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Congregationalism and
Methodism









CONGREGATIONALISM

AND

METHODISM.



CONGREGATIONALISM

AND

M E T H O D I S M.

BY Z. K. HAWLEY,

OF SOUTH NORWALK, CONN.

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ERRATUM.

On page 96 of "Congregationalism and Methodism" it is said; "One person was executed in New Haven Colony" (on a charge of witchcraft), "and several were accused in Connecticut, but none were executed."

This statement, if made at all, should have been *reversed*. It was made thus by inadvertently associating the town of Stratford with the former Colony; while, in fact, it belonged to the latter.

No record of any execution for witchcraft within the bounds of this State is known to exist; but there is some incidental evidence of such a fact;—and it was upon this authority that the admission was made.—(See Kingsley's Historical Discourse.)

is, the hope of reaching a class of readers who are not accessible through more expensive works. And it is believed that those to whom these historical facts are familiar, will find them clothed with fresh interest, from the application which is here made of them. The reader is desired to remember that this portion of the work is not given for the sake of the history, (for, in that case, more than a mere epitome would have been necessary,) but as furnishing illus-





P R E F A C E .

THE following Work was not undertaken for the sake of controversy, nor to produce it;—*it had already been produced by others.* Neither was it at first any part of the Author's design "to make a book." Circumstances, already alluded to, had led him to a discussion of these subjects, which was primarily intended exclusively for the people of his particular charge. The idea of publishing originated with those in whose advice, strongly and repeatedly urged, he can safely confide.

While various defences of the Puritans and of their principles have been put forth, *none has hitherto been attempted at the quarter where assaults have been as incessant as they have been violent and peculiar.*

The Work is not shaped merely by a theory;—it is the result of observation, and is designed not only to supply a deficiency, but to meet the exigencies of actual life. The plan of the original discussion is preserved, as well *in the historical illustrations*, as in the form of the argument. This is required by a variety of reasons; not the least of which is, the hope of reaching a class of readers who are not accessible through more expensive works. And it is believed that those to whom these historical facts are familiar, will find them clothed with fresh interest, from the application which is here made of them. The reader is desired to remember that this portion of the work is not given for the sake of the history, (for, in that case, more than a mere epitome would have been necessary,) but as furnishing illus-

trations of important truths. This remark applies, also, to the few local allusions which are employed.

While engaged upon the work, in its present form, the Author has had his eye fixed upon *the effects* of an application of the principles upon which it is executed, *as already developed*; and he would improve this opportunity to acknowledge his obligations to his Methodist brethren, for the numerous and important suggestions which they have offered, both in public and in private. If the work possesses any thing of *point*, or *practicalness*, much of its merit, in these respects, is attributable to this source.

If there should appear to be an unnecessary particularity in any respect, the Author has only to say that he has been guided, mainly, by one important consideration, viz., *the effect upon the popular mind*; and especially at those points where he has found error and prejudice most deeply entrenched. On the other hand, the object in view required that the work should be brought within a narrow compass.

SOUTH NORWALK, CT., January, 1846.

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I.

“WHAT HAVE I NOW DONE? IS THERE NOT A CAUSE?”

1 Sam. 17: 29.

Introductory Remarks—Origin of the work—Assaults on New England—Clamors against Calvin—Sectarian Aggressions and Misrepresentations—The Work purely defensive—Plan.

IT has been said that “*History is philosophy teaching by examples.*” A few “examples,” therefore, may be the best introduction to the following work.

Congregational Tract No. I. had been circulated among us; the circulation, however, being carefully confined to Congregational families. That Tract was designed to be an exposition and defence of the Congregational system of Church Polity, but contained an incidental allusion, by way of contrast, to Episcopal Methodism; an allusion occupying less than eleven lines. The term *Church* was there defined; and the definition was sustained by an appeal to the Scriptures. It was maintained that the Bible is our only authority on that subject. The rights and privileges and duties of church members, were argued from the same authority; and it was assumed that what the Scriptures enjoin as a duty, is *every* man’s duty.

Now, what was there in all this to create a secta-

rian warfare? Or, if any felt themselves called to the field, how should we expect them to be equipped? How, but with argument, and with counter appeals to Scripture? But was such the fact? No. The weapons are, petty criticisms upon particular words and isolated passages; and the grossest assaults upon personal character, not only in private, but from the pulpit and the press; and a sweeping slander upon all New England,—characterizing it as “*the land where they hung Quakers and witches;*”—accompanied by the changes which are usually rung upon “Calvin,” and the “Saybrook Platform,” and the “Blue Laws of Connecticut;” and all this, not merely by a regular onset from the pulpit in a course of sermons, but by constant assaults in public and in private, extending through a period of several months; and not only did the *fact* and the *manner* of the assault indicate the spirit which dictated it, but the *time* which was chosen was an equally decisive indication. It was a time of more than common religious interest in our church, when the popular mind was turned more than usual in this direction, and men were inquiring of us, “What shall we do to be saved?” For such a cause, and at such a time as this, public attention was diverted from this inquiry by a flourish of trumpets, announcing a formal and characteristic assault upon the ghost of Calvin, and the persecuting and witch-hanging Puritans. Our arguments and our appeals to the Scriptures, are met by appeals to popular prejudice, and by caricatures of Calvin. When the anti-scriptural and anti-republican nature of Episcopal Methodism is

alluded to, attention is called from the true point by conjuring up "witches," and the ghost of Calvin. Is there a lack of argument at any point? The gap is filled by the cry of "Calvin! Calvin!!" And what do they know of Calvin, or of his doctrines? *When did they ever state his doctrines fairly?*

But what if they *did* state them fairly? Calvin is not our Oracle; nor are his Institutes our Bible. We do not adopt Calvin as our *authority*, nor any other man, or body of men.

All this would be a matter too small to be noticed, were it merely an ebullition of *individual* or *local* feeling. But it has derived importance from the fact that it has received sanction, and currency, and influence, in a series of articles, through the columns of the Methodist Episcopal organ, the Christian Advocate and Journal.

These "examples" appear to be the *natural* result of the system in connexion with which they are exhibited; and they are specified, not in the least as peculiar to any particular locality, but as illustrations of the spirit which animates that system. When did a Methodist preacher ever pass his year in any place without shaking off the dust of his feet against "Calvinism" and "Presbyterianism?" *Volumes* might be filled with their caricatures of these standing topics. Even our families are invaded, and our children arrayed against their parents. Facts,* con-

* Not long since, a member of the Sabbath School, connected with the author's congregation, was ridiculed by another child, for attending "a blue Presbyterian Sabbath School." Where did the child acquire that spirit, and that language? Another child, of fourteen or fifteen years of age, was told, in effect, that she was under no

stantly occurring, indicate the influences that are in operation, to make our people feel,—and especially the young,—that they are under a cold, iron, “man-made” system, which “neither they nor their fathers were able to bear;” while “the enlarged liberty” of Episcopal Methodism is portrayed in glowing colors. Efforts, constant and systematic, are made to preju-

obligation to regard the feelings or the advice of her parents, in matters of religion, though they were both members of a Congregational church. The effort was, to induce her to join a Methodist class.

Allow me to give some of my own experience and practice. The first year of my ministry was passed in the state of Illinois, in a region of great moral destitution. There was but one Congregational, and no Presbyterian minister within thirty-five miles of me. The Methodists had been accustomed to send a preacher to that settlement once a month. Scarcely had I entered upon my labors when the Methodists *doubled* theirs by coming *twice* a month. At length, finding too much upon their hands, or that I was comparatively harmless, they came but one-third of the time. At the end of the year, I was invited to another field of labor; and then our Methodist brethren immediately fell back upon their old plan of *once a month*. On what principle were more of their efforts necessary during the time that the ground was occupied by a Congregational minister? *Were half their labors expended in counteracting his influence?*

I accommodated my labors to theirs; going to other settlements whenever Methodist meetings were held in the village in which I resided. My own family, as did every family of my congregation, attended their preaching, (though very few of the Methodists attended mine,) and thus I could not but learn the great frequency with which “Calvinism” and “Presbyterianism” were made the theme of the preacher’s discourse. After one assault, of more than common violence, I prepared a sermon in reply; but finally refrained from preaching it, through deference to the feelings of my Methodist hearers, and through the influence of certain “peace” principles, *falsely so called*.

These facts are not given, as possessing any thing peculiar; but simply as illustrations of our *common experience*, and of our *common practice*. *We have been silent, till silence is a sin.*

dice the minds of the young and of the old, until many are made to regard "Calvinism" as emphatically "*the doctrine of devils.*"

It affords no pleasure to expose faults like these, but it is the dictate neither of wisdom nor of charity, that we shut our eyes to them. *Principles* are involved which *some* of the sons of the Puritans *will never relinquish or cease to defend.* But the history of Congregationalism shows that we are not hedged in by denominational lines. Presbyterians and Congregationalists meet, and have always met, and interchanged labors, with the utmost cordiality. The names of Scott, and Robert Hall, and Milnor, are cherished by us, with the most affectionate regard;—*the more heartfelt,* if possible, not because they were without denominational preferences,—but because they rose *superior* to them. And *wherever* true Christian candor is exhibited, *it meets from us a prompt and hearty response.* *This is true Christian union.* *Without this,* union is hollow-hearted and mischievous.

Under the influence of such views, it is with commingled feelings of reluctance and of pleasure that I engage in the present undertaking. It is with reluctance, because I cannot expect that my motives will be fully appreciated; but what is more, different bodies of the sacramental host will *seem* to be arrayed against each other. Instead of combining their energies against the common foe, they seem to present a divided front, even upon the field of battle.

But with all this, there is mingled a feeling of pleasure. This arises from a perfect conviction of the truths which I am to maintain, and which are

often misunderstood and misrepresented; truths which were so dear to our fathers, and for which they suffered the loss of all things; truths which lie at the foundation of *all liberty, civil and religious*.

In entering that portion of the field which has remained, hitherto, almost untrodden, I am *not* conscious of being actuated by party feelings. On the contrary, I *am* conscious of higher motives than those of a sectarian character.

It is not my object to attack others, but to defend ourselves, and to defend the truth. In doing this, I must, necessarily, expose error, and the character of the means by which error is propagated, and truth opposed. Congregationalists have too long slumbered over this matter. We have too long been disobedient to the inspired injunction, "CONTEND EARNESTLY FOR THE FAITH WHICH WAS ONCE DELIVERED UNTO THE SAINTS." Our silence has been construed into a consciousness of our weakness. The assertion has been openly made that we "*dare not defend the peculiarities of our system.*"

These are some of the circumstances and the motives under which this work is undertaken. I now call attention to the manner in which I purpose to accomplish my design.

My first object will be, *to exhibit the leading features of Congregationalism,—both the theory, and its developments in practice,—and to repel certain objections and unjust charges which have been, and are still, with great frequency, made against it; and then to examine that system which we are often urged to substitute for "the old paths."*

II.

“THESE SPEAK EVIL OF THOSE THINGS WHICH THEY KNOW NOT”

Jude 10.

Principles of Congregationalism—Based only on the Scriptures—Congregationalism Republican—Consociation—Association—General Association—Councils—Presbyterianism—Protestant Episcopacy—Episcopal Methodism.

THE starting point in the Congregational system is this, THE BIBLE IS THE ONLY AUTHORITATIVE RULE OF FAITH AND PRACTICE IN RELIGION. We hold, that, according to the Bible, every particular church is an ecclesiastical republic, authorized to derive its own rules and doctrines from the Word of God, and to apply them in practice. Accordingly, every Congregational Church adopts for itself its own Confession of Faith and Covenant. No man or body of men may legislate over us in ecclesiastical matters. We have our Consociations of Churches, or Conferences, or Conventions, and our District Associations and General Associations of Ministers; but these are not authorized to legislate over the individual Churches. Every Congregational Church adopts its own principles of intercourse with other churches. The brotherhood admit candidates to the privileges of membership; they perform the various acts of discipline; they choose their own ministers, and other officers, and all without the necessity of submitting their ac-

tion to the revision of any individual or body of men, any farther than may be necessary to secure Christian confidence and ecclesiastical intercourse. If churches unite in consociation, or otherwise, of course the body thus constituted adopts such rules as it sees fit, consistently with the fundamental principles already acknowledged.

The great difficulty with many who oppose our ecclesiastical system is this; either *they do not understand its principles*, or *they do not enter into its spirit*. They seem to have *no idea of republicanism in a Church*. They are just in the condition of foreigners, subjects of monarchical governments, travelling in our free country. The subjects of a monarchy see every thing through *monarchical spectacles*. All their reasonings, all their remarks, show this. They cannot forget or lose sight of their old principles and prejudices; and therefore their journals abound in inferences unfavorable to republicanism, and laudatory of monarchy. They cannot understand our system, because they are not republicans either in theory or practice or heart. Consequently they never represent republicanism fairly.

Just so it is with those who have never enjoyed the privileges of republicanism in the Church. According to Episcopal Methodism, the *clergy* rule the Church; the clergy legislate; they frame the rules of discipline, and apply them. That system leaves nothing to the people but to *obey, and pay their "quarterage."* The clergy prescribe the articles of belief. If the articles of faith are ever altered, the people have no voice in the matter; they have only to say "amen," or leave the church.

Now, how is it possible that those who are imbued with the spirit of such a system—who are always accustomed to look through the medium of such a prejudice as that system must necessarily beget, and without which it could not continue to exist—how is it possible that they should so enter into the spirit of republicanism in religion, as rightly to understand Congregationalism, or rightly to represent it? So far from this, whenever they think of a book upon Church order or doctrine which they call ours, they regard it as imposed upon *us*, just as the Book of Discipline is upon *them*. When they speak of the Saybrook Platform, they seem to regard it as one of our books of *statutes*, every doctrine of which we *must* receive, and every principle of which we are *bound to practice*. Or when they speak of Calvin, they seem to regard him as the founder of *our* system, just as Wesley is of Methodism. *Nothing could be farther from the fact*. While all, who call themselves Calvinists, *do* believe that the doctrinal views of Calvin are, in the main, in accordance with the Scriptures—as *distinguished from Arminianism*—yet we do not adopt all his views, or all his principles. The Methodist Book of Discipline is like a bullet-mould; it runs all who adopt it as nearly alike as the nature of the materials and of circumstances will admit. Go from Maine to Iowa, and you will see the truth of this remark. But you find every shade and variety of Calvinists. They are found among Congregationalists, and Presbyterians, and Baptists, and Episcopalians, and there is even a denomination of Calvinistic Methodists. Among these denomina-

tions there is every shade of belief. They are called *Calvinists*, to distinguish them from those who hold the *opposing* system of *Arminianism*. Some of these denominations have their Books of Discipline, which unite the various churches of each denomination into one body, constituting, in theory, one church. But with Congregationalists it is not so. With us, every particular church is a little republic. If any wish to know what we believe, they must study the Confessions of Faith, and the Covenants of the individual churches.* They must enter into the spirit of religious republicanism. They must think of each particular church as a religious commonwealth; under subjection to no foreign yoke; all its members freemen in Christ Jesus, regulating their own affairs, subject only to their divine Head. The Saybrook Platform, the Catechism, and Calvin, are all tried by the Bible, and are in no sense binding upon us, except as our own judgment and conscience admit them to teach the truth.

Having thus alluded to some of the Republican principles of our system, let us trace them in their natural operation. The history of this church † may be taken as an illustration.

Certain Christians in this community became

* It is confidently believed that no equal number of churches of any denomination exhibit a greater degree of *intelligent* and *harmonious* belief, than is found among Congregationalists. The fundamental doctrines upon which we unite as a basis, and the *nature of our ecclesiastical organization*, causing, as it does, a *sense of individual responsibility to press upon the people*, combine, as we think, to produce this result.

† South Norwalk, Ct.

desirous of establishing a Congregational church in this place. They proceeded to make their own preliminary arrangements, in connection with their pastor and those with whom they were in covenant. In doing this, they were guided only by a regard for their own interests, and for the general interests of the Redeemer's kingdom. They adopted their own Confession of Faith and Covenant, and their own Rules of Discipline. They made arrangements to erect a house of worship, *and to retain it in their own name*. They appointed church officers; they sought a pastor. In all these things there was none to dictate; no man or body of men could claim the right to intermeddle in their affairs, except as this church might desire their counsel, or their aid. And thus they may go on, if they please, to the end of time. There is the Saybrook Platform, and other forms, but they have no *authority* over us, except the authority of truth; *nothing* has authority *except the Bible*, and whatever we see fit to adopt, as according with that inspired directory. This church is a perfect republic. *The majority rule*, under the Great Head of the Church. Our articles of faith are our *own* belief. Our forms of procedure are our own. No body of men stereotype these matters for us, deciding beforehand, perhaps before we were born, what we *must* believe and practice. If, under the increasing light of God's word and providence, our views of truth and of duty are altered or modified, we can alter our articles and our forms. No human authority may dictate to us in these matters. Those who are unwilling to submit to such a government as

this, are unfit to enjoy its privileges ; they have no *right* to enjoy them ; they should be content to go elsewhere.

But as men are social beings, so *churches* should be social. Congregationalists, therefore, adopt the principle of a union of churches.* In respect to the *intimacy* and *permanency* of union, Congregationalists differ among themselves. In Connecticut this union, with the exception of a few churches, is *permanent* under the name of *Consociation*. A Consociation is a union of several contiguous churches, with their pastors. At all the meetings of Consociation, every consociated church has a right to be present by its pastor and delegate ; and in these meetings all have equal rights. But the power of the delegates (which is but the power of the people) is almost always greater than that of the clergy ; for there are commonly some churches destitute of settled pastors ; and as none but settled pastors have the right of voting in these bodies, the delegates usually outnumber the clergy. Farther than this ; the pastors are themselves, in reality, representatives of the people, for they are the free choice of the people ; they are not imposed upon them by some other power.

In the meetings of Consociation any question of general interest to the churches is discussed. But this is merely an *advisory* body ; it has no *authority* over the individual churches. It is designed to furnish mutual counsel and spiritual aid to the churches composing it, and to be a bond of union in interest

* Upham's Ratio Disciplinæ, § 17. (10.)

and in effort. It has, of course, the right to prescribe the terms on which its privileges are to be enjoyed.

