one week's probation, after his first expressing a hope in Christ. This, too, when the man was a respectable citizen, a regular attendant upon the sanctuary, and of most blameless morals. Such were the habits of the Christian community, that great anxiety was created by what was there deemed so hasty a step in the reception of a convert to the ordinances of the church. Yet the writer of this article has witnessed in the state of Kentucky, under the Scotch system, an instance of a woman's coming to what

was, untastefully enough, called an "anxious seat," on Saturday evening, indicating there and by that act, for the first time, that she was impressed with the great truths of the gospel; and yet she was received to the church the next day, without creating even surprise among the people.

This was not a new measure at the West, because the people were accustomed to it. It would probably be looked on as an act of hurried fanaticism in the most extravagant Presbyterian church in western New York, at the present day.

The causes of the division lay back of any serious differences in doctrines or measures. The Domestic Missionary Society, in New York, was a voluntary association, sending its missionaries to the new settlements of our western frontiers. The General Assembly also employed missionaries to labor upon the same field. Some friends of domestic missions in New England and New York, conceived of a noble project for increasing the efficiency of the domestic missionary movement.

It had been satisfactorily proved by the munificence of an individual, that the sum of one hundred dollars, given to a feeble congregation, would operate as an encouragement to the people, to secure a continuous dispensation of the gospel among them.

After some communications from one to another, among distinguished Christian philanthropists, the Domestic Missionary Society was merged in the American Home Missionary Society, formed in New York, in 1826. This society enjoyed a success which the missions of the General Assembly had never possessed.

The reasons were obvious. According to its plan of operations, every one hundred and sixty-two dollars, secured the planting of a missionary for one year, over a feeble church. Its funds were collected by soliciting from the benevolent considerable annual donations to its treasury. Many wealthy Christians contributed a sum sufficient to support one, two, three, or more missionaries. On the plan of the Assembly, every missionary cost its mission four hundred and sixty-six dollars. Its collections, too, were mainly sought for in small sums. "The fifty

cent plan," as it was termed, was greatly relied on.

This plan of soliciting from every member of the church, a penny a week, failed to secure any great amount of funds. The wealthy were pleased with a plan so agreeable to a parsimonious spirit; the solicitation was not universal, and great numbers failed to comply with a request so reasonable. Here was the germ of the difficulty. The Home Missionary Society extended its influence rapidly. The plan was popular. The results gave it increased eclat, and those who were connected with it, acquired a vast moral influence in the church. This influence was wielded mainly by those who were of the Puritan party. In Philadelphia, there was another kind of influence. It was ecclesiastical, and arose from that city's being the birthplace of American Presbyterianism, and the place where the General Assembly held its annual sessions. In that Jerusalem of our beloved church, resided men venerated for their years, and respected for their learning, piety, and usefulness. They were of the Scotch party. "They were desirous," as Dr. Miller said of the ministers from Scotland, at another period, "to carry into effect the system to which they had been accustomed in all its extent and strictness." The Home Missionary Society, and the Plan of Union, promoted a rapid growth of the Puritan element in the Presbyterian Church. That portion of the church which had received its cast and tone from New England, possessed an efficiency in impressing its own character upon our growing population, which the Scotch party did not possess. It gave funds for the missionary work with far greater liberality; it educated men for the sacred office in greater numbers, it co-operated with other denominations more freely. It was the more popular and growing portion of the church, and it was evident that the day was not very distant, when it would have a strongly ascendant influence in the Presbyterian Church, unless something were done to check its power.

This naturally created anxiety in those who had been accustomed to a strong control in the ecclesiastical judicatories. They

felt that the church would be unsafe, if the power should pass into other hands. Hence arose accusations for heresy against ministers whose reputation for orthodoxy never could be brought into question with any intelligent, uncommitted hearers of their preaching. Three distinguished prosecutions for heresy were instituted as a means of carrying out the designs of the Scotch party. These were the cases of the Rev. George Duffield, of Carlisle; the Rev. Albert Barnes, of Philadelphia; and the Rev. Lyman Beecher, D. D., of Cincinnati. These prosecutions were carried on with great zeal for several years; that of Mr. Barnes lasted six years; but all proved signal failures. There was a tone of moderation and piety in the church, which would not allow such men to be deposed as heretics.

These efforts were accompanied by a warm resistance of voluntary associations in the work of missions, and in educating young men for the sacred office; and also by a complaint of extravagance and new measures in the region where "the Plan of Union" had exerted its influence. It cannot be denied, indeed, that extravagances existed in western New York; but they were extravagances of which the other party had no right to complain, and of which they would probably never have heard, if the Puritan party had been as much accustomed to camp meetings, and anxious seats, and hasty admissions, as extensive regions of the church under the control of the Scotch party had been.

The Scotch party was doubtless sincere in magnifying every cause for apprehension in regard to the doctrines, and the order of the other portion of the church. Good men accustomed to great influence very easily believe, that if power passes from their own hands, it will be exercised with less discretion.