Besides this body, there are Associations of Ministers; the ministers of each particular Consociation. They unite in reference simply to their ministerial duties; they possess no judicial authority over the churches. There is also a General Association, composed of delegates from the local associations. This body is likewise destitute of all judicial authority.

With truth, and with emphasis, may it be said of those who enjoy the privileges and blessings of such a system, *they are freemen in Christ Jesus*. Is not this system dictated alike by reason and by revelation? Does it not recommend itself to every man's judgment, and conscience, and heart? Who calls this system a yoke of iron? Who fears to assume such a yoke? Is it not the yoke of Christ? It bears upon all alike; for each church is composed of members of the same community; no one among them, or from abroad, may "lord it over" them. If this is not liberty, what is liberty?

Methodists not unfrequently refer to the agency of Consociations in installing and dismissing pastors; and very incorrect ideas have been entertained respecting this matter. They seem to regard the powers of a Consociation as analogous, on these points, to those possessed by a Methodist bishop. Now let it be remembered, that a Consociation is *merely an advisory body; that it possesses no judicial authority*.* Of course the decisions of Conso-

* I am aware that there is some diversity of opinion among Congregationalists respecting the nature and powers of Consociation.

ciation may differ from the judgment of a particular church, but then its decisions are *advice*, and not *mandates*. If a church persists in its wishes and its views of duty, Consociation pretends to no authority to control it. As no pastor is *forced upon* a church, so they are not obliged to retain him longer than they themselves consent. If a case occur, seriously affecting Christian faith or practice, other churches are not bound to remain consociated with a church which is thus delinquent; though they may not, necessarily, cease to regard it as a church.

Other denominations, and even some Congregationalists, do not seem to understand the nature of a union of churches, whether in Consociation or otherwise. The general object of a union of *churches* is similar to that for which *Christians* are associated *into churches*—their mutual benefit by advice, watchfulness, and admonition. The powers of associated churches are those of a Council; and the peculiarity of a Consociation, by which it is distinguished from any other Council is, it is a *standing* or *permanent* Council, securing frequent and regular intercourse of the churches. Few churches out of Connecticut are united in Consociation. If occasions occur, in churches not consociated, in respect to which the aid of a Council is desired, several churches—more or less—are requested to convene, by their pastors and delegates, in that capacity. In such cases, every Council is confined to the object for which it was called, and ceases to exist at the moment of its ad-

I have asserted what I suppose to be correct *in theory*, and in accordance with the commonly received opinions.

journalment. A Consociation, on the contrary, is a *permanent* body, composed of all those churches and their pastors which see fit to unite in that relation, for the purpose of promoting the peace, the purity, and the efficiency of the churches. They are thus not left as so many isolated bodies; there are bonds of union, uniting them together as perfectly as is consistent with the independence of the individual churches.

This subject may be illustrated from the political history of our nation. Previous to the adoption of the present Constitution of the United States, there was a union of the States on a principle more loose and inefficient. Experience proved it to be *too* loose and inefficient to answer the purposes of government for so extensive a country. It was a confederation of several States, with no common head. For the purposes of defence, of revenue, &c., it was found to be utterly inadequate. In order to secure certain great objects the present Constitution was adopted, in which the several States resigned certain rights to the General Government.

Now, such principles of consolidation under one government, are, manifestly *necessary* in *civil* government. There must be *power*,—not the mere power of truth,—but *physical* power,—the power to *coerce*. But in matters of conscience and of religion, *it is not so*. In respect to these, there may be *no* power, *but the power of truth and love*. Hence, no such system of consolidation is necessary. It is not only *unnecessary*, but we believe it to involve a violation of the fundamental principles of Christ's

kingdom in this world. Intercourse and co-operation, to a certain extent, are indeed necessary. But we hold it to be a *first principle*, that, as every man is to give account of himself to God, no system of church government may be adopted, which places individual *men* or individual *churches* under the *judicial control* of others. We are not only endowed with *rights*, we are intrusted¹ with duties and responsibilities, which we may neither transfer to others, nor permit to be merged in a consolidated mass. We find no such examples in the Bible, *but the contrary*. Churches are there never spoken of except as *individual* churches, with their appropriate duties, which they are specifically directed to perform, and how to perform them. If they would secure the approbation of their divine Master, *they must retain such an organization as will admit of practical obedience*. An union like that in our civil government, *forbids* the discharge of various duties specified in the Bible ; for that union is formed only by the resignation of certain rights, and the transfer of certain duties. The *very object* of such an union is, to constitute a power *above* the individual bodies composing the union. Accordingly, in the Presbyterian Church, for example, the transactions of a particular church, (or rather of its officers), are judicially reviewed by the Presbytery with which that church is connected. The transactions of the Presbytery are judicially reviewed by the Synod ; and these, under the old system, by the General Assembly. The evils of this order of things have been admitted by many Presbyterians themselves. Accordingly, the "Constitutional"

General Assembly is only an *advisory* body ; all *judicial* acts terminate in the Synod ; while many leading minds in the Presbyterian Church would prefer that they should terminate in the *Presbytery*.

For the Protestant Episcopal Church the same analogy is claimed with our civil government. I say *claimed*,—but with what truth ? In that denomination, notwithstanding there is a lay representation, the reins of government are in *fact* held by the clergy. In voting, such principles are acknowledged, that nothing can be done without the concurrent vote of the clergy. In the House of Delegates the clergy, from their privilege (if they choose to assert it) of voting separately from the lay delegates, hold, in fact, a veto power upon every act of the people ; while the bishops possess a veto power over both.

But what shall be said of the system of Episcopal Methodism ? Its friends claim for that, too, *analogy with our civil government* ! 'This has been asserted in this place, and it is boldly set forth in their published works. Now there is, truly, a *gradation of power*, from the class-leader upwards to General Conference. But what is the *basis* of that power ? and who constitute the bodies by which that power is exercised ? For the present it is enough to say, that *not a particle* of that power is in the *people* ; not a *representative of the people* is found in any ecclesiastical body among them ; not a lay member is found in the General or Annual Conferences ; and if found in any other body, he is appointed, not by the *people*, but in many cases directly, and in *every other case virtually*, by the clergy. I design to ex-

amine that system, in the proper place, but I refer to it now for the purpose of remarking, that under any system of consolidation, the right of an ultimate, final decision is taken from the individual churches where it was placed, as we maintain, by the Great Head of the Church. I shall not now re-argue the rights of individual churches, as those who wish to see the argument in a condensed form can obtain it in Congregational Tract No. I., the substance of which has been briefly referred to. There our argument is chiefly scriptural; but if the Scriptures were less explicit on those points, are not the principles which we maintain such as to commend themselves to every man's reason and conscience? And does not the history of the church warn us against the insidious, but inevitable encroachments of power, unless resisted at the threshold? Does not the history of the world teach us, that the *natural tendency* of every government administered by man is, to accumulate all power within and around itself? It was on this ground that opposition was raised against the adoption of our National Constitution. And is not this principle an *universal* one? May not the spirit of ambition invade the *Church* as well as the *State*? Christians, even the best, are but men, possessed of like passions with other men. The race of Diotrophes is not yet extinct. Will the peace and purity of the churches be promoted, by transferring the management of them from the hands of those who are most concerned? Shall we renounce that abhorred dogma of "the divine right of kings," and yet permit others to "lord it" over us in spiritual matters?

Above all, can we improve upon the wisdom of Inspiration?

Do such questions as these need to be argued with republicans? Is there any thing more surprising, than that republicans should look with suspicion upon these free principles in church government, and upon those who advocate them? Is liberty—religious liberty—so fraught with danger? Is it even odious and irksome? Why is it so difficult to obtain, even from the people, a candid hearing in behalf of these principles? Why is it that so many minds are, at this moment, ransacking the universe for objections to break the force of these arguments? More ready to listen to the claims of a *religious Monarchy*, or of a *religious Aristocracy*, than to the claims of *religious Republicanism*, though urged by the authority of Christ?

Where, let me now ask, have these principles of Congregationalism prevailed? I ask this, in order to refer to the manner in which the land where they have especially prevailed, has been designated "*The land where they hung Quakers and witches!*" Do these revilers of New England know the origin of those institutions which render New England the glory of all lands? Do they know who sowed it, broadcast, with common schools, and with academies, and colleges, and churches? Do they know what land originated American Missions, home and foreign, and almost every other cause which blesses mankind? Did they ever hear of Plymouth Rock, and the Charter Oak; and of Concord, and Lexington, and Bunker Hill? Do they know that New

England kindled the beacon of the Revolution, and furnished, probably, more than half of the men and the money to carry on that contest? "*The land where they hung Quakers and witches!*" Is that the way to characterize New England, in the presence of those whose fathers suffered and bled for these principles and these privileges? Is that the way to designate the soil that was fattened, not only by the ashes of the dwellings of your sires, but by their blood?

Who are these revilers of New England? Where did they originate? We know the origin of the religious system under which some of them have been trained, and into the *spirit* of which they have been *baptized*. Its origin was a man who, however worthy in other respects, showed himself to be, as he declared, "*no republican*," either in religion or in politics. They glory in a system framed by a man who wrote a pamphlet to his followers, while the Revolutionary contest was raging, calling upon them to lay down their arms and submit to his king. Yes, while those who inherited the spirit of our Puritan fathers, were "jeoparding their lives unto death in the high places of the field," the master spirit of *their* system was calling upon all whom he could influence, to hold out their hands and receive the chains of a foreign despot.

"*The land where they hung Quakers and witches!*"* That slander should blister the tongue

* The sentiments upon which we are animadverting (and the expression quoted above seems to have been the *real text* of the discourses) were uttered in the presence of one of the most numerous

that utters it. However true it is in fact, never was there a charge more calumnious. This it will be my object to show in its place.

As we proceed, let no one yield his judgment, where his judgment is not convinced; but let him yield a candid hearing; that no argument may be deprived of its force because of some imaginary difficulty at some other point. When we arrive at these different points, it may be found that those difficulties are the result of *a total misapprehension*. In this matter we all have common interests, and common responsibilities. I appear as no man's enemy, but to inquire for truth, and for the path of duty. Why should we not, in these matters, place ourselves at the feet of the Great Teacher? Do any of us presume to place human wisdom and human experience before divine wisdom and divine authority? I shall endeavor to examine the various principles which I propose to discuss, in the light of revelation. I shall examine them freely; I shall endeavor to do it candidly.

Methodist congregations in this region; and yet not a murmur or a whisper of disapprobation of them has ever reached the public ear from that quarter. Nothing could more strikingly elucidate *the spirit* and *tendency* of the system, under the influence of which those auditors had been trained.

III.

“THUS SAITH THE LORD, ‘STAND YE IN THE WAYS AND SEE, AND ASK FOR THE OLD PATHS, WHERE IS THE GOOD WAY, AND WALK YE THEREIN, AND YE SHALL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.’”—JER. 6 : 16.

“The old Paths”—“Statute Law” and “Common Law”—Congregationalism a system—Congregationalism previous to the Reformation—Congregationalism alone secures the ecclesiastical rights of individuals and of individual Churches—Episcopal Methodism an Aristocracy—Tendencies of Clerical Power—Congregationalism the Reformatory Principle.

It seems to have been *a desire for something new*, that led to the commission of the first sin in Paradise,

“Which brought death into the world, and all our woe.”

This restlessness seems to be a characteristic of the human mind, and most especially of the mind of fallen man. Hence, even the “old paths” of the Bible are often forsaken, that men may follow the guidance of human wisdom and experience.

In the preceding chapter we took a bird’s-eye view of the “good way” which our fathers trod, and which was marked out for them on the chart of eternal truth. It was then remarked, that it appeared exceedingly difficult for those who have been trained under other principles of church order, to understand the true nature of Congregationalism, and the basis

upon which it rests. This always surprises us; for, to our eyes, nothing appears more simple, either in its principles, or in its operations.

An illustration occurs which may aid in conveying a correct idea of the leading features of Congregationalism, and in fastening it upon the memory.

We often meet with the phrases, "*Statute Law*," and "*Common Law*."

By the term "*Statute Law*," is meant, the laws which are enacted by the state or national legislature. All such laws are formally enacted, and are compiled into codes. All their force depends upon some known act of the legislature. In the application of these laws, all that is necessary is, to consult the statutes, and follow the letter of the law.

"*Common Law*" is different. Such laws do not originate in acts of a legislature; neither are they written down in a code, as statute laws are, but are scattered through the records of the courts of justice, and books of reports and judicial decisions, and the treatises of learned men of the legal profession. They are sometimes called the monuments and evidences of our legal customs.* If a collection of them should be made, the book containing them would possess no *authority*, except as the individual cases of common law have authority. All the authority, all the binding force of these laws would rest upon well known and established principles.

Now, do not understand me as saying that this illustration holds *in every particular*. A candid mind can perceive my object, and the bearing of the illustration, as we proceed to apply it.

* Encyclopædia Americana, Art. Common Law.

Most Christian denominations, as the Presbyterian, Episcopal, and the Methodist, are governed, chiefly—I might, perhaps, say entirely—by what might be termed *Statute Law*. They have their Books of Discipline, according to which, and according to which *only*, they are guided in all ecclesiastical matters. If a case of church order or of discipline arises, you will hear them constantly referring to “the book;” by which they mean, their Book of Discipline. In these cases, and in every case, their “books” are as truly statute laws, as legislative enactments are statute laws in civil matters. There is, indeed, a marked difference, in some important respects, between the “books” of different denominations. In the Presbyterian book, the bottom of almost every page is crowded with references to the Bible. With the *Methodist* Book of Discipline, and for a very good reason, the case is entirely different. In all that is peculiar to Episcopal Methodism,—its organization and its discipline,—its episcopacy, with three orders, practically, in the ministry,—its powers of the clergy,—its conferences, quarterly, annual, and general,—its bishops, presiding elders, and itinerant clergy,—its mode of disciplining offending members,—its mode of appointing all officers, and of administering the temporal and spiritual affairs of the church,—its funds, accumulating in the hands of the clergy,—*every thing centering in the clergy* ;—in respect to all these things, and in respect to *every thing* bearing upon the *peculiarities* of *Methodism*, there is not a solitary scriptural reference which possesses even the *semblance* of a SPECIAL APPLICA-

TION to that system. They *profess* only to be guided by "*experience*."* And what is their experience on these subjects? The experience of a little more than one hundred years. Truly, *such* "paths" are *far* from being "THE OLD PATHS."

But however these various Books of Discipline may differ in other respects, they agree in this: they all are *statute laws*, formally adopted by the appropriate legislative bodies; and their authority is practically acknowledged by the people.

With Congregationalists the matter is *entirely different*. We have no *statute laws*, OUT OF THE BIBLE, except the Confession of Faith and Covenant of *each particular church*; and these are merely evidences of the manner in which the Bible is understood by those adopting them; and they are adopted, not by others for us, but by the members of the particular churches where they are in force. *No human enactment* has force in any Congregational church, except what that church sees proper to acknowledge as its own. As we indignantly shake every human yoke from our necks in *civil* matters, so we permit no man or body of men to "lord it" over us in *religious* matters.

But this feature of Congregationalism, so adapted, as it would seem to recommend itself to every man's reason and conscience, who is not filled with a "love of the pre-eminence," is often objected to, as leaving us upon a floating island, at the caprice of every wind and current of popular excitement and of

* Book of Discipline, p. 5, edition of 1844, which is the edition uniformly referred to in this work.

popular error. Many look upon us as *destitute of fixed ecclesiastical principles*,—as possessing no foundation for the security of individual rights,—as exposed to the recklessness of party spirit, to the intrigues of ambitious and designing men, and to all the wildness of fanaticism in doctrine and in practice.

But we maintain that our system is as efficient a safeguard as can be found in this imperfect world; *more safe than others*, for we trust alone in the inspired Word, and what is evidently derived from that infallible source. Is ambition to be mortified by the aggrandizements of power? Or, is it to be subdued by the magic touch of the triple crown, of a mitre, or of the less gaudy trappings of office and of rank? Are the interests of the people and of truth safer *any* where than *with the people themselves*? Do not those, who fear to trust *the people with* the right of self-government, excite the suspicion that they regard themselves as among the favored few upon whom the mantle of authority has fallen? Are they not the very men whom the providence of God, *or something else*, will indicate as the guardians of the public? Will the rights and interests of the people, individually or collectively, be more secure by committing them to the irresponsible control of the few? Shall the people be persuaded into the belief that they are not competent to manage their own affairs? Shall we not libel both reason and revelation, by admitting that neither the one nor the other furnishes the people with fixed principles, upon which they may safely rest? Congregational principles, both in doctrine and in practice, are, in fact, as well estab-

lished as *Common Law* is established in civil matters. These principles, like common law, are scattered through the history of the church, from the Apostles' time downwards, "in our *one Statute Book, the Bible*, and in the writings of those who are guided, authoritatively, only by the Bible; and these are, emphatically, "the monuments and evidences of our" ecclesiastical "customs." Hence, the principles of Congregational usage have become *as established*, as *well known*, and *as easily and certainly applied*, as the principles of *Common Law*. *In this sense we have a Congregational system*; not a system drawn up and enacted like statute law, cutting and stretching and vamping every thing over the last of legal technicalities; but a system which leaves full exercise for the judgment and the conscience. The landmarks of this system are all found in the Bible, marked, as it were, and numbered, and as unchangeable as the Author of that blessed Book. Among these principles are, the rights and duties and responsibilities of the individual churches; the perfect ecclesiastical equality of gospel ministers; the nature of the pastoral office; the principles of church discipline, and the fellowship of the churches. These principles, we maintain, are *distinctly,—not obscurely,—but DISTINCTLY* marked in the Bible. We maintain that they are recorded there, not only as the *wisdom*, but the *authority* of God. For example, the directions for church discipline in the 18th chapter of Matthew, and in the 5th chapter of 1st Corinthians, are *authoritative* directions. In like manner, for *all* the leading features of Congregation-

alism we plead *divine authority*. Show us that the Bible does not thus teach, or that it teaches differently from these principles, and we are ready to renounce them. But until this is done, argument and ridicule fall *not on us*, but on the *divine Author* of this system.

There is a sense, then, in which no system of church government is drawn out, *formally*, in the Bible. I say, *not drawn out formally*; while, on the contrary, *we do maintain that one particular system is there taught*. And it follows, with equal decisiveness and authority, that whatever *conflicts* with these principles, is *forbidden*, as conflicting with the mind of the Spirit, and as marring the order of God's house.

It is easy to perceive, now, the pertinence of my illustration. The system of Congregationalism is, in the main, *in the form of Common Law*. Even the directions of the Bible are, commonly, in this form; and for the very good reason that the Bible is eminently a practical book. Hence, its directions on these subjects are given, not in the form of human books of discipline, but from *time to time, as circumstances created a necessity*. But all these directions, which are of *general application*, are, when once given, of *perpetual obligation*. It must be so, or the Bible has no authority, and it ceases to bind the consciences of men.*

* To guard farther against misapprehension I would add, that no ecclesiastical principle receives force, among us, from the *mere* fact that it is a *commonly received* principle. Its *only authority* is the authority of the *Scriptures*. But the *correctness of our understanding* of

Now, let us see how these remarks apply in practice. How far do they hold when applied to the Bible? In deciding what are scriptural principles of church order, we need, first, to settle the question, *What is a church?* We find in the Bible no formal definition of the term Church; but what then? Are we left in the dark respecting its import? Not at all. The manner in which a church (I speak of what is called an *organized church*), is always spoken of, sheds a perfect flood of light upon its nature. Such a church is *always* spoken of as a company of believers, associated together for the worship of God, and the observance of Christian ordinances. It is *never* spoken of in a way that conflicts with this idea. This fact ought to settle the question in the mind of every man who takes the Bible for his guide. He finds no example of a church extending over a province or a country, and including several local churches, or organizations of Christians; nothing, not a word that looks like the expression, "*The Church of the United States of America.*" If any think differently, it becomes them to point out the passage which throws other light upon the subject, which has the *appearance*, at least, of conflicting with our position. The word *church* is used more than seventy

the Scriptures may be *confirmed*, in a measure, by the concurrent views and testimony of good men, from the Apostles' time, downward; and by the evident approbation of the divine Author of the Scriptures; just as the historical arguments for Infant Baptism and for the change of the day of the Sabbath, are confirmed by such concurrent testimony and blessing; and just as Congregational *common law* on those subjects, is established; while the only *authority* which we plead in respect to them, is *inspired* authority.

times in the Scriptures; and in about twenty it is used in a spiritual sense, as including all the sanctified. In all other cases, in *all* cases where a visible organization is intended, the term is, indisputably, purely local in its application. The word *churches* is used thirty-four times; and, from its very form, (the plural,) can have only a local application.

The next question is: What are the rights, and duties, and responsibilities, of these particular churches? One distinct and fundamental principle is, that none, either individuals or bodies of men, may "lord it" over others. Read the New Testament with your eye fixed on this point, and you will find that each particular church managed its own affairs, *authoritatively* and *finally*. Is an officer needed? He is chosen by the brethren. Is a warning uttered against error, or against erroneous teachers? It is addressed not only to individual men, but the Spirit speaketh expressly, "*to the churches.*" Is a case of discipline to be decided? If individual effort fail of success, the specific direction is, "*tell it to the church.*" Equally specific is the direction for the church to assemble, for the purpose of bearing and deciding the matter. These directions (with, at most, but few exceptions) are not drawn out in the form of statutes. They are given in the form of "maxims;" or are the directions for particular cases, or are the records of those cases; in other words, they are in the form of common law. But they are, nevertheless, *laws*, the recorded laws of God's house; possessing *all the authority* that belongs to the word of God. And, as shedding additional light, we have Paul's commentary upon a par-

ticular case, showing how the thing *actually was done*; that it was done BY THE MAJORITY; that principle which some in our times delight to reproach. If a case arises which transcends the wisdom of any particular church, the Bible points out a council (Acts xv.) as the proper means, next after the Bible, for gaining light; and its decisions are to be regarded *as light*, i. e. as advice. So that chapter teaches. We read, indeed, in our translation of that passage, the word "decrees," but the original word does not necessarily imply human *authority*. That decision was to be regarded as the mind of the Spirit, and not as human dictation.

Now, I appeal with confidence to the candor of any intelligent reader of the Bible, and ask, Are not these principles of church order clearly marked out in that sacred book? If we are to follow the Bible as our guide in these matters, need we, *can* we remain at a loss respecting the path of duty? Are not these principles of church order fundamental in *any* system, which *justly* claims to be derived from the Scriptures?

It is not necessary to dwell longer upon these points. My object at this time has been to show *in what sense* the Congregational system is a *Scriptural* system, and how its principles are to be applied. Equally clear is it, that any system which *conflicts* with these principles, is, *on these points, anti-Scriptural*.

In tracing the history of the church since the times of the Apostles, we are to be guided by these landmarks. As we read, we discover that the church

became more and more corrupted from the simplicity which was in Christ ; and we find that *its departure from these principles is the measure of its corruption*. To trace the church through all the stages of its downward course, would be to transcribe a volume of church history. The object of this work is to deal in *principles*, giving only so much of particulars as is necessary to illustrate those principles. The previous illustration and remarks apply, with special force and pertinence, to our ecclesiastical system, as found in books and records of mere human origin. In respect to these it is literally true that we have *no statute laws*. We have no book of discipline, like some other denominations, uniting Congregational Churches under one code of laws. We go to no book of human origin, and to no body of men, to learn *authoritatively* what we *must* believe or practice. We do not regard ourselves as above learning from the wisdom of others. Accordingly, we endeavor to gather wisdom wherever we can find it. We learn from the primitive churches, so far as they are competent witnesses of apostolical practice. We learn from the few scattered lights which God preserved amidst the dark ages. We learn from the Reformers, and those who followed after, from Wickliffe downwards ; trying all, however, by the *only infallible test, the sacred Scriptures*. We frequently consult the Presbyterian Book of Discipline.

In process of time certain principles have come to be well *known and admitted*, and hence *established* as CONGREGATIONAL PRINCIPLES. They have been gathered into compilations ; what might

be called DIGESTS OF CONGREGATIONAL COMMON LAW. Among these are the Cambridge Platform, the Saybrook Platform, Cotton's Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, Hooker's Way of the Churches, and more recently, Upham's Ratio Disciplinae, or the Constitution of Congregational Churches. Bearing in mind the distinction between statute and common law, we can easily understand in what light we are to regard such books as the Saybrook Platform. They were in their day, and still are, though perhaps in a somewhat modified sense, commonly received Congregational principles ; to be judged of, however, by every church for itself, in view of their accountability to the great Head of the Church ; for these books lay no claim to the nature of statute law, binding the consciences of men to implicit obedience ; especially while the word and providence of God are shedding increasing light upon the path of duty, in the ever varying circumstances of particular cases. Perhaps it should be added, that the Confessions of Faith are regarded as possessing more of authority ; but it is because they are regarded as containing, in a condensed form, the fundamental doctrines of the Bible. Still, no one of them is to be considered, except in a general sense, as the Confession of Faith of a particular church, until adopted by that church.

Let us pause here, and contrast the system of Congregationalism with the systems of those denominations, which are united under one book of discipline.

It is the theory of Presbyterianism, that all the Presbyterian churches in the United States are unit-

ed under one code of laws, as truly as the several states of the Union are united under the Constitution of the United States. Their book of discipline can be altered only by the General Assembly; the alteration being ratified by a particular proportion of all the Presbyteries. Every church, and every member of every church, is ruled by this book of discipline, while he remains a member of a Presbyterian church. But in all the meetings of the various ecclesiastical bodies composing the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America, the people have a representation from among men of their own choice. Voting is always performed by joint ballot, so that every vote has its full force.

In the Protestant Episcopal Church different principles prevail, both in respect to the organization of ecclesiastical bodies, and in the manner of voting. The House of Bishops constitutes a separate body, and of course votes separately. The clerical and lay deputies may also vote separately. Hence, in the lower house, the clergy may have a veto power over all acts of the laity, while the bishops possess a veto power over both. However the people may be disposed "to thrust against the wall," they are held in with "bit and bridle."*

* It is urged in favor of this system, that the House of Bishops is analogous to the United States Senate. There may be an analogy in respect to *form*, but where is the analogy in *fact*? The members of the U. S. Senate are, in reality, though not directly, chosen by the people, and are regularly returned to the people for re-election or substitution, by the representatives of the people. Here, at the very gist of the matter, the analogy fails; for the clergy have a veto power upon every act of the laity, in the election of bishops. And in the ordina-

When we come to examine, in detail, the theory and practice of Methodist Episcopacy, we shall find statute law with a witness, in which the people have not a vestige, not even the *semblance* of power. That system has placed *all ecclesiastical power in the hands of the itinerant clergy*, and has SECURED it there. The people are saddled and bridled, and mounted,* for it is one of the peculiarities of that system that, not only is every thing placed at the irresponsible control of the clergy, alone, but it is placed *beyond the reach of the people*. “The Gen-

tion of the clergy, there is no direct act of the people ; they may “give information,” and they may protest, and thus *delay*, but not finally prevent the act of the bishop. What honesty is there in pleading this analogy? Its only effect is to blind and mislead the thoughtless.

* This expression was employed in the original discussion, and great complaint has been made on account of it. It was not my object to wound the feelings of any, but to exhibit the truth, clearly, and *in a way that it might be remembered*. However, as offence has been taken, I would prefer to alter this and a few similar expressions, were it not that such extreme efforts have been made to prejudice the public mind, by captious criticism, and by attempts to excite public sympathy by puerile complaints and false representations. I prefer, therefore, if this work go before the public at all, that these expressions appear without any essential alteration either in their *form* or *connexion*.

But after all, what is the justice of the complaint? All know that the expression is simply figurative ; and it is a figure derived from the Bible, implying moral restraint and subjection. The figure had just been employed, in a case where it was far less expressive. In the progress of the argument, and especially where there was *such* progress, a *bolder* use of the figure was *demand*ed. The question, therefore, is purely one of *taste* ; and the fact that all the complaint has been expended upon the *form of the expression*, as if to turn off attention from the great principle at issue, *proves* that whatever may be thought of its *dress*, the expression in its essence is well founded and unanswerable.

eral Conference" (which is composed of the itinerant clergy alone) "shall have *full powers* to make rules and regulations for our church;" limited only on six points;* and on *five* of these it is limited only by these same clergy in the Annual Conferences. One of these five points is "the plan of our itinerant general superintendency,"—a very modest phrase, but containing a volume; a volume, however, which might be comprised in a very few words, thus: "We are no republicans, *and never intend to be,*"† *therefore no change shall ever be made in our system of church government, impairing the sovereign power of the itinerant clergy.* On *one* point, and that a fundamental one, there may be, positively, no change, viz.; in "the Articles of Religion." The Methodist articles of faith are stereotyped for all future generations. There is no room left for judgment or conscience, on the part of the people; they must "believe," or leave the church.

To all these principles, let them be found where they may, Congregationalists object, and for a variety of reasons. We object to them as violating the liberty of freemen in Christ Jesus. If these things are not lording it over Christ's heritage, we can attach no meaning to the words of the Apostle. Congregationalists object even to Presbyterian statute law, as conflicting with duties which have been assigned to the local churches, and with the free exercise and enjoyment of individual rights. Much more do they object to a system which places the *entire church, in all its members and interests,* beneath the control

* Dis. pp. 21, 22. † Wesley.

of a self-constituted hierarchy. *We have not so learned Christ*, or the spirit of his Gospel. It is an usurpation of power which Apostles never exercised or claimed. The Apostles directed the management of the churches, *only as the inspired teachers of the will of their divine Head*. They were no autocrats; they ruled by no powers inherently possessed. They spoke by authority, indeed; not in a judicial or executive capacity, but simply as inspired to declare the duty of others. Is an act of discipline required? The Apostles do not perform it; on the contrary, they point it out as the duty of the Church. And when their own teachings were tested by the Scriptures, they commended the act. They commanded that the doctrines of religious teachers be tried whether they were of God. Where does the Bible authorize any uninspired man, or class of men, to stereotype the faith of others for all coming time? Where does it *permit us to yield* our faith to such assumptions of power?

But the history of the Church warns us against all such principles of man's devising, as paving the way for farther encroachments of error, and corruption, and power; and as preparing the Church for fanaticism on the one hand, or for a dead formalism on the other. It is claimed, indeed, for these statutory systems, that they are *necessary safeguards against error*. Now it must be admitted, that *the Bible itself* is not a safeguard against error, to any but the humble in heart. Where depravity has not been subdued by the cross, Truth will not always maintain its sway. He who is willing to be taught

of God, shall know of his doctrine. The Scriptures, and the Scriptures alone, in the hands of the Spirit, are able to make men wise unto salvation. As far, therefore, as dependence is placed upon any system of man's wisdom or authority, so far men are removed from the simplicity of the Gospel, so far God's word is dishonored, so far the sword of the Spirit is permitted to rust in its scabbard, so far, in short, the very tendency of things is, to draw off attention and confidence from the Bible. Just as the use of a crucifix in religious worship, calls off the mind from him who was slain for us, so the interposition of any human authority, *as authority*, tends to weaken the practical authority of the Bible. This proposition is a self-evident truth. Let us see how it is verified by facts.

Not to dwell upon the evidence that some had begun, even in the Apostles' time, to yield themselves to the guidance of particular leaders, not only such as Apollos and Cephas, but a Diotrefes, who loved to have the pre-eminence,—not to dwell upon these things, we find that soon the authority of individuals, and more especially of *Councils*, was employed to mould and stamp the faith of the churches. The questions, What is truth? and what is error? were decided by names, and numbers, and councils. Every thing was settled less by the Bible than by human opinions and decisions, expressed in creeds and councils; and as the clergy, generally, in many cases exclusively, composed these councils, their power rapidly accumulated. As an illustration of the tendency of human ambition to grasp power,

not only ecclesiastical, but *civil* and *pecuniary*, we may refer to the fact that, in England, in the time of Wickliffe, two hundred years before Luther, more than one-half of all the lands in the kingdom were in the possession of the clergy.* The true Protestant principle is, THE BIBLE IS THE ALONE AND ALL-SUFFICIENT AUTHORITY IN MATTERS OF RELIGION. And when individuals *or churches*, allow others to form their creeds and books of discipline—indeed just so far as men resign their rights and duties to others—have they not just so far departed from the true principles of the Reformation? And, what is more, have they not just so far departed from the Bible? What was the germ of Popery, but the pretended right of the clergy to prescribe the faith of the people? There are different ways, indeed, of *coercing* the faith of men; but all these different ways are but the consequences of that first principle in Popery, viz., *the divine right of the clergy to prescribe articles of religion for the people*. The evidence of this truth is not merely an accumulation of isolated facts; though that might be sufficient. It is a connected *chain* of facts, as easily traced as the thread in the ancient labyrinth.

The soil that germinated the seeds of Popery, was that spirit of Diotrephes, who loved to have the pre-eminence. As the number of such men increased, they associated together in councils, *not Congregational councils*, for the purpose of giving *advice*, when their advice was *asked*,—but assembling in

* Purchard's Hist. Cong. p. 149.

their own names, and *legislating* for the people. It was in this way that ceremonies and forms of worship were fixed, and creeds and articles of religion established. By degrees the power was assumed to *enforce*, or to secure the enforcement of pains and penalties; till, at length, all *civil* power as well as *ecclesiastical*, was, in effect, concentrated in a hierarchy. By open influence or by private intrigue, they controlled the destinies of nations. To give this power of the clergy the greater effect, the doctrine of *purgatory* was invented. As they had taken the consciences of mankind into their keeping, they desired something to compensate them for the trouble of this "oversight." No means could have been devised more efficient than that doctrine. By these means they held, in the fullest sense, the keys of the kingdom of heaven. The next step was, the doctrine of Absolution; for the idea that they were the authorized legislators in matters of faith, standing thus between God and the creature,—this idea paved the way for them to usurp the prerogative of God in the remission of sins. But as the human body is imperfect without a head, so a hierarchy is imperfect without a head, and the system was completed by the creation of a Pope.

Thus we may trace this river of error either way, from the obscure spring in the mountain downwards to the ocean; or from the ocean backwards to the spring; and that spring is *the principle which led to the enactment of ecclesiastical statutes*; one class of men deciding, authoritatively, for others in matters of religion.

Opposition to this usurpation constitutes the grand feature of Congregationalism. "*The Bible, and the Bible only,*" is our motto; no human authority may legislate for us, in matters of religion. And it is instructive to notice, how the providence of God has preserved the spirit of this motto against all the gates of hell. Never has there been a time without witnesses for this truth. Not only were *individuals* found in different ages of the Church, maintaining the simplicity of the Gospel, but various *sects*, as they were called, arose from time to time, renouncing more or less of the cumbersome weights of human authority, and falling back upon the naked simplicity of the Scriptures. Among these were the Novatians, the Paulicians, the Albigenses, and the Waldenses. There were also those in the darkest ages, who were called the "Cathari;" i. e. the pure, (for that is the meaning of the word,) a term derived from their claiming to worship more purely by the word of God.

But this name *Cathari* is to us of peculiar interest. It is the very name, in meaning, with that of *Puritan*, and originated in essentially the same way; for *the Puritans* were so named because they wished to purify the Church from the corruptions of human customs and human authority. All reformations are, necessarily, in the outset, imperfect; they may even be mingled with much that is positively erroneous. But no fact, in all the pages of history, stands out more prominently than this, viz., *in all real and important reformations in the Church, the leading features of Congregationalism have constituted their basis.* That fact is at once an illustration of

the importance of these principles, and a demonstration of their Scriptural character and authority. And it could not be otherwise; for if error commences in a departure from the Bible, reformation is but a retracing of those steps, a return to the pure fountain of Truth.

If the preceding remarks and arguments are based in, or are in accordance with the Bible, we may decide how far a very common assertion is in accordance with truth, viz., "*That no system of church government is taught in the Bible.*" It is true that no system is drawn out in *formal propositions*; but is there no other way of teaching than by formal propositions and definitions? Has it not been *shown* that principles of church order *are* taught, and in the very manner that almost every thing else is there taught? Sometimes by *general*, and sometimes by *specific* statements of principles, of duties, and of examples? An orderly arrangement of these scriptural instructions, constitutes *a system, and that system is Congregationalism.* The assertion which we are considering, originated in an overlooking of the obvious distinction between *statute* and *common law*?