The moderate party had the advantage in point of numbers; but they had less of *esprit du corps*, less of organization as a party, and less disposition to contend. The Scotch party organized themselves by conventions and appeals through the press, representing the church as being in extreme danger from heresy in doctrine, and innovations upon established order. The feelings to which they appealed were a

warm regard for Presbyterian order and doctrine. The Puritan party really believed that it was unjustifiable to attempt to meet these war-like preparations by demonstrations of the same character. They thought, if they still devoted their energies to the cause of missions, and the progress of piety in our own church, and in the country at large, God would protect their cause.

The General Assembly of 1837, convened in Philadelphia. It was distinctly understood, previously to the meeting, through a convention of that party, that if they could secure a majority, some measures would be adopted which would disable, ever thereafter, the moderate party in the church. The desired majority was obtained. They first abrogated the Plan of Union, and then declared four synods, viz : those of Utica, Geneva, Genesee, and the Western Reserve, out of the Presbyterian Church. The "Plan of Union" did not make these four synods, it only made the people Presbyterians, and the General Assembly constituted the synods. When "The Plan of Union" was abrogated, it became obvious that those churches, which were partly or wholly Congregational, must lose their connection with the presbyteries; but how synods and presbyteries lost their Presbyterian character by the removal of what little remnants of Congregationalism had remained in them till that time, it is difficult to conceive. Indeed it is quite manifest that the whole movement was made, as was admitted by a principal leader of the party at the time, for the simple purpose of preventing a future majority of the other party. These four synods, comprising about five hundred ministers, and six hundred churches, and sixty thousand communicants, were attempted to be cut off from the Presbyterian Church, because, if the opposing party was not thoroughly broken by such an excision, the Scotch party would never have a majority on that floor again.

After passing these resolutions, the majority took effective measures to retain the records, and the funds of the church, by passing an order requiring the clerks to pledge themselves not to receive the commissioners from the excinded synods, in the formation of the next Assembly.

The Puritan party learning that if the moderator and clerks should assume to carry out the unconstitutional acts of 1837, in the organizing of the Assembly of 1838, it would be clearly a conspiracy to deprive them of their rights, appeared by their commissioners and organized the Assembly, at the appointed time and place, in a legal and constitutional manner. The Scotch party also organized, and each body proclaimed itself the regular constitutional "General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America." The party that had excinded the four synods to secure to themselves a future majority, retained all the funds and property of the church, amounting to more than three hundred thousand dollars.

The General Assembly in its session in 1838, appointed six new trustees, in accordance with the act of Corporation, passed by the Legislature of Pennsylvania, in 1799. The new trustees thus appointed, instituted a process in law, requiring of the trustees who had been superseded "To answer to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, by what warrant they claimed to have, use, and enjoy the franchises and privileges of Trustees of the General Assembly."

After a full and impartial trial before a jury, a verdict was rendered in favor of the plaintiffs—the Puritan party: "that is," as explained by the presiding judge, "the Assembly which held its sittings in the First Presbyterian Church, (a portion of which had been cut off in 1837, without trial,) was the true General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, in the United States of America, under the charter."

The counsel for the defendants applied to "the Supreme Court in Banc" for a new trial. After hearing the cause, Chief Justice Gibson ordered a new trial. Various delays occurred. The General Assembly is satisfied with the moral effect of the decision rendered by a jury of their countrymen, and has withdrawn the suit.

The reasons for this withdrawal are various. First, the General Assembly is willing to sacrifice something, and even much, for peace. But the great object of the trial has been secured. The Constitutional party definitely offered to leave all the funds in the hands of the excinded

ing party, if they would allow the separation to be a *division* of the church rather than an expulsion of nearly one third part of the whole, so that its church property should not be at the mercy of the excisors, whenever even a small minority might see fit to rise up and claim it from those who had produced it to secure to themselves and their children the ordinances of the gospel. This they utterly refused. The Assembly preferred to secure the right to the churches which they had built, by testing their right to be considered the law successors, according to the charter. The result is known. An enlightened court and jury, before whom the merits of the cause on both sides were fully and ably manifested—**THE ONLY TRIBUNAL WHERE THE CAUSE EVER WAS TRIED UPON ITS MERITS**—were prompt and unanimous in our favor. After the new trial was ordered, several suits were commenced, by small minorities attempting to take, by course of law, the sanctuaries which our people had erected before the division. Every one of these cases that came to an issue was decided in our favor.

The award of the Court in Banc, Chief Justice Gibson presiding and pronouncing the opinion of the court, in the case of the Presbyterian Church of York, Pennsylvania, while it has for ever settled the occupancy of church property in that State on the proper basis, has so clearly treated of the main question at issue, between the parties in the action we have withdrawn, and so correctly in the main has it elucidated and settled them, that we are comparatively content with the award, inasmuch as **IT EXPLAINS, QUALIFIES, AND IN EFFECT MORALLY OVERRULES, THE POSITIONS BEFORE ADVANCED**, by the same court, on the motion previously "affirmed absolute," for a new trial.