In closing these remarks, may I not ask, with earnestness, Do not these principles of Congregationalism, and the basis upon which they rest, commend themselves to us, as founded in reason and in the word of God? Is not their practical utility most apparent? Do they not lead the mind, at once and effectually, from the impure fountains of human wisdom to the well-spring of Inspiration? What is

the abhorred popish doctrine of obedience to tradition, but obedience to human authority? Wherein does it differ, in principle, from the authority which, under *any* form, assumes the right to legislate, ecclesiastically, for others; whether in creeds or in books of discipline? Who will pronounce it "*sectarianism*" in me, to explain and defend the principles which I have espoused? Are they not parts of "the counsel of God,"—portions of "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints,"—which we *may* not "shun to declare?" And is the duty less imperative to *receive* them, and to "*contend earnestly*" in their defence? Who is excused from that duty? Who may plead attachment to any forms of human origin, and remain deaf or disobedient to Him who speaks through the divine Oracles?

"*Stand,*" therefore, "*in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.*"

IV.

“HE SHALL TURN THE HEARTS OF THE CHILDREN TO THEIR FATHERS.”
Mal. 4 : 6.

The Reformation—Luther—Wickliffe—Condition of the Church—Church and State—How united—Who was Wickliffe—What were his Principles—His Times—The Puritans—“The Independents.”

THE principles of Congregationalism, and the character of our fathers who brought these principles to light, and reduced them to practice, after they had lain buried for ages in the rubbish of Popery, have been laboring alike under the effects of an ill-founded and most unjust prejudice. There are those, even among the descendants of the Puritans, who are far from being familiar with these principles, and who are filled with these unfavorable prejudices. Those who cannot command the time or the means of reading extensive histories, will find themselves interested and instructed by a perusal of Congregational Tract No. II. They will there find an epitome of the origin, the history, and the operation of Congregationalism drawn out in a way that abridges the labor of accomplishing my present design. I shall, therefore, dwell less upon particular facts, calling attention, mainly, to *the principles* in which these facts originated.

The subject of the last chapter was, the *Nature and Scriptural origin of Congregationalism*. It was there shown, that the manner in which the Bible teaches the principles of Church order, is not with the formality of *statute law*, like most human systems ; but by examples, and maxims, and specific duties, given from time to time, according to circumstances, and in the form of *common* rather than of statute law ; and that in this form they are as fixed and intelligible as the other instructions of the Bible ; this being the form in which the Bible *generally* imparts its instructions. We have glanced at the evil consequences which followed the exercise of human wisdom and authority, in framing statute laws for the Church. In proof of these evils and of their origin, we glanced over the history of the Church, and found that error and corruption, in doctrine and in practice, followed just in proportion as *the few* assumed the right to legislate for the *many* ; that this aristocratic right is a violation of the fundamental principles of the Gospel, leading naturally and directly to the gates of spiritual despotism and spiritual death. It was remarked, also, as an indisputable fact, that every attempt at essential reformation, at whatever time and by whomsoever made, was a return to the essential principles of Congregationalism. This fact will be rendered more apparent as we prosecute our object.

Rejoicing as we do in the light of the Great Reformation, most turn to *Luther* as the luminary who, under God, dispelled the gloom of the dark ages ; most turn *only* to Luther as the voice of Him who

said, "Let there be light." And yet more than a *century and a half* before the time of Luther, the dawn of that glorious day had appeared in the land of our fathers; when every essential feature of the Reformation under Luther was distinctly unfolded. Some principles were then even *more* distinctly unfolded than they were by the great German Reformer. By noticing these facts as fully as space will permit, in connection with the then existing and preceding state of things in England, we may best perceive the true origin and nature of Congregationalism.

John Wickliffe was born in England, one hundred and fifty-nine years before Martin Luther was born in Germany. A careful perusal of the history of those times will powerfully suggest the inquiry, whether England, and all who speak the English language, and all who feel the influence of those who speak it, are not *far more indebted to Wickliffe than to Luther*. By refreshing our minds with the leading facts which rendered the Reformation necessary, not only in *religion* but in *politics*, we shall be furnished with an intelligible answer to that question.

The clergy had commenced their usurpations by taking the consciences of the people under their care and control. In the latter part of the fourth century, the Bishop of Rome had reached the chief seat among the bishops of Christendom. In the eighth century, the Pope became a temporal prince; and from that time he strode rapidly forward in the acquisition of power, till he became, in fact, universal

sovereign ; for kings and emperors received their crowns from his hands, and were subject to his will.

The process seemed to be this. As the clergy, and especially the Pope, held the keys of *heaven*, it was a small matter that they should hold those of *earth*. Indeed, as every temporal interest should be regarded as subordinate to the interests of eternity, and of the kingdom of God, it was reasonable that those who control the *one*, should control the *other*. Necessarily connected with these ideas of ecclesiastical power, was another respecting the *nature of excommunication*. It was this ; excommunication was the veritable pronouncing of the curse of God, and a withdrawal of the divine favor and protection. Hence it followed that the subjects of an excommunicated prince were absolved from all allegiance to him ; indeed, allegiance to him was treason against heaven.

But the power which could absolve men from *one* duty, could absolve them from *any other* ; and the power which could *absolve from duty*, could *pardon sin* ; or, what was the same thing practically, could *pronounce* its pardon. This power over "the keys of heaven," was the power to prescribe the terms of admission within the celestial gates. It was the authority to prescribe not only what men *ought* to believe, but what they *must* believe. Hence, to differ in belief from these heaven authorized instructors was rebellion against God. This implied that they were infallible ; for the authority to teach what men *must* believe should be infallible. But

whatever is moral truth *to-day* will *remain* truth *to-morrow* and *forever*. Hence arose the authority of tradition, in which men are the channels of God's unwritten instructions. In short, the supreme authority of the priesthood in all matters, became fully established. For ages the people had been taught these leading principles of the Catholic Church ; and not only these, but the doctrine of transubstantiation, or the real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, in the administration of which, the *bread* only was given to the people. Confession to the priest was insisted on, by which every thing was laid open to the clergy, enabling them to manage all affairs at their will. More firmly to bind the priesthood together, and to their common head, they were forbidden to marry ; and extensive orders or societies of them were established, *having no fixed residences*, and no bonds to bind them to the people ; *going at the bidding of their master, and performing his will*. These men were the confessors of the rich, as well as of the poor, and they often became the inheritors of immense possessions. At one period, the Pope received from England an annual revenue five times greater than that received by the king.*

While men were thus bound as in fetters of brass, the key of knowledge was prohibited, as if to consign them to perpetual debasement. We can thus form some idea of the difficulty with which a reformation must be commenced. Political and social degradation combined with ignorance and superstition to suppress all free investigation. *To believe*

* Punchard's Hist. Cong., p. 149.

any thing contrary to the church was heresy ; and the penalty of that was death.

From these facts it is easy to see where a reformation *must commence*, if it commence at all. It must commence with the *right* of the *people to think for themselves* ; and that was a *civil* as well as a *religious* right. *This was the starting point.* This was the corner-stone. There could be no *civil* right which did not involve, or which was not based in, a *religious* right. *This is the key to the right understanding of the origin and nature of Congregationalism*, as facts incontestably show. Every fact shows that *religious right* lies at the foundation of *civil liberty*, and *not civil liberty* at the foundation of *religious right*. It will be easy to prove, (and we shall soon introduce the witnesses,) that the principles of Congregationalism were the seed from which sprung the glorious harvest which we are now reaping. It will appear that the institutions which it is our boast to style *American*, did not spring up in some unaccountable way,—hatched from the brain of persecuting fanatics, to oppose and destroy whom would be doing good service both to God and man. In no age and in no nation, have the institutions of civil and religious liberty gained permanent and important triumphs over tyranny, and infidelity, and superstition, except as the contest has been waged under a banner emblazoned with these principles.

I have referred to Wickliffe. *Who was Wickliffe?* He was born in Yorkshire, England, in or about the year 1324. He was educated at Oxford

University, where he became distinguished for his talents and learning ; was honored with the degree of D.D., (which *implied something* in those days,) and was created a Professor in the University. He was distinguished for his knowledge of the philosophy of the times ; of the canon and civil laws, and especially of the Scriptures.

What brought him into notice ?

Here we must go back a little. John, King of England, had quarrelled with the Pope, about the year 1200, respecting the right to appoint to important ecclesiastical offices in England. The Pope excommunicated him, and laid the whole land under the effect of the excommunication. Religious services were mostly suspended—the dead were buried without religious ceremonies—the Sacraments were neglected—and the whole land seemed hung in sackcloth. John was compelled to submit ; and in order to regain the Pope's favor, he resigned his dominions to his Holiness, to be received again at his hands, to be held as tributary to him, and for which one thousand marks of silver were to be paid annually.

During the next reign, the exactions of the Pope increased. Foreign clergy came into the possession of the most important and lucrative benefices, the income of which was equal to two hundred thousand dollars annually—a sum which in those days was enormous ; and the legate of the Pope is said to have carried more money out of the kingdom at one time than he left in it.* The whole kingdom lay groaning under these exactions, and bleeding at every pore.

* Punchard's Hist. Cong.

Such were the circumstances which, under God, raised up John Wickliffe. Various individuals had appeared from time to time, who raised their voices against these oppressions, but little was accomplished till Wickliffe arose. As early as 1356, at thirty-two years of age, he began in good earnest his opposition to Papal authority. Immediately after, we find him actively opposing the itinerant clergy, who were the agents and tools of the Pope. As a consequence of this, he was expelled from an important station which he occupied in the University at Oxford.

About this time, Edward III. began to oppose the tribute which king John had permitted to be imposed upon the Crown of England. Wickliffe took up his pen against the payment of it, and opposing the right of the Pope to exact it; and was thus brought to take a decided part in ecclesiastical politics. He boldly and explicitly charged the Pope with simony, with covetousness, ambition, and tyranny; and even styled him Antichrist. Of course Wickliffe was pronounced a heretic. Nineteen articles of false doctrine were charged against him; three bulls were issued, requiring him to be seized and imprisoned; and the necessary steps were taken to root out the heresy. For a while he was protected by the government and by the people; and in the mean time he applied himself with increasing zeal to the task of undermining, by his preaching and writings, the power of the Pope. Though this protection was at length withdrawn, yet he was permitted by Providence to die a natural death; but his bones were dug up and burnt a few years afterwards, and the ashes

thrown into a river. His followers experienced the usual tender mercies of Rome. Sir John Oldcastle (Lord Cobham, as he is called) was burnt on a charge of treason ; but really a victim of Papal wrath for his efforts to spread the doctrines of Wickliffe.

The writings of Wickliffe were carried into Germany, and were there the means of the conversion of John Huss, who was burnt by the Council of Constance, and who kindled up a fire which spread through Germany one hundred years before the time of Luther.

The grand features of Wickliffe's reformation were, first and prominently, opposition to the Pope, and to all ecclesiastical authority ; for he contended earnestly that the clergy were not to be forced upon the people, nor to be maintained by them, except voluntarily. The next step respected the nature and organization of a church. Indeed, this was the *first* step in the order of nature, though perhaps not in the order of *time*. And here we find brought out thus early the leading features of Congregationalism, as taught by Wickliffe, viz., that a church is composed of professing Christians, who can assemble in one place ; that Christ is the only Head of the Church ; that we must practice and teach only the laws of Christ ; that *it is not lawful for a Christian*, after the full publication of the law of Christ, *to devise*, himself, any other laws for the government of the Church ; in short, that *the Scriptures are our only authority in matters of religion*. He taught explicitly that there are but two classes of officers in the church, ministers and deacons. Says an Episcopal

historian : "If Wickliffe had been permitted to reform our church, his work, in all probability, would nearly have anticipated the labors of Calvin ; and the Protestantism of England might have pretty closely resembled the Protestantism of Geneva."* But we cannot dwell upon the *origin* of our principles as we desire ; we must turn to their *tendency* and *results*.

We have seen how civil and ecclesiastical matters were commingled, to the annihilation of the rights of the people. To admit that *the people possessed rights*, was to admit the wedge that would rend asunder every system of priestly and political tyranny. This was seen both by kings and priests. Hence, when Henry VIII. shook off the yoke of Rome, and seated himself in the Pope's place, he restored to the people none of the rights of which they had been deprived. You are not to suppose that our principles were developed and applied in a moment. Many of the reformers themselves saw "men as trees walking." Human imperfection often marred the good work ; but the leaven was cast into the meal, and it *must* diffuse itself. From the death of Wickliffe to the first settlement of New England, was a period of two hundred and thirty-six years ; a longer period than has transpired since the Puritans first landed upon the Rock of Plymouth. We must remember that through all that period the good work was opposed by ignorance, by prejudice, by custom, by superstition, and by civil and ecclesiastical power. Nobility, royalty, and Popery—earth and hell were

* Neal's Hist. Puritans, Harper's edition, pp. 29, 30. Punchard's Hist. Cong. pp. 161, 169.

combined against it. But this very opposition, and the circumstances which gave that opposition its peculiar power, demonstrate the more clearly the nature and tendency of the principles which were leavening slowly, but surely, the whole mass. And here we have testimony which is beyond the reach of cavil.

It is not uncommon to see the testimony of Hume, on this point, adduced as applicable *indiscriminately* to *all* who ever bore the name of "*Puritans*." 'Thus: "Says that bitter hater of the Puritans and Presbyterians, David Hume, 'The precious spark of liberty had been kindled and was preserved by the Puritans, * * and * * to this sect * * * * the English owe the whole freedom of their Constitution.'"* "*This sect*." What sect? However Hume, in the abundance of his *hatred* of the Puritans and Presbyterians, may at times employ the former term, he leaves the historic fact in no shadow of doubt to what "*sect*" the distinguished honor here awarded is eminently due. Chapter LVII, to say nothing of the entire warp and woof of his History of England, points out the "*Independents*" as that "*sect*" † whose fame and whose principles are thus linked forever with the glorious name of LIBERTY; and whose name is thus enrolled in

* Biblical Repository, 1844, p. 286.

† "The *political* system of the *Independents* kept pace with their *religious*. NOT CONTENT with confining to very narrow limits the power of the Crown, and reducing the king to the rank of first magistrate, which was the project of the Presbyterians, THIS SECT, more ardent in the pursuit of liberty, aspired to a total abolition of the monarchy, and even of the aristocracy; and projected an entire equality of rank and order, in a republic, quite free and independent."—Hume's Hist. Eng., chap. 57, vol. V, p. 154, Campbell's edit.

her own temple. And there are others who delight to burn incense to their praise. Says *Lord King*, "As for toleration, or any true notion of religious liberty, or any general freedom of conscience, we owe them not in the least degree to what is called the Church of England. On the contrary, we owe all these to the Independents in the time of the Commonwealth, and to Locke, their most enlightened and illustrious disciple."

Lord Brougham speaks of the Independents as a "body of men to be held in lasting veneration for the unshaken fortitude with which, in all times, they have maintained their attachment to civil liberty; men, to whose ancestors England will ever acknowledge a boundless debt of gratitude, as long as freedom is prized among us. For, I freely confess it, they—with whatever ridicule some may visit their excesses, or with whatever blame others—they, with the zeal of martyrs, and with the purity of early Christians, the skill and courage of the most renowned warriors, achieved for England the free Constitution which she now enjoys."

Allow me to introduce another witness, and one no less distinguished than his Holiness, the present Pope. Surely he would bear no willing or overwrought testimony in our favor. It is an extract from a bull issued by him against the Christian League; a society formed for the purpose of extending the principles of the Reformation in Catholic countries, and especially in Italy. After invoking the efforts of his clergy and all the faithful, he continues: "Let us not doubt but your exertions, added to our

own, will be seconded by the *civil authorities*, and especially by the most influential *Sovereigns* of Italy, no less by reason of their favorable regard for the Catholic religion, than that *they plainly perceive how much it concerns them* to frustrate these sectarian combinations. Indeed, *it is most evident from past experience, that there are no means more certain of rendering the people disobedient to their princes than rendering them indifferent to religion, under the mask of religious liberty.* The members of the Christian League do not conceal this fact from themselves, although they declare that they are far from wishing to excite disorder; but they, notwithstanding, avow that, *once liberty of interpretation obtained, and with it, what they term liberty of conscience, amongst Italians, these last will NATURALLY soon acquire POLITICAL LIBERTY.*"

Here we have "in a nut-shell" the cardinal truth which I wish to illustrate, viz., the *natural, evident* connection—a connection most evident, not only from the nature of things, but from all "past experience"—that exists between *religious* and "*political* liberty." Not more fixed and certain is the law of the natural world, "that whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." But the seed which was sown at the commencement of the Reformation, was long "choked by the thorns" of Catholicism. The Beast of Rome plucked and trampled the crop for nearly three centuries. The husbandmen employed by heaven in this glorious field, although earth's noblest noblemen, were yet imperfect. They had so long been immured in darkness that their eyes could scarcely bear

the light. They were not fully disenthralled from the errors of the times. And these facts have been tauntingly urged against them as proof of weakness or imperfection. In subsequent chapters, it will be my object to show the groundlessness and injustice of the charges which have been, and which are still, so freely urged in certain quarters against our Puritan fathers. We shall find that their errors and their frailties were the results of human imperfection, and of the age in which Providence gave them their birth; while their virtues, and the institutions which were reared by their toils and cemented in their blood, and which stand as monuments more lasting and magnificent than the mausoleums or the pyramids of ancient ambition and arbitrary power, *are but the legitimate results of the great principles which we are now advocating.* We shall see in the contrast, how inexcusable is the ignorance, and how pitiful and unworthy the descendants of such sires, is the prejudice which can blind the mind to such virtues and to such results, and which contrast strangely with the candor and liberality of the titled names of Europe, and even of England's infidel historian.

It is not unusual, in these days of "the march of mind," to see a conceited stripling, or an equally vain and simpering boarding-school miss, decked in the proceeds of the toil and self-denial of a fond, but ill-judging parent, exhibit towards that parent less of deference and respect than is due to a faithful domestic; perhaps even ashamed to recognize a parent under the coarser dress, and the rustic but frank

manners of olden time. Language is inadequate to characterize such conduct and such hearts. But there are those, so destitute of magnanimity, so lost to gratitude and to patriotism, as to be guilty of all this towards *their country*, and towards *the fathers of their country*. Not content, with Ham, to expose the dishonor of the living, they must needs invade the sanctity of the tomb, that, by chance, they may discover some remaining relic of their fathers' imperfections which they can hold up to the ridicule of a degenerate age; trafficking in what they intend for their fathers' shame, and all for the ignoble purpose of increasing their sectarian capital. And the only palliation for all this,—*if it be a palliation*,—is, that they have become imbued with the spirit of a system which is *the antipodes of that which gave birth to the institutions of our country*; a system which can flourish among us *only as it disparages the glorious principles of our Puritan ancestors*; which can flourish among us *only* as it “turns the hearts of the children” *from “their fathers.”* And how is this object accomplished? By filling the minds of the young and of the old with mistaken and unjust prejudices. Defections from “the old paths,” in any considerable numbers from among *the people*, can be produced *only* by magnifying the defects of the Puritans, and by retailing the base fabrications and the wholesale slanders of those who hate both them and their principles.

And when an attempt is made to disabuse the public mind of these misrepresentations, what do we hear? A bold and open defence of these assaults upon

Puritanism? or a frank and manly acknowledgment of injustice? No, but a reiteration of these parricidal charges, from another haul of their drag-net of detraction through the pages of history; by appeals to public sympathy by the cry of "Persecution;"—appeals to the sympathy of those whose ancestry is thus dishonored, and who, if their minds were not already warped by an unjust prejudice, would revere them emories of their sires; who would perceive the beauty, the excellency, the scriptural origin, of "the old paths;" who would gather around the standard which was planted upon the rock of Plymouth; *who might desert the graves, BUT NEVER THE ALTARS of their fathers.*

V.

WHAT MEAN YE BY THESE STONES? Josh. 4 : 6.

Progress of Congregationalism-- Henry VIII.--Elizabeth--Her Times--Contest of Principles--Oppressions--James I.--Planting of New England--The Seed--Witchcraft.

WHEN the children of Israel, after their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, had passed over the river Jordan, twelve men, selected for the purpose, were commanded to take each of them a stone from the bed of the river, and set them up as a monument of the Divine interposition ; so that whenever their posterity in future generations should behold it, they might be reminded of the privileges thus wonderfully conferred, and of the responsibilities which had been laid upon them by the Divine hand.

Thus it is with us. The monuments of the Divine interposition meet us on every side ; not like the pyramid on Bunker Hill, pointing in majestic silence toward the eternal throne ; but in our school-houses, and academies, and colleges, and churches ; in our flourishing villages, and our peace-embowered houses ; in the quiet, and in the bustling scenes of industry ; in the arts and improvements of civilized life ; and, *above all and fostering all*, in the free political and religious institutions which were reared by our Puritan Fathers. Rocks may dissolve in

dust, Bunker's proud monument may waste away beneath the tooth of Time ; but while Freedom survives, or the *history* of Freedom, so long shall a wondering world inquire, "*What mean ye by these stones ?*"

To furnish an answer to this question, in part, is the design of this chapter. It was remarked in the last chapter, that this glorious structure was not reared in a day. Wickliffe commenced the Reformation in England as early as 1356 ; but the supremacy of the Pope was not renounced till 1532, by Henry VIII. During this long period, the Bible, which had been translated by Wickliffe, though trampled under the iron hoof of Rome, had been producing its natural and appropriate fruits. From the seed thus sown, the principles of the Reformation had taken effectual root. These principles might be summed up in *the right of individual men*, and of *individual CHURCHES, to regulate their own faith and practice by the Scriptures*. While Popery, or the elements of Popery, remained predominant, of course these principles were suppressed to the fullest extent of human power. But God did not leave himself without witness.

Though Henry had renounced the supremacy of the Pope, it was only that he might be Pope himself ; and never was Pope more arbitrary. Puritan and Papist, indiscriminately, who would not bow to his authority, were made to feel the weight of his power. He was followed by his daughter, "the bloody Mary," after a brief respite during the life of his son, the youthful Edward VI.

In 1558, just about two hundred years after Wickliffe commenced his eventful labors as a reformer, Elizabeth ascended the throne of England. She was a Protestant *in name*, as were most of the sovereigns who followed her; but notwithstanding this, very little advancement was made in the principles of true religious liberty. Religious faith, and public worship, and many of the private privileges of religion, were regulated by law; and the least departure from the prescribed forms and modes exposed the offender to the most cruel punishments,—even to death itself. Many, in these days, seem to suppose that persecution was practised, chiefly, by the *Catholics*; while the *Puritans* are made to share in the odium which is attached to the name of *Persecutor*. The injustice of this slander upon the name of Puritan, in its application to Congregationalists, we shall not neglect to expose, in the proper place. Many seem to forget that it was the *settled policy* of the Church of England, *for generations*, to inflict pecuniary and corporeal punishments for religious principles conscientiously held, and peaceably practised; *and that even now* political disabilities and pecuniary expenses are incurred from the same causes. *To pray* in any other manner than in the legally prescribed form, subjected our fathers to the loss of goods and chattels, for the *first* offence; to one year's imprisonment for the second; and to imprisonment for life for the third.

So little removed from Popery were the Episcopal forms and ceremonies of worship, that the Puritans regarded an observance of them as a practical sanc-

tioning of Popery. Some of those things might have been very harmless, in themselves; and so was a three-penny tax on tea a small matter, *in itself*, but it involved *the great principle of taxation without representation*. Much of the principle involved in these popish rules and observances was *real Popery*. It involved the question whether *God* or *man* should be obeyed,—whether men should be guided by *the Bible*, or by *human authority*. It was a contest of principles. The drinking of a few drops of an intoxicating liquor may be of little importance in itself, but in its influence it may involve the entire interests of the great cause of Temperance. Emphatically is this true in matters of religion, and especially in the great work of a reformation from Popery. To yield to human authority, where the Deity alone might command, was to deny his supreme authority over the conscience, the heart and the life. Hence, as the government assumed the right to regulate the religious faith and practice of the people, it is easy to see how the assertion of their rights in matters of *religion* would pioneer the way for the attainment of their rights in *civil* matters. Let it never be forgotten that this is the true order of things; then shall we be prepared to perceive and appreciate the obligations which the world is under to the men who bared their bosoms and their necks in defence of the principles which were involved in the Reformation. For these they endured fines, imprisonments, banishments, stripes, slitting of the nose, cropping of the ears, branding with red-hot irons, and death itself. To all these evils, inflicted

with greater or less severity, the Puritans were constantly subjected, not merely while Popery prevailed, but from the accession of Elizabeth in 1558, till they sought refuge in the wilderness of New England.

An extract or two from "Neal's History of the Puritans," will enable us to form some idea of the reasons why our fathers refused to conform to such a church, and to submit to such laws; and their abundant justification for seeking redress by any necessary means.

"In the supplication of the people of Cornwall, it is said, 'We are above the number of four score and ten thousand souls, which, for the want of the Word of God, are in extreme misery and ready to perish, and this neither for want of maintenance or place; for besides the impropriations in our Shire, we allow yearly above £9200, and have one hundred and sixty churches, the greatest part of which are supplied by men who are guilty of the grossest sins; some fornicators, some adulterers, some felons, bearing the marks in their hands for the said offences; some drunkards, gamesters on the Sabbath day, &c. We have many non-residents, who preach but once a quarter, so that, between meal and meal the silly sheep may starve. We have some ministers who labor painfully and faithfully in the Lord's husbandry; but these men are not suffered to attend their callings, because the mouths of papists, infidels, and filthy livers are open against them, and the ears of those who are called lords over us, are sooner open to their accusations, though it be but for ceremonies, than to the other's answers. Nor is it safe for us to

go and hear them ; for, though our own fountains are dried up, yet, if we seek for the waters of life elsewhere, we are cited into the spiritual courts, reviled, and threatened with excommunication.”*

But as “excommunication” was not sufficient, the following law, among others, was enacted : “ An act for the punishment of persons obstinately refusing to come to church, and persuading others to impugn the queen’s authority in ecclesiastical matters. It is therein enacted that if any person above the age of sixteen, shall obstinately refuse to repair to some church, chapel, or usual place of common prayer, to hear Divine service for the space of one month, without lawful cause ; or shall at any time, forty days after the end of this session, by printing, writing, or express words, go about to persuade any of her Majesty’s subjects to deny, withstand, or impugn her Majesty’s power or authority in causes ecclesiastical ; or shall dissuade them from coming to church to hear Divine service, or receive the communion according as the law directs ; *or shall be present at any unlawful assembly, conventicle, or meeting, under color or pretence of any exercise of religion ;* that every person so offending, and lawfully convicted, shall be committed to prison without bail, till they shall conform and yield themselves to come to church, and make declaration of their conformity.

* * * “ But in case the offenders against this statute, being lawfully convicted, shall not submit and sign the declaration within three months, then they shall abjure the realm, and go into perpetual banish-

ment.* And if they do not depart within the time limited by the quarter sessions or justices of the peace, or if they return at any time afterward, without the queen's license, they shall suffer death without benefit of clergy. So that as Lord Chancellor King observed at the trial of Dr. Sacheverel, the case of the Nonconformists by this act was worse than that of felons at common law, for these were allowed the benefit of clergy, but the others were not. This statute was levelled against the laity as well as the clergy, and the severe execution of it, with that of the 23d of Eliz., in this and the following reigns,† brought infinite mischiefs upon the kingdom; many families being forced into banishment; some put to death, as in cases of treason; and others as the authors of seditious pamphlets.”‡

Under the severe operation of these laws some of the sufferers “ventured to lay their case before the

* “It is remarkable that there is a proviso in this statute, that no popish recusant shall be compelled or bound to abjure by virtue of this act. Such was her Majesty's tenderness for the papists while she was crushing Protestant dissenters.”

† “These laws are still put in execution, and about three years ago, in Cornwall, a poor fellow, a Dissenter, was libelled in the spiritual court for not attending divine worship at his parish church on Sunday. He had not taken the oaths required by the Toleration Act; but it being a sufficient defence to take them at any time during the prosecution, he applied to the magistrates of the county, at their quarter sessions, who illegally refused to administer them; the consequence was, that he was excommunicated. Upon a representation of the committee in London for taking care of the civil concerns of the Dissenters, the chairman of the sessions acknowledged the error of the justices, and the man took the oaths at the ensuing sessions, but it was then too late.” Note in Neal's *Hist. of the Puritans*.

‡ Neal's “*Hist. of the Puritans*,” Vol. I. p. 198. (Harper's Ed.)

lords of the council in an humble petition." In this petition they say, that "upon a careful examination of the Holy Scriptures, we find the English hierarchy to be dissonant from Christ's institution, and to be derived from Antichrist, being the same the Pope left in this land, to which we dare not subject ourselves. We farther find that God has commanded all, that believe the Gospel, to walk in that holy faith and order which he has appointed in his church; wherefore, in the reverend fear of his name, we have joined ourselves together, and subjected our souls and bodies to those laws and ordinances. * * * * *

But the prelates of this land have for a long time dealt most injuriously, unlawfully, and outrageously with us, by the great power and high authority they have gotten in their hands, and usurped above all the courts, judges, laws, and charters of this land, persecuting, imprisoning, and detaining at their pleasure our poor bodies, without any trial, release or bail; and hitherto without any cause either for error or crime directly objected. Some of us they have kept in close prison four or five years with miserable usage; others they have cast into Newgate, and laden with as many irons as they could bear; others into dungeons and loathsome jails, among the most facinorous and vile persons, where it is lamentable to relate how many of these innocents have perished within these five years: aged widows, aged men, and young maidens, &c., where, so many as the infection hath spared, lie in woful distress, like to follow their fellows, if speedy redress be not had; others of us have been grievously beaten with

cudgels in Bridewell, and cast into a place called Little Ease, for refusing to come to their chapel service ; in which prison several have ended their lives ; but upon none of our companions thus committed by them, and dying in their prison, is any search or inquest suffered to pass, as by law in like case is provided.

“ Their manner of pursuing and apprehending us is with no less violence and outrage ; their pursuivants, with their assistants, break into our houses at all times of the night, where they break open, ransack, and rifle at their pleasure, under pretence of searching for seditious, unlawful books. The husbands in the dead of night they have plucked out of their beds, and haled them to prison.

“ We therefore humbly pray, in the name of God and our sovereign the queen, that we may have the benefit of the laws, and of the public charter of the land, namely, that we may be received to bail till we be by order of law convicted of some crime deserving of bonds. We plight unto your honors our faith unto God, and our allegiance to her Majesty, that we will not commit any thing unworthy the Gospel of Christ, or to the disturbance of the common peace and good order of the land, and that we will be forthcoming at such reasonable warning as your lordships shall command.”*

Many minds are struck with horror chiefly at the burnings at the stake ; but the extracts just given show us that such public and cruel executions were were but a drop in the bucket, in comparison with

what was endured from other modes of punishment and of cruelty. The law above quoted had a two-fold object, viz., to enforce conformity to all the principles and practices of the established church; and to prevent and punish attendance upon any religious meeting, public or private, for reading or hearing God's word, and for prayer, or for any religious exercises whatever. There was no charge of hostility to the civil government, or of any thing that tended to weaken the government. It was purely a warfare upon the rights of men quietly and peaceably to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences. These were the true grounds of the contest which was waged between the Puritans, on the one hand, and the royal party and the Episcopal clergy on the other. Relief from the evils under which the Puritans groaned, could be obtained only by a change in the principles of civil and ecclesiastical government. But no sufficient and permanent relief was to be found in England. It was only to be found upon these shores. During a brief period they obtained a respite in their native land, but they obtained it only by rising against their oppressor, and wresting the rod from his grasp. This was under Cromwell. The men who gained this victory over oppression were but a minority; but they succeeded, under God, through their talents and their courage. While Cromwell lived, they were able to maintain the advantages which they had gained. That chapter in the history of England, whatever may be the faults which it records, is a perfect vindication of our principles, civil and religious. Two fundamental

principles are the landmarks which guide in the survey of those stormy times, viz. *Republicanism in government*, and *toleration in religion*. Their republicanism has already been exhibited from Hume. Of their tolerance, the Encyclopædia Americana, article, Cromwell, thus testifies. "*In religion he acted on the principle of toleration. Every man had liberty of conscience.*" It might have been added, that no test was applied to any man, except what is applied in this state at this day, viz. *That he be true to the government of his state and of his country.*

In judging of the manner in which these principles were carried out in practice, two points must be borne in mind. (1.) Those were times of revolution, in which the actions of men are not to be judged by the same standard as in times of established order. Even in our own Revolution in '76, many acts and measures, which were then regarded as just and necessary, would appear in altogether a different light, in the present circumstances of established authority. The Puritan reformers were surrounded by a powerful body of Catholics, with whom the Catholic governments of France and Spain, and the Pope were ready to unite for the purpose of re-establishing popery in England. Scarcely less to be dreaded was the royalist party, combining the influence and the tender mercies of an intolerant hierarchy, whose motto, as uttered by king James was, "*They*" (the Puritans) "*shall conform, or I will harry them out of the kingdom, or worse, only hang them, that's all.*" (2.) We who enjoy the light of mid-day, are

not to condemn those who stumbled in the twilight of the morning. Who thinks of casting odium on the name of Fulton, because some of his efforts in the application of steam were crude, or even unphilosophical? His name will shine as the morning star in the history of that great invention, even though others have far surpassed him in the application of the grand idea to which he gave birth. Columbus would be remembered and honored as the discoverer of America, even though he had died when his eyes first gazed upon the shores of the first discovered island. What though his plans and calculations were marred with error, and ignorance, and absurdity? His name is still recorded as "*The Discoverer of a New World.*" Why, in the name of honesty and of justice, should not the same truth and candor mark our estimate of the principles, and actions, and characters of our Puritan fathers, who discovered and reduced to order the elements of civil and religious liberty? And yet these are the men who are selected as outcasts from the pale of candor; whose names and whose principles are shuttlecocks for every witling. Some, even their own degenerate sons, would brand the Puritans as *intolerant bigots*, and hold them up to the odium of the world. Facts show the base injustice of such representations. Cromwell expresses the abhorrence he would feel, if those, who had cast off the yoke of bishops, should themselves become the persecutors of others. The Puritans fought for religious liberty, not merely for themselves but for others. Accordingly, when resting in the rewards of victory, they permitted all

peaceable citizens to enjoy the rights of conscience unmolested. To this truth let an Episcopal church historian bear testimony. "All the world," says he, "will allow that, in point of religious liberty, their conduct when in power, fulfilled the promises made in obscurity."* Says Hume, "Of all Christian sects, this was the first" (the Independents) "which, during its prosperity, as well as its adversity, *always adopted the principle of toleration.*"† And yet, in the face of all this, there are those who can denounce and misrepresent the heroic efforts of these men in defence of themselves, of liberty, and of the sacred rights of conscience.

Amid the adverse influences by which they were surrounded, in England, the Puritans could not long retain the power which they had acquired. They retained it long enough, however, to demonstrate the political bearings of their religious principles, viz., *that republicanism in religion leads directly to republicanism in politics.* Men of all religious views may *now* be found harmonizing in their politics; but it was not so *then*. The anti-republican in religion, was an anti-republican in politics. This remark is verified by the famous maxim of James I. "*No BISHOP, no KING.*" "A Church without a bishop" led, *naturally*, to "a state without a king." In proof of this, we need only the history of the reigns of the four kings of the house of Stuart. They were "the declared enemies of the civil constitution; they aimed to govern without law. They levied taxes by the

* Hist. Eng. Ch. and Sects, by Rev. J. Grant, Vol. II. p. 435.

† Hist. Eng., Vol. V. p. 154.

prerogative ; and endeavored to put an end to the very being of parliaments ;” and the people were forbidden even “to *talk* upon political matters.” These arbitrary measures were countenanced and encouraged by the bishops, that thereby they might secure the suppression of the Puritans, and the supremacy of “the Church.”