In that award, allusion is distinctly had to those positions, as leading to the absolute affirmation of the motion; and this result is explained as follows: "It was not because the minority were thought to be any thing else than Presbyterians, but because a popular body is known only by its government or head. * * * Indeed, the measure [the excising violence] would seem to have been as decisively revolutionary, as would be an exclusion of particular

States from the Federal Union, for the adoption of an anti-republican form of government. * * * * * That the Old School party acceded to the privileges and property of the Assembly, was not because it was more Presbyterian than the other, but because it was stronger; for had it been the weaker, it would have been the party excluded."

The Scotch party retain the funds and property. Individuals of the party have intimated a willingness to restore as much of these funds as was contributed by the Puritan party. There is no doubt they would be more happy if it were done; but how to perform that which they desire, they find not. The funds are of little consequence. The period of deep excitement has passed away. Some great advantages have accrued from this unhappy division of brethren. The accusations of heresy have ceased, and events have shown that either party would gladly strengthen itself with receiving to its arms any clergyman of good standing in his present position. An interchange of public service in one another's churches has already commenced, and there is every reason to hope that the time is not distant, when the kindest and most fraternal intercourse will prevail universally between these two branches of the Presbyterian family.

Names are of minor consequence; yet they exert an influence; and the present relations of these two bodies demand the exercise of Christian courtesy and kindness in the appellations by which they shall distinguish one another. The General Assembly of the Puritan party has been termed the Constitutional General Assembly, to distinguish it from those of the excising body, and this has been justified on the ground that the jury so decided. But it is to be remembered that a final decision has not been had, and it is adapted to wound the feelings of some to fix such appellations upon the two parties. They are now two churches. The division may be advantageously contemplated as one of the events ordered by an all-wise Providence.

The Assembly of the Scotch party holds its sessions annually. That of the Puritan party meets only once in three

years. There can be no offence in calling one the Annual Assembly, and the other the Triennial Assembly.

The numerical strength of the two churches is not greatly unequal. The Triennial Assembly carries forward its charitable operations wholly by means of voluntary associations, in which it co-operates with other denominations. Its contributions to foreign missions are made chiefly to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions; those for our own country are through the American Home Missionary Society. It has no denominational tract society, preferring to act with its Christian brethren of other churches in the American Tract Society. The church has raised up, and has now under its care, four theological seminaries, viz.: those of Auburn, New York, and Lane Seminary, at Cincinnati, and the Theological Seminary of Maryville, East Tennessee, together with a theological department in the Western Reserve College,—and all in a highly flourishing condition. In respect to colleges and institutions of secular learning generally, the Presbyterian Church prefers to act with all its countrymen, without respect to denominations, any further than to secure in such institutions a proper regard for sound morals and true religion. Associated naturally with the population of New England, the difference of forms of ecclesiastical polity cannot prevent a natural co-operation with the sons of the Pilgrims, in disseminating Christianity with less of exclusiveness and sectarian character than belongs to any other body of Christians.

It remains to be seen whether there is sufficient of liberality and charity in the age to justify such a procedure, or whether this generosity of the Presbyterian Church shall be met with such an amount of exclusiveness, as to receive an impulse while imparting one, and thus to become assimilated in this respect to the sects by which it is surrounded.

The General Assembly has under its care 19 synods, 101 presbyteries, and nearly 1500 ministers.

In concluding this statement it may not be improper to remark, that when other denominations have been alluded to,

it has been done for the sake of setting forth distinctly the character and position of the Presbyterian Church. Not a wish has been indulged to wound the feelings of other communions. The prelatial churches, from which we differ so widely on the great principles of ecclesiastical liberty, we nevertheless regard as churches of Christ, and would as cordially invite them to our pulpits and our communion, if they would reciprocate our kindness, as we do the clergy and communicants of other denominations, and we feel even an unaffected grief that they should be prevented by their system from meeting us as the ministers of Christ, and members of the Church Universal. We would gladly have passed over all allusion to the divisions of our own church in 1833; but it seemed otherwise impossible to make a fair statement of the characteristics and condition of the Presbyterian Church. We have aimed to avoid all offence in speaking of the parties as leaning respectively towards the strictness of the Scotch Church, and the readier tendency to yield and to assimilate with others manifested by the descendants of the English Puritans. It cannot be denied, that many Presbyterians originally of the Scotch school, both clergy and laity, as the Synod of Virginia and others, are among our most liberal constitutional Presbyterians, nor that some of the clergy and people born and educated among the Pilgrim sons of New England, are among the strictest class of those connected with the church of the Annual Assembly. We only mean a general characteristic of the parties as such, when we give them these appellations. With that church the writer, as an individual—and he is confident the same may be said of most of his brethren—has no personal difficulties. He has been for a term of five years together connected with a presbytery, in which nearly every member sympathised with that party. The kindly intercourse enjoyed with his brethren of Louisiana will not be easily forgotten. If we have spoken of our own church as the true constitutional Presbyterian Church, it was not to question the rights of others. It was only because we really think it such. Undoubtedly others think differently with