The state of the parties is shown by this short piece of history. Upon the accession of James I. to the throne of England, the Puritans petitioned for a reformation of certain abuses and corruptions in the Church. They were met by a counter petition from the Episcopal party, who endeavored to excite the prejudice of the king against the Puritans, “as being for a limited monarchy, and for subjecting the titles of kings to the approbation of the people.” “Look at the Reformed Churches abroad ; wheresoever the desire of the” Puritan “takes place, how ill it suits with the state of monarchy.” “The present Church government” was commended “as the great support of the crown, and calculated to promote *unlimited subjection*.” “The archbishop and his brethren were indefatigable in possessing the king with the excellence of the English hierarchy, * * as best suited to a monarchical government.” In a conference with these petitioners, the king, turning to the bishops, said, “My lords, I may thank you that these Puritans plead for my supremacy, for if once you are out and they in place, I know what would become of my supremacy, for, no bishop no king.” Then rising from his chair he added, “I will make them conform, or I will harry them out of the land, or else do worse,

only hang them, that's all." Bishop Bancroft fell on his knees and said, 'I protest my heart melteth for joy, that Almighty God, of his singular mercy, has given us such a king as, since Christ, has not been.'"
"Chancellor Egerton said, 'he had never seen the king and priest so fully united in one person.'"^{*} At the next day's conference, the king having given utterance to the same arbitrary spirit, the old Archbishop cried out, in transport, "Undoubtedly your majesty speaks by the special assistance of God's Spirit."

This was the precise state of the parties,—Episcopacy and monarchy on the one hand, wedded together and mutually supporting each other; and Puritanism on the other, the defender of constitutional liberty.

But the Puritans were not all Congregationalists, or Independents as they are called in England. If we would correctly understand the relations which Congregational principles sustain to civil and religious liberty, we must not forget that as matters by degrees approached a crisis, *opposition to despotism centered more and more in Congregationalism*. The men of that religious party were the men who took the lead of the opposition among the people, in Parliament, and in the army, and who finally overthrew the monarchy and established the Commonwealth, and who, amid all their reverses, were ever found the consistent and indomitable champions of liberty. Says Hume, "The INDEPENDENTS, who had, at first, taken shelter, and concealed themselves

* Neal.

under the wings of the PRESBYTERIANS, now (1644) evidently appeared *a distinct party, and betrayed VERY DIFFERENT VIEWS AND PRETENSIONS.*"* Hence the testimony of lords King and Brougham already given, that "to the Independents England owes all true notions of religious liberty, and freedom of conscience," as well as "the free constitution which she now enjoys." It was, then, not merely to the *Puritans* that "England owes this debt of gratitude," *but pre-eminently to that class of Puritans who held the peculiar principles of Congregationalism.*

It was from this party that New England was colonized; and these were the principles with which this soil was planted. Not by a few ranting fanatics, who were too surly and persecuting to dwell with the rest of mankind. No men in England ranked higher in point of talents and education than their statesmen and their clergy. These were the men, under whose administration, and by whose arms, the national glory of England was raised to a pitch, that never has been surpassed. These were the men, whom some can ridicule as whining, psalm-singing, ignorant, fanatical persecutors; the men who hurled tyranny from its throne, and beneath whose tread Europe trembled. Yea, more; these were the men who moulded this fair land, and breathed into it the living soul that now animates it with the spirit of civil and religious liberty. Not merely did they cross the ocean with these principles; *it was these principles* that inspired them with the courage and the

* Hist. Eng. Vol. V. p. 153.

fortitude to brave the ocean, the wilderness, and the savage, and hunger, and cold, and death.

It is deeply interesting and instructive to trace the development of these principles, during the two hundred and thirty-six years preceding the first settlement of New England, beginning with the time of Wickliffe. Scarcely one important principle either in politics or religion, has been since discovered. He did not, indeed, foresee,—no human mind could have comprehended their operation or results. That great Reformer fell back upon the naked Scriptures. He there saw at once the rights, and duties, and responsibilities of individual *Christian men*, and of individual *Christian Churches*. The Bible, and the Bible only, as the rule of faith and practice in religion,—the voluntary election and support of the ministry by the people,—the nature of the pastoral office,—the mode and design of Church organization,—these were the elements of the *religious* rights, and they led, *naturally* and *directly*, to the *civil rights of the people*. All who adopted these principles, did not at once, and with equal clearness, discover their nature and practical application. Persecution at times excited and beclouded their minds, for it can “make a *wise* man *mad*.” They were often uncompliant to the weakness of others; they were stern and rigid; sometimes even harsh towards others, for those were not the times when men were enervated upon beds of down or of roses. We may even admit that they were deficient in the milder graces of the gospel; but those were the faults of the *times*, and *not of the Puritans alone*. Many seem

to forget that to estimate the historical facts of the seventeenth century by those of the nineteenth is, *necessarily*, to make a *false* and *unjust* estimate. Many seem to forget that those men were born amid the corruptions of popery, or of a hierarchy that was based on essentially the same principles, and that they were called to suffer beneath the heavy hand, and to resist the full grown power of the Man of Sin.

We shall be aided in estimating our obligations to these men, by answering to ourselves this one question, viz., *What new principle in civil or religious liberty has been discovered since the settlement of New England*, and the establishment of these colonial governments? Many among us seem to look upon the fathers of these enlightened republics as passing through a change similar to that of the semi-savage Russians, under Peter the Great. Now, what change has taken place in New England, or in our country? There has been, absolutely, *no change of essential principles*; there has been no change except in the *application* of these principles, and in the advancement of the arts of life; in personal matters of religion; and in our relations to the mother country. What was accomplished, or aimed at, in the Revolution, but a confederacy of the States, and independence of Great Britain? *Nothing*. The adoption of a National Constitution followed as a matter of expediency, which was taught by experience; but what new principle was there in that? It was simply an application of well known principles of Republicanism. In the confederation of the colo-

nies, by which independence was achieved, there was nothing new; for four of the colonies of New England had confederated, for their mutual defence against a common danger, nearly a century and a half previous, and the constitutions under which they achieved their independence of the mother country, and which continued in force afterwards, were the very constitutions which had been handed down from our Pilgrim Fathers.

These facts are not only important to a right understanding of the origin and genius of our institutions, but also of the difference between the governments of the New England colonies, and of the colonies at the South. These latter governments were *proprietary* in their character; i. e., the king, or some great proprietor or company was at the head of the government; or at least had a leading agency in the direction and administration of affairs. Nothing of this had any existence in New England.

The first attempts at a settlement in New England, were made in what is now the State of Maine; but the first regular and permanent settlement, was that of Plymouth, which was commenced in 1620. The settlers had started for "South Virginia," as it was called; but on landing they found themselves so far north, as to be out of the jurisdiction of that colony, and without any powers of government. They therefore entered into a voluntary compact, as follows. "We do, by these presents, solemnly and mutually, in the presence of God, and of one another, covenant and combine ourselves together, into a civil body politic, for our better ordering and preservation

and furtherance of the ends aforesaid ; and by virtue hereof, to enact, constitute and frame, such just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions, and offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the colony ; unto which we promise all due submission and obedience." "The government was administered by a governor chosen annually by the people, and seven persons called assistants, chosen in the same way. It was at first a pure democracy, and the whole body of the people often met and decided upon executive as well as legislative affairs." "In 1639, a House of Representatives was established."

"The Colony of Massachusetts was settled in 1628. Powers of government were given them the next year, by Charles I. as 'the Governor and Company of Massachusetts Bay.' The Company was authorized to hold four great and general courts annually, which were empowered to make laws and regulations for the government of the colony. In 1630, what was intended merely as the organization of a *Company* became the Constitution of a *State*. In 1634 the House of Representatives was established, and became a fundamental part of the Constitution."

The first colonists of Connecticut came from Massachusetts, in 1635, and were governed by persons called Magistrates, empowered for that purpose by the Legislature of Massachusetts ; but finding they were out of the limits of that colony, they established, in 1639, a Constitution for themselves. The substance of this Constitution was contained in

the Charter granted by Charles II. in 1662, and continued, without any material alteration, to be the fundamental law of this State till 1818.

“The Colony of New Haven was settled in 1637. The colonists, having no powers of government, constituted themselves into a body politic, and established a form of Government.”*

The settlers of all these colonies were republicans before they left their native land, and they left it *because they were republicans* in politics and in religion; and so truly as religion had an influence in the formation of their characters, so truly was it the cause of their republicanism.

Rhode Island was settled in two colonies by Roger Williams and Mrs. Hutchinson, with governments similar to the preceding.

“In 1643, the Colonies of Plymouth, Massachusetts, Connecticut and New Haven, formed a Confederacy, which lasted forty years. By the Articles of Confederation they entered into a perpetual league of friendship and amity, for offence and defence;” each colony retaining its own government and jurisdiction in domestic concerns,—just the form of confederation which existed during the Revolution. Two Commissioners from each of the Colonies formed a board for managing the common concerns of the confederacy.

After the termination of the Commonwealth in England, and the re-establishment of Monarchy, royal commissioners were appointed to govern the colonies at their discretion. “But,” as Lord Claren-

* Encyclopædia Americana, Art. New England.

don expressed it, "*they were already hardened into republics,*" and the commissioners found themselves unable to execute their duties. Regular resistance was offered in all these colonies, as decided in its spirit as that which commenced and completed the war of the Revolution. As a consequence, "their charters were declared to be forfeited, and a Governor General was appointed for New England, with instructions to allow no printing press." The charter of Connecticut was preserved by the boldness of the people, from falling into the hands of the king's commissioner, and was kept secreted until after the Revolution in England by which William III. was placed upon the throne. When a rumor of that revolution reached this country, "the people of Boston flew to arms, seized the Governor and the Captain of a frigate in the harbor, compelled the castle to surrender," and thus effected a complete revolution. The charters of Connecticut and Rhode Island were then resumed, but that of Massachusetts had been seized; and though they petitioned for its restoration, it was refused, and a new one granted, by which the Governor was appointed by the Crown. From time to time the temper of the colonies was tried by restrictions laid upon their trade and manufactures, and by constant attempts to encroach upon their liberties. More especially was this true after the annihilation of the French power in America in 1763. From that time, a new system of colonial policy began in England, which led to the war of the Revolution.

I have glanced over these matters, not to impart knowledge, but to refresh the mind with the facts

which show that the independence of these States was *the mere ripening of a harvest which was sown in the first planting of our country*, and that this harvest was matured by influences which had been in constant operation during the entire history of the colonies. Our free institutions were brought here by our fathers ; here they planted, in the outset, our system of education, our churches and our religion.

It would be interesting to notice the fact and to exhibit the proof, if our particular design would permit, that in the eventful struggle of the Revolution the colonies which bore the heat and burden of the day, were those which were most deeply imbued with the spirit of the Puritans ; while those, *whether colonies or individuals*, who, under the name of *Tory*, preferred a foreign yoke to the glory and independence of their country, were, with some noble exceptions, equally opposed to the religious principles of the Puritans. But we must pass on to other topics. Yet, at this day, when so many revile the vine thus watered with tears and blood, even while reclining beneath its branches and revelling upon its fruits, it is well to refresh our minds with our obligations to those men, of whom the world was not worthy. It is a reproach that *ingratitude* should be recorded as the peculiar "sin of republics." But our obligations are not seen alone in the fact that *such* an inheritance has been bequeathed us ; we must look at the sacrifices by which it was obtained.

Of the one hundred and one who landed on Plymouth Rock, Dec. 22, 1620, more than one half were laid in their graves before spring, by hardship,

exposure and privation. At times not more than six or seven were found possessed of sufficient strength to attend upon the sick, and to bury the dead. Nothing but a *Puritan Faith* could have sustained them under such crushing trials; and scarcely was it ever true, during a long series of years, that their lives were secure from a savage foe. Their wars with the Pequots, with the Narragansetts, with Philip, and with the combined powers of the French and Indians on the north, were sustained at a greater sacrifice of treasure and of blood, in proportion to their numbers and their wealth, than that which gained our national independence. In forming their settlements, in making their improvements, in performing their journeys and their marches, all was accomplished by slow and exhausting bodily toil, unaided by modern improvements in science and the arts. Truly, *other men labored, and we have entered into their labors.*

But they were not perfect men, and consequently, though they were in advance of all others, and in advance of the times in which they lived; though they were employed by Providence to dig up the Bible from the rubbish of ages, and to apply its principles to practice; though they were the constant defenders of constitutional liberty, and the founders of this glorious Republic; yet there are those, even among us, who are possessed of so little candor or gratitude, as not only to be blind to their virtues, and to the monuments of their heroic deeds, but who seem to delight to hold up their imperfections, and even these men themselves, as only fit subjects of

ridicule. While the historians, and the titled names of Europe,—though the subjects of a monarchy and a hierarchy,—delight to honor our Puritan fathers, attracted, chiefly, by their characters and their achievements, showing that it requires *nobility of soul*, if not of *titles*, to discover and appreciate true greatness,—while they can expatiate, with delighted candor, upon our tasteful dwellings, our shady and quiet villages, our factories, our cultivated farms, our roads and internal improvements, our schools, and our churches, *as the results of Puritan principles*; others, even its own sons, can denominate New England only as “*the land where they hung Quakers and witches.*”

Let us begin with the hanging of witches. The history of our country contains a melancholy chapter on this subject. The year 1692 is celebrated for the sad delusion which has given Salem an unhappy distinction. In that year nineteen persons were hung, and one pressed to death in Salem and its vicinity, for the alleged crime of witchcraft. The delusion was not confined to that region; though matters were not elsewhere carried to the same extreme. One person was executed in New Haven Colony, and several were accused in Connecticut, but none were executed; and no execution took place in New England, subsequently to 1692.

It is common, in some circles, to speak of this matter as if all the Colonies were equally implicated in whatever of dishonor may be attached to such transactions; but certainly it is manifest injustice to charge the crimes or the weaknesses of the people,

or of the government of *one* colony upon them all indiscriminately. The colonies were entirely distinct, and independent of each other.

But why select *New England* at all, as the country peculiarly marked in history for the superstition, if you please to call it such, which believed in witches, and the records of whose courts are stained with their blood? Is it *true* that "New England is *the* land where they hung witches?" Or is the charge *a slanderous libel*?

We find traces of the execution of witches as early as the 13th century; but it was not until the 15th that the proceedings against witchcraft assumed the most hideous form. "In 1484, Pope Innocent VIIIth issued a bull, directing the inquisitors to be vigilant in searching and punishing those guilty of this crime." Other bulls followed by Alexander VIth in 1494, by Leo Xth in 1521, and by Adrian VIth in 1522. For two centuries and a half these principles had full sway. We are told that five hundred witches were burned in Geneva, in three months, a little before the Reformation. One thousand were executed in one year in the diocese of Como. In Wurtzburg, one hundred and fifty-seven persons were burned in two years; and it has been calculated that one hundred thousand persons suffered in Germany alone, from the date of the first bull, just referred to, until the termination of prosecutions on these charges. "A witch was burned in one of the Swiss Cantons as late as 1780. In England the state of things was no better. The Reformation, which exploded so many errors, seems to have had

no influence upon this. Individual cases of trial occurred in that country previous to the existence of any penal statutes against it," but the enactments of Henry VIIth, about the year 1500, of Henry VIIIth, of Elizabeth, and of James Ist, in 1603—the last passed when Lord Bacon was a member of Parliament, and not repealed till 1736—show the extent of the legislative proceedings in regard to that crime in England. As late as 1716 a woman and her daughter were hanged on a charge of witchcraft, twenty-four years after the last execution in New England. "The number of those put to death in England for this crime has been estimated at thirty thousand!" something like one thousand to one for those executed in New England. What truth, or candor, or intelligence, is there in characterizing New England as "*the land where they hung Quakers and witches?*" The last victim that perished in Scotland, was executed as lately as 1722,—in Scotland, than which there is not a more enlightened country in Europe. Indeed, the most distinguished men were led away with this delusion, in common with the multitude. Not to occupy space, I will quote only *Blackstone*. "To deny the possibility, nay, the actual existence of witchcraft and sorcery", (Commentary on the Laws of England,) "is at once flatly to contradict the revealed word of God, in various passages both of the Old and New Testament; and the thing itself is a truth to which every nation hath in its turn borne testimony, either by examples seemingly well attested, or by prohibitory laws which, at

least, suppose the possibility of a converse with evil spirits.”*

Where, then, let me ask, is the justice of singling out New England as *the* land where this delusion has prevailed, as if this were enough to stamp with weakness and superstition the fathers of our country? They were, indeed, influenced by the common belief of the times. Not to have been thus affected would imply that they were either more, or less, than men. But, so far were they from being subject to that weakness, *peculiarly*, the *contrary* was the fact. So far was New England from being “*the* country where they hung witches,” it is, in truth, the country where *few* were hung. But least of all should this charge come, by way of reproach, from those whose peculiar glory it is that they are the disciples of John Wesley. “It was owing to this weakness,” says his biographer, (“a too great readiness to credit the testimony of others,”) “that Mr. Wesley so readily believed most of the stories he heard concerning witchcraft and apparitions.” “It is true likewise,” says Mr. Wesley, “that the English in general, and most of the men of learning in Europe, have given up all accounts of witches and apparitions, as mere old wives’ fables. I am sorry for it: and I willingly take this opportunity of entering my solemn protest against this violent compliment, which so many that believe the Bible pay to those who do not believe it. I take knowledge, these are at the bottom of the outcry which has been raised, and with such insolence spread throughout the nation, in direct opposition

* Enc. Am., art. Witchcraft.

not only to the Bible, but to the suffrages of the wisest and best of men in all ages and nations. They well know, whether Christians know it or not, that the giving up witchcraft is in effect giving up the Bible.* And this was written in 1768,—seventy-six years after the chief part of the delusion had passed away from New England. Truly, this is the land where they believed in witchcraft! That popular delusion did indeed prevail here; but New England was as far in advance of the rest of the world, in this respect, as she was in all others. He who casts sneers upon her for her popular belief, in respect to these matters, betrays his own ignorance, or prejudice, or both. As we proceed, we shall see that other unworthy charges are equally groundless and unjust. The followers of Wesley should be the last to reproach the Puritans for being led away by that common error of the times. We have only to open our eyes, and we shall discover not only monuments of Providential regard, but of the distinguishing glories of our Puritan fathers,—monuments which should lead our children to inquire, (and none *but children* should *need* to ask,) *What mean ye by these stones?* Let us teach these things to our children; let us labor to cultivate these principles in every heart, till throughout the length and breadth of our country there be found no *viper to sting the bosom that has nourished it.*

* Whitehead's *Life of John Wesley*, pp. 189, 190.

VI.

“DOTH OUR LAW JUDGE ANY MAN BEFORE IT HEAR HIM, AND KNOW WHAT HE DOETH?” John 7: 51.

Blue Laws of Connecticut—Persecution—Roger Williams—The Anabaptists—The Quakers.

THIS question of Nicodemus is based alike in common sense, and common justice; and yet few principles have been oftener violated than this, by the stale and slanderous misrepresentations which are so commonly heard, of the fathers of New England,—the founders of the institutions which are the pre-eminent glory of our land. They were men who lived not for themselves. They not only lived and labored, but they *died*, for posterity. We have been permitted to enter into their labors; and yet there are those who can ridicule and reproach their memories, even while revelling upon the fruits of their toil.

We have glanced, hastily, over some of the facts which exhibit the character of the Puritans, and the principles for which they contended, “even unto blood;”—facts which show that *the peculiarities of their religious system* were the springs which put in motion that train of influences which is leading on to the emancipation of the world from both civil and religious thralldom;—facts which show that every

privilege which we now enjoy was elaborated, and matured, and established, by those far-reaching and self-denying men. Not that they were inspired,—not that they were perfect,—*not that they always made a right application of their own principles*,—not that they had cast off all the prejudices and errors of the dark ages, from which they had but just emerged ;—but to censure or reproach those men for these things is as unreasonable, as to censure or reproach the distinguished genius which applied the powers of steam to the arts of life, because he did not perceive the full extent of its application ; or because he was beclouded by the ignorance, or misled by the prejudices of the times in which he lived. Such charges, made on such grounds, more justly lie at the door of those who urge them.

Who has not heard of “ ‘The Blue Laws of Connecticut?’ ” Those who know little of the history of their country, are frequently familiar with these fables, and are ready to point to them, as characteristic of our ancestors.

What, then, was the origin of the book which bears the above title ? It was the *fictitious production of an enemy*, for the sole purpose of casting odium and contempt upon the principles and the institutions of those whom he thus slanders. There were, of course, many things in the personal habits, and in the social and civil regulations of our fathers, that appear to us quaint and antiquated,—which partook of the times in which they lived ; but the author of that book filled it with tales, and pretended facts which never had an existence, except in his own imagination.

But who was the author of that book? An Episcopal clergyman, who had labored to propagate the principles of Episcopacy among a people that, with the true old Puritan spirit, refused to bow their necks to the yoke which had been cast off by their fathers. And when the Revolutionary contest commenced, he joined the enemies of liberty, and then wrote a book filled with caricatures of Puritanism, and which was worthy to stand on the same shelf with "the Adventures of Sinbad the Sailor." But so often has this book been quoted, that multitudes suppose it to contain the veritable laws of Connecticut.

More unjust, though with more semblance of truth, are *the charges of persecution*, which have so often been made against the fathers of New England. They are more unjust, because, more important principles being involved, they bear more heavily upon the characters of the pretended persecutors; but they bear more of the semblance of truth, because our fathers, acting under *the law of self-preservation*, sometimes forgot their own principles, and even mingled error with truth. They supposed, —and in many cases, perhaps, truly,—that severity was, at times, necessary, not only in preserving their principles from being contaminated by what they regarded as fundamental error, but in guarding their institutions and themselves from a hierarchy, on the one hand; and on the other, from the insidious approaches of arbitrary power. In estimating their conduct, it is indispensable, that facts and circumstances be taken into the account; and yet both have been most injuriously overlooked.

1. The first settlers of New England, by their sacrifices, and in view of the objects which they were aiming to accomplish, regarded themselves as possessing *the right* to adopt their own principles of government, even to the exclusion of those who differed essentially from them. They had sacrificed all the comforts and privileges of their native land, for one great object,—the enjoyment of their own rights and principles in government and religion. To achieve this object, they had gone out from the pale of civilization into an unbroken wilderness. What *right* had others to molest them, by their intrusions, and by efforts directly intended to subvert these newly established institutions? *We*, in the manhood of our strength, enact and enforce alien and naturalization laws, to protect ourselves and our institutions; and thus we advertise all who would come among us; “*Conform to these principles, or stay away.*” *We assert the right*, for ourselves, to enact just such laws as we deem necessary for the attainment of these objects; and shall we question the right of our fathers to adopt the same principles? They may have been *severe* and *even impolitic*, in the *application* of these principles; they doubtless were; but let us not condemn them for adopting principles which we ourselves continue to practice.

2. Another thing which is to be noticed, as a characteristic of those times, was *a commingling of civil and ecclesiastical matters*.

It had long been the principle of the Catholic world, that *the Church is above the State*; and after the authority of the Pope was renounced in Eng-

land, the Sovereign was still regarded, there, as *the head of the Church*. Under this evil our fathers had long groaned; and although they did not seem to perceive, with perfect distinctness, where to draw the line between "*Church and State*," still they watched, with a most jealous eye, every thing which they regarded as tending towards the yoke from which they had so recently escaped.

3. *All those individuals and sects, which our fathers opposed, commingled with their religious opinions, more or less of opposition to the civil government of the Colonies.*

They were not satisfied with being permitted to enjoy their religious opinions, and to express them, in a religious way; or rather, it was a part of the religion, of some of them, to *oppose* the existing governments of these infant colonies. Even in the case of Roger Williams, who was far from being the most violent, Gov. Winthrop tells us that even he was sent out of the Colony, not because of his opinions as a Baptist, but because he endeavored to alienate and divide the colonists, while they were scarcely able to stand together.*

4. The feebleness of the colonies, and the dangers which threatened them from the French and Indians, and from the mother country, where the principles from which they had fled were still in operation, all combined to impress our fathers with the necessity of guarding themselves, *effectually*, from every internal cause of weakness. This is a con-

* Winthrop's Journal, pp. 86, 88; Hutchinson's Hist. Mass. Vol. I. p. 41.

sideration which we can scarcely appreciate ; just as the full grown man loses the impressions of weakness and of danger which he felt in childhood.

5. As their *religious principles* were the sources of their civil institutions, it was natural that the Puritans should feel a deep apprehension excited by whatever should *corrupt* their religious principles ; for thus all that they held dear would be undermined and destroyed together.

With these facts distinctly before our minds, let us come to the examination of the charges of *persecution* which have been made against our fathers.

Roger Williams came to New England about the year 1630. He was at that time a Congregational minister, in regular standing. The church at Salem invited him to become an assistant to their pastor. The Governor and Council, fearful of the tendency of his principles, *not merely* upon the churches, "but upon the *political constitution of the country*,"* advised the church at Salem not to employ Mr. Williams as their pastor. It was not, therefore, *mere religious persecution*, as some would have us believe ; but, as Gov. Winthrop asserts, *political* considerations were leading, if not *the* leading reasons for guarding against the effect of what were then considered as disorganizing principles. Opposition to Mr. Williams was increased by the course which he pursued on two points, which were then regarded as important by all parties. (1.) He refused to hold religious intercourse with the church at Boston, because they would not make a public and

* Mather's Magnalia, Vol II. p. 430.

solemn declaration of their repentance for communing with the Church of England, while they were in the realm of England. (2.) He violently declaimed against the right of the civil magistrate to punish breaches of "the first table of the moral law," for example, blasphemy, which is even *now* punished under many civil governments.

To appreciate the first of these charges, it is necessary to remark, that the Puritans were divided upon the question of religious intercourse with the Church of England. Many of the Puritans still continued that intercourse, showing, if that fact is a recommendation, that they were not the bigots which many would represent them to be. But there were those, who were for overturning every thing, in State as well as in Church. Mr. Williams was regarded as belonging to this number. It is not surprising, therefore, that the governments of New England, in their weakness, should stand in fear of all who were infected with those principles. How far Mr. Williams was infected we do not assert; but his sympathy, real or supposed, with that party, would naturally excite apprehension.

The Church at Salem accepting the advice given them, Mr. Williams went to Plymouth; but not succeeding according to his wishes, he returned again to Salem, where he was employed. "It happened soon after this, that the Church" (at Salem) "applied to the court for a piece of ground which lay commodious for their affairs; but the court, offended at the slight latterly put upon them, delayed to grant their petition.

Whereupon Mr. Williams induced "the Church to join with him in writing letters of admonition to all the Churches whereof any of the magistrates were members, that they might admonish the magistrates of scandalous injustice for denying this petition ;" a step which, it is readily seen, was, in those times, *adapted*, as it was doubtless *intended*, to weaken the power of the government. One thing, however, is most evident, viz., the ill grace with which Mr. Williams and his party could complain of the interference of the civil authority in Church affairs, when he was himself the first to induce the Church to interfere in civil matters. All that the Governor and Council had done, was simply to give *advice*, while *he* would have the Church administer its censures upon civil magistrates, for not obeying, in their official capacity, the will of the Church ; and even on points involving no principle of morality. We may thus correct the representations of those biographers and historians, who ascribe to Roger Williams the discovery of the great principle of an entire separation of civil and ecclesiastical matters. If he had made that discovery, he, equally, at least, with some of his contemporaries, was, at times, inconsistent with his own principles.* An illustration of this appears in the very next step. The churches, to which those letters were addressed, directed their labors, not to the magistrates, but to the Church at Salem, to reclaim them from discoun-

* " He, perhaps, allowed his feelings to bias his judgment ; * * * and to make him forget his own principles of liberty of conscience." Memoir of Roger Williams, p. 47, by James D. Knowles.

tenancing, disorganizing measures. Mr. Williams, therefore, in accordance with his principles, attempted to withdraw the church at Salem from communion with all the churches in *New England*, as well as in *Old*; but as they would not yield to his proposals, "he never would come to their assemblies any more, no, nor hold any exercise of religion with any person, so much as his own wife, who went to their assemblies."

"These things were very disturbant and offensive, *but there were two other things that made it no longer* convenient for the civil authority to remain unconcerned about him. For, first, whereas the king of England had granted a royal charter unto the Governor and company of the colony, which patent was indeed the very life of the colony, he preached against the patent, as an instrument of injustice, and pressed both rulers and people to be humbled for their sin in taking such a patent, and utterly throw it up, on pretence of wrong thereby done to the Indians, which were the natives of the country therein given to the subjects of the English crown. Secondly, an order of the court, upon some just occasion, had been made, that *an oath of fidelity* should be, though not *imposed* upon, yet *offered* unto the freemen, the better to distinguish those whose fidelity might render them capable of employment in the government; which order this man vehemently withstood, on a pernicious pretence that it was the prerogative of our Lord Jesus Christ alone to have his office established with an oath; and that an oath, being the worship of God, carnal persons" (those

not regenerate) “whereof he supposed there were many in the land, might not be put upon it. *THESE crimes at last procured a sentence of banishment upon him.*”*

It seems most evident, from these facts, that the character of Roger Williams, and the treatment which he received from the colonies, have been greatly misunderstood.

1. *He was not opposed for being a Baptist* ; for he was not then a Baptist, but a Congregational minister, in regular standing.

2. *He was not “persecuted for conscience’ sake.”*

However conscientious he might have been in his principles and practice, it was not the design of the government to correct his conscience, or to punish him for obeying its dictates, but, as was then thought, for infringing upon the rights of others. He was not banished merely for “his opinions.”

The testimony of Mather, in addition to that already quoted from Gov. Winthrop, shows that there was no interference by the civil authorities, on account of his religious opinions and practices, except by way of advice and caution,—until he made them the occasion of assault upon important principles in civil government, which rendered him, in their opinion, dangerous not only to the *peace*, but the *safety of the state*. So far were they from exhibiting the hot haste of persecuting bigots, *there was a delay of nearly five years* ; and when they finally proceeded to active measures, it is expressly asserted that they acted in view of *political* offences. And

* Magnalia, Vol. II. p. 431.

even then, all that was done was simply to remove him from the colony, where he might follow their example in establishing his own peculiar principles without annoying others.* “They had come to the outside of the world for the privilege of living by themselves. Why should they open their asylum” to those whose principles, as they feared, might convert that asylum into the “grinding house” of oppression?

3. To Roger Williams has been awarded the pre-eminent glory of discovering the principle of a separation between the church and the state. Bancroft labors a wreath for his brow, as the discoverer of a great principle; that “the magistrate should ** never control opinion; ** should never violate the freedom of the soul.† But when we have followed the historian through page after page of ornate composition, we involuntarily pause, and inquire,” *What is the author’s design?* We turn back and read, “A wide experience had emancipated them” (the Puritans) “from bigotry; and they were never betrayed into the excesses of persecution, though they sometimes permitted a disproportion between punishment and crime.” “An entire separation was made between state and church; religious worship was established on the basis of the independence of each separate community; and these rigid Calvinists, of whose rude intolerance the world has been filled with malignant calumnies, subscribed a covenant, cherishing, it is true, the severest virtues, but without one tinge of fanaticism.” “The motives which controlled

* See Note at the end of this chapter, p. 127.

† Hist. U. S., Vol. I. p. 367.

their decisions were so deeply seated in the very character of their party, that the doctrine and discipline then established at Salem remained the rule of Puritans in New England.”*

Now, what if our fathers, under the operation of human imperfection, and of the times in which they lived, did sometimes fail in the application of their principles, do they merit those left-handed thrusts? and are those invidious comparisons sustained by facts, even Mr. Bancroft himself being judge? It appears to have been a part of Roger Williams' *religion* to assail some of the fundamental principles of civil government, such as administering oaths of office to civil officers indiscriminately. He labored with the church at Salem, to induce it to administer spiritual reproof and discipline to officers of government, because of their refusal to yield subordination to the decisions of the church.

In our criticisms upon some portions of Roger Williams' history, we would be insensible to none of his claims to the gratitude and veneration of mankind. We only oppose those unjust claims, which are sometimes urged at the expense of the other fathers of New England. It is too much to claim for *any of them*, that they saw *all truth*; *that was impossible*, for the mists of the morning yet hung upon all their mountains. Roger Williams was a great and a good man. At some points he was “from his shoulders and upward above all the people.” He saw, with great distinctness, for those times, the line between political and civil institutions. Emphatically was he possessed of that magnanimity of soul,

* Bancroft's Hist. U. S., Vol. I. pp. 348, 349.

which is manifested in the forgiveness of injuries. But he lacked certain qualities, which were indispensable to inspire the more sober fathers of New England with confidence in his views. These cannot be described more satisfactorily to all parties, than in the language of one of his biographers.

“The faults of Mr. Williams sprung, in part, from the imperfections of human nature, and in part from his temperament and the constitution of his mind. He was ardent, *and his imagination was the most active of his intellectual qualities.* He sometimes adopted opinions, *rather by a sudden bound of the imagination,* than by a regular process of reasoning. His ardor, and his conscientious and fearless love of truth, impelled him to act on his opinion, with a degree of energy and firmness which exposed him to the charge of *obstinacy.* Such a man will occasionally fall into *error, and into rapid transitions,* which will give to his conduct the appearance of inconsistency.”*

It is easy to conceive, how *such a mind,* coming into contact with *others of a different cast,* at such points, at that period of time, *and under such circumstances,* should excite, first, mistrust, and then opposition. It could not be otherwise. Hence, there would be *mutual misunderstandings,* and *unnecessary apprehension.* *Each had his errors;* and these would produce mutual repulsion and exacerbation of mind.

It is difficult for us at this distance of time, to

* Memoir of Roger Williams, p. 389. By James D. Knowles. The *italicizing* is mine.

form any other than meager conceptions of the nature and progress of those causes, as they appeared to the minds of our fathers, which led to the removal of Mr. Williams from Massachusetts. The history of his opinions on the subjects of Baptism and Church order, furnish a clue to the manner in which he would propound and maintain his opinions, and urge them upon others. Some time after he commenced his colony at Providence,—how long after it does not appear,—he changed his opinions on the subject of Baptism, and was immersed. In a few months after,—perhaps by one of those “sudden bounds of the imagination,”—thinking that the true church was lost, he withdrew from church fellowship, and thus continued during the remainder of his life.

Now, while we would not attempt to justify all the measures which were adopted against him, every candid mind will admit, without hesitation, that there was much to *palliate* them. None can fail of perceiving the injustice of placing those measures in the same category with the persecutions from which our fathers had just fled. Professor Knowles candidly admits, “that they” (the government) “banished him, *not so much to PUNISH* him, as to remove from the colony a man whose doctrines” (*political* as well as religious) “they believed to be wrong,” and “whose influence they feared.”* This we conceive to be the correct view of this case, and of all similar ones. The object was, not to coerce the conscience, or to punish those who obeyed its dic-

* Memoir of Roger Williams, p. 88.

tates, *but to secure their own safety*. Confirmatory of this view, as derived from the testimony of Gov. Winthrop and others, we add a quotation from the celebrated John Cotton, when writing upon this very case.

“ We have tolerated in our churches, some Anabaptists, some Antinomians, and some Seekers, *and do so still, at this day*. We are far from arrogating infallibility of judgment to ourselves, OR AFFECTING UNIFORMITY. *Uniformity* God never required; infallibility he never granted us.”*

Let it be remembered, that it is not my object to draw a comparison between Roger Williams and others; but to inquire into the justice of the charge, “that our fathers persecuted others, as they themselves had been persecuted.” With such facts before us, what does it avail, that the haters of our fathers’ principles, like scavengers, collect together their errors and inconsistencies, and heap them like “*Ossa upon Pelion?*” Quotations like those which are here made, show to the world *the germ of that noble tree, whose branches now overshadow our land*.

It appears, therefore, that Roger Williams might not only have *enjoyed* his religious opinions, but *advocated* them, if he had not done it in a way that was regarded by those who had planted these colonies at the expense of all things, as *tending* and as *designed* to subvert, or at least radically to change the civil institutions of these infant States. And there is no evidence that invalidates this testimony. Detached

* Benedict, Vol. I, p. 377, quoted by Prof. Knowles, in his *Memoir of Roger Williams*, p. 245.

scraps, collected and presented by interested partisans, or declamatory demagogues, *though filling volumes*, or breathing all the enchantment of rhetoric, should not set aside *the positive testimony* of one such witness as Governor Winthrop. Whatever else he was, Governor Winthrop was an honest man; and he "testified" not merely "that which he had heard," but "which he had seen with his eyes, and which" he had "handled." Who occupy the position most favorable for a correct judgment respecting a man's character and influence? Those who live at a distance of two centuries; or those who hear his words and his very tone, and who witness his actions, and his look and gesture, and who can watch the ebb and flow of his influence upon the popular mind, and who are familiar with all the circumstances which can aggravate or modify causes?

A single circumstance, very slight in itself, shows, as straws show the direction of the wind, how easily the public mind was agitated and unsettled. "One man, under impressions from the ministry of Mr. Williams, did, by his own authority, cut the red cross out of the king's colors, to testify a zeal against the continuance, or appearance of a superstition. * * * Besides the mischiefs hereby occasioned among the trained soldiers, whereof some were loth to follow the colors which had the cross, lest they should put honor upon a Popish idol; others were loth to follow the colors which had *not* the cross, lest they should seem to cast off their allegiance to the crown of England,—the business fell under agitation in the general court."^{*}

* Mather's *Magnalia*, Vol. II. p. 433.

Resulting from this was another fact, *of decisive weight* upon the question whether our fathers "*persecuted for conscience' sake.*" A committee of freemen, chosen both by the people and the magistrates, decided that the leading offender in the above affair, should be disabled, for that act, from holding any public office for one year. "A harder sentence was not passed, *because real tenderness of CONSCIENCE, and not any ill-affected mind, was the real original of his offence.*" Thus it appears that an erratic *conscience*, so far from *subjecting* men to *legal penalties*, was *actually a shelter against their infliction.*

In considering the laws which were enacted against the "*Anabaptists,*" we must have regard to the period in which they originated. It was at a time when the impressions made by the "*Munster tragedy*" were fresh in the memory. "The General Court were afraid lest matters might at last, from small beginnings, grow into a *new Munster tragedy*, that they enacted some laws for the restraining of Anabaptistical exorbitances; which laws, though *never executed* unto the extremity of them, yet were soon laid aside as to any execution of them at all."*

Notwithstanding these fears have been ridiculed, as being excited by a "*phantom,*" we must say, that those who know any thing of the atrocities which were perpetrated by Munzer and his followers, might be expected to make great allowance for the acts of the Puritans in reference to this matter. But *whether those fears were well or ill founded, is*

* Mather's Magnalia, Vol. II. p. 460.

not now the question. The only question now is, Did our fathers persecute for conscience' sake? Or did they, in view of these fears, adopt measures in self-defence? This question can be answered from Prof. Knowles' Memoir of Roger Williams.

“Forasmuch as experience hath plentifully and often proved, that since the first rising of Anabaptists about one hundred years since, they have been the incendiaries of the commonwealth, and the infectors of persons in the main matters of religion, and the troublers of churches in all places where they have been, and that they who have held the baptizing of infants unlawful; have usually held other errors and heresies therewith, * * * and whereas divers of this kind have * * appeared among ourselves, some where of, denied the ordinance of magistracy, and the lawfulness of making war; and others the lawfulness of magistrates, and their inspection into any breach of the first table; which opinions, if they should be connived at by us, * * must necessarily bring guilt upon us, infection to the churches, and hazard to the whole commonwealth; it is ordered and agreed,” that if any “openly” advocate the above “Anabaptist” doctrines, or “go about secretly to seduce others” to them, “every such person or persons shall be banished.”*

It is evident, that the government of Massachusetts had in view the peace and purity of the churches, as well as the safety of the common-

* Act of General Court of Mass., Nov. 1644, quoted by Prof. Knowles, in Memoir of Roger Williams, pp. 201, 202, from Backus, Vol. I. p. 150.

wealth. It is equally clear, that for the attainment of the former object they had not learned to trust with confidence, in the power of truth; yet this "Act," itself, shows, that its authors did not intend to interpose their authority, except to prevent the *actual propagation* of doctrines which had a *political* bearing. Prof. Knowles says, "Mr. Williams was accused of preaching doctrines 'tending to Anabaptistry;' a charge which was MEANT to impute to him principles subversive of CIVIL ORDER, RATHER THAN HETERODOX notions concerning the rite of baptism."*

* Memoir of Roger Williams, p. 163. It is not only exceedingly grateful to our own feelings, but "it is due to the principal actors in these scenes, to record the fact, * * that personal animosity had little if any share in producing the sentence of banishment." * * "Governor Winthrop was a generous friend to" Mr. Williams, "throughout his life." * * "Mr. Cotton was, at that time, the most powerful man in the commonwealth; and well did his piety, learning, and intrepid love of pure religion merit the respect and affections of the colonists. Whatever share he may have had" in this affair, "it is certain that there was no personal feud between them. They had been acquainted with each other in England, and had alike suffered from the intolerance of the Prelates. Mr. Cotton sincerely thought Mr. Williams' principles * * dangerous to the church and the state. He felt it to be the duty of the government to protect the colony, by removing from it this source of peril." (do. pp. 78, 9.)

We may add, that these harmonious feelings were never interrupted, but continued to exhibit themselves in various kind offices, and acts of friendship. And not only so, there was at first, and for a long period, a most free and friendly intercourse between Congregational and Baptist ministers and churches; even at the ordination of ministers, they met in council as pastors and delegates, and united in the public exercises.* If our Baptist brethren claim for the founders of Rhode Island a precedence in liberal principles, they must allow, or at least

* Calendar.

Our limits forbid farther quotations ; but it seems to us clear, from their own positive assertions, already quoted, that, however the Puritan legislators *desired* to preserve the purity of religion, the last quotation from Prof. Knowles is in accordance with the real nature and design of all their legislation, on these matters.

But we should remember, that almost all the legislation, of the above character, was confined to the colony of Massachusetts. Where is the justice of the "imputation" of this sin of one upon all ?

While we admit, therefore, that our fathers did not perceive clearly, where to draw the line between politics and religion, yet who can doubt that the principles which controlled their conduct, were totally different from the persecuting spirit which was the characteristic of the times ? Is it not confounding things that differ, and misleading the popular mind, as well as inflicting deep injustice upon those pioneers of civil and religious liberty, to denominate their actions *persecution*, in the common acceptation of that term ? Is it not most evident, that in all their acts, the principle of *self-preservation* stands out more prominently than any other ? Where, then, is the justice of this indiscriminate application of the branding iron of infamy ? Yet smarting from the fires of persecution, no wonder they looked with apprehension upon every rising cloud, and that they took efficient measures to avert the storm. To protect themselves, and to suppress immoralities the verdict of the world will be, that their sun has "gone backward upon the dial."

in a new state, founded under such circumstances, is a very different thing from employing the same measures in a country, where all possess, inherently, the same privileges. Is it a thing unheard of, except among Puritans, to suppress immoralities by law? They may have carried, and doubtless did carry, the principle too far; but a *misapplication* of a principle does not invalidate its *correctness*. That the Puritans, *as a general remark*, did not intend to interfere with "opinions," except as they had a political bearing, is evident from the fact that Roger Williams, as well as others, *held and propagated, in peace, many opinions, both in politics and religion, essentially different from those entertained by the government and the dominant party. That is an indisputable fact*, which outweighs pages of declamatory or sectarian sentimentalism. It would be no difficult matter, two centuries hence, to select from the words of Wm. Lloyd Garrison, (if they should then survive,) or of any other no-government man, whose motto is, "THE LARGEST LIBERTY," and who discourses eloquently upon "popular rights," and "liberty of conscience," and, by the aid of a creative imagination, and a flowing diction, to create a martyr—a paragon, among the heroes of civil and religious liberty. Let the wand of the historian, at that distance of time, but touch the ashes of Abby Kelly, and there shall spring forth the very personification of Liberty, the goddess herself, with sword and helmet and shield.

Another charge against the Puritans is that of *the persecution of the Quakers*.

Whenever we think of a Quaker, there rises up before us a quiet, inoffensive man, with a peculiar hat and coat ; who, so far from interfering with the opinions and rights of others, scarcely makes an effort to propagate, or even to defend, his own. He, who supposes that such a picture represents a Quaker of olden time, has totally mistaken his man. No two characters can be more diverse. Both, indeed, claim to be guided by "the light within,"—but this was formerly but a cloak for every outrage, and every indecency.

The political principles then held and practised by the Quakers whom our fathers opposed, may be gathered from the title of one of their books. It ran thus : "Against all earthly powers, parliaments, laws, charters, magistrates, and princes."* One of their writers attempts to prove, "that every government, consisting of rulers, judges, justices, lawyers, and constables, is a tree that must be cut down, for the *light* alone to rule." Had these things happened, when social and civil matters possessed the maturity of our times, they would have been as little regarded as the wind. One of the Puritan historians entreats the world "not to be too ready to receive all the stories told by Quakers about the New England persecutions ; because they have in print complained of a persecution upon two women of their sect, who came stark naked, as ever they were born, into our public assemblies ; and for that act were adjudged to the whipping-post. Their stories about their sufferings, are as little to be credited as their

* Mather's Magnalia, Vol. II. p. 454.

miracles.”* Their violations of decency, and their proceedings at their own meetings, are well exemplified by the recent acts of the “Millerites” in the State of Maine, where individuals of that sect have been sentenced, even in these times, to houses of correction for their irregularities. It would doubtless have been more fitting, had our fathers adjudged such offenders to a Lunatic Asylum, (if such an institution had then existed,) instead of the whipping-post, or the gallows; but to call those punishments *persecution*, is as manifestly unjust as it would be to brand with that charge the Massachusetts judge, who sentenced Abby Kelly to the Insane Hospital at Worcester, for disturbing public proceedings. Individuals have been carried out of churches, and even to jail, in New Hampshire,—that pink of democracy,—for disturbing public worship. Why not connect modern New Hampshire with Puritan Massachusetts, in the charge of “persecution?” What difference is there in the *principle* of restraining men’s consciences, in the two cases, though it is not carried to quite an equal extent?

But many of the people of the colonies being dissatisfied with the exercise of any great severity, the General Court of Massachusetts made, in 1659, what they called “a Declaration.” “About three years since,” they say, “divers persons, professing themselves to be Quakers, (of whose pernicious opinions and practices we had received intelligence from good hands,) arrived in Boston, whose persons were only secured to be sent away by the first opportunity,

* Mather’s Magnalia, Vol. II. p. 455.

without censure or punishment, although their professed tenets, turbulent and contemptuous behavior to authority, would have justified a severer animadversion. A law was made and published, prohibiting them from coming in, on penalty of the house of correction, till they could be sent away. Notwithstanding which, by a back door they found entrance; and the penalty proving insufficient to restrain their impudent and insolent intrusions, was increased; which also being too weak a defence against their impetuous and fanatic fury, *necessitated us to endeavor our security*; and upon serious consideration, a law was made that such persons should be banished, on pain of death, according to the example of England in their provisions against the Jesuits;* which sentence being regularly pronounced, at the last court of assistants, against these parties, and they either returning, or presumptuously continuing in this jurisdiction after the time limited, were appre-

* The same principle was also applied, in England, about the same time, to the Quakers. Charles II., writing to the colony of Massachusetts in 1662, says, "We cannot be understood hereby to direct, or wish, that any indulgence should be granted to those persons commonly called Quakers, *whose principles being inconsistent with any kind of government*, we have found it necessary, by the advice of parliament here, to make a sharp law against them, and we are well contented that you should do the like there." Holmes' Annals, Vol. I. p. 322, (Note.)

Laws, of the same character, and even more extensive, and of equal severity with those passed in Massachusetts, were passed in Virginia, in 1659, 1662, and 1693, do. p. 323, (Note.)

"Nor may it be forgotten * * * that the tendency of their tenets and practices," (the first Quakers of New England,) "was to the subversion of the commonwealth, in that period of its infancy." Holmes' Annals, Vol. I. p. 319, (Note.)

hended, and, owning themselves to be the persons banished, were sentenced by the court to death,—which hath been executed upon two of them. One, upon the interposition of a son, had liberty to depart, and accepted it. The consideration of our *gradual proceedings* will vindicate us from the clamorous accusations of *severity*; *our own just and necessary defence* calling upon us (other means failing) to offer the *point* which these persons have violently and wilfully rushed upon, and thereby became felones de se (“felons by suicide”),—as well as the sparing of one, upon an inconsiderable intercession, will manifestly evince that we desire their *lives absent*, rather than their deaths present.”*

These extreme measures thus appear to have been adopted reluctantly, in self-defence. There may have been unnecessary severity—there doubtless was,—but they thought there was a *necessity* for severity.†

* Mather’s *Magnalia*, Vol. I. p. 454.

† It is easy for those whose taste and principles incline them in that direction, to fill a volume with tales, too well founded, of the severities and inconsistencies of our fathers,—to say nothing of base and calumnious *fabrications* which are far more abundant. But to deny, for such reasons as these, the excellence, and even the existence of those principles, upon which we rest the defence of those venerated men, exhibits a blindness or a perversity far exceeding that which would pronounce the partial obscurity of the morning dawn to be Egyptian midnight, because it is not full-orbed day. And yet, this is precisely the course, in effect, which is invariably pursued by the maligners of the Puritans. Instead of seeking the real sources of their privileges, instead of patiently and candidly inquiring for the truth, and separating it from the rubbish of the times,—many are far more delighted with Munchausen tales, which are adapted, and intended to mislead the minds of those who are too indolent to think, or too perverse to appreciate the truth, and to follow its guidance

But why select *New England* as the scape-goat upon which to lay the sins of the world, in the enactment and execution of such laws? Far greater severity was exercised in England; while the strength of the government rendered severity far less excusable. Why this tendency, this disposition, so commonly exhibited, to cast reproach upon the fathers of New England, as though they were sinners above all other men, in these respects? Why this predisposition to receive with, or without, evidence or examination, whatever prejudice or sectarianism may please, or may imagine to be for its interest, to lay to their charge? Why this tendency to magnify their faults, and to construe their *mistakes* into *crimes*? Are the peculiarities of the times, when taken in connection with such men, appropriate subjects of ridicule? Why not laugh at their round hats, and the ruffles around their necks? What is the true character of those who can make themselves merry at the expense of such men, and of such principles? What shall be said of the feelings, which blind the mind to the excellency of those great and glorious principles with which this land was planted? Not to speak of the *justice* due to those into whose labors we have entered, what is the effect of this injustice upon the minds of their posterity,—the youth of our times? The effect, and the *intended* effect, is, *to cast dishonor upon those principles*; and thus to weaken their hold upon our hearts, and their influence upon our lives. And it *does* weaken those law-abiding principles which were the stability of other times; it weakens, and *would annihilate* those principles

which were the peculiarity of the Puritans ; it weakens even love and veneration for our country, till some can speak with lightness of New England, and of her institutions,—ashamed, even, of their ancestry, and of the land which gave them birth. As for myself, whenever my tongue shall falter at the avowal that *New England* is my native land, *let it cleave to the roof of my mouth*. Others may boast of titled names, and royal descent ; it is for me enough of ancestral honor, that *my* blood is *Puritan* blood ; that my flesh, and bones and *marrow* and SPIRIT are NEW ENGLAND.

NOTE TO p. 111.

The following are some of the facts, connected with the “banishment” of Roger Williams. The “order of the court” required his speedy departure from the colony ; but in consideration of the season of the year, he was permitted to remain until spring, with the understanding, at least on the part of the government, that he should refrain from propagating those principles which had given offence. Refusing to be silent on his favorite topics, he was about to be apprehended, and sent back to England, by the first favorable opportunity ; but he preferred a flight beyond the boundary of the colonies, where he commenced one of his own, which he named “Providence.” These facts show that such unmitigated severity was not exercised towards him as is sometimes represented.

VII.

“KINGS SHALL BE THY NURSING FATHERS, AND QUEENS THY NURSING MOTHERS.” Isa. 49: 23.

Union of Church and State—Toleration—Saybrook Platform—Half-way Covenant—Unitarianism—Numbers and Success not tests of Truth.

THE above quotation is from the midst of the loftiest predictions of the prosperity of Zion,—the earthly kingdom of the Messiah. While, in those days of Millennial glory, there shall be no “*Union of Church and State*,” in the common and odious sense of that expression, it is asserted, as the irrevocable purpose of Jehovah, that all things, even the state,—civil governments and civil rulers,—shall be subservient to that cause “for which all other” things “were made.”

We have here a clue to some important parts of the civil and ecclesiastical history of New England. Especially may we learn two things: 1st, while we admit, that at certain points our fathers did not clearly distinguish between civil and ecclesiastical matters, we may discover how some of their chief mistakes originated, and thus may learn how to excuse them; and 2dly, we may see, with equal clearness, the injustice which has been heaped upon their memories, by misrepresentations of their acts and of their principles.

Let us look at some admitted principles of our own times. We *claim* to be a *Christian nation*. Some, at least, of the institutions of Christianity, are recognized in our statutes. The Bible is acknowledged by politicians and legislators, as the basis of our national belief. It is even claimed as the only security of our civil and religious liberties. It is blazoned upon political standards. It is not only the rallying word of *partisans*, it gathers, from all parties, the watchful guardians and defenders of our institutions against those insidious principles, which threaten to undermine and subvert our liberties. These things are found in the *nineteenth century*; they are not relics of *the dark ages of Puritanism!* They exist to-day, and are cherished principles of our own times. No one is deterred by the clamors of the Catholic or the infidel, from avowing these principles; we do not admit that the adoption of them infringes upon their rights. These are principles which may *justly* be maintained, and which are necessary to our own safety.

Now, these are precisely the principles, *in kind*, upon which our fathers *aimed* to act. They were not only *Christians*, and *Protestants*, but *Puritans*. They had left their native land, at the sacrifice of all things, for the attainment of specific and all-important objects. They may not always have used the best means; and when they did, they may not have used them in the best way. They may even have overstepped, at times, the line of right; we admit they did. But were they the only men of whom these things are true? They were simply an

American party,—the party which *now* demands that our public affairs shall be managed on *American principles*. This was not merely their *religion*, it was a part of their *politics*; and hence it has been supposed that they formed a “union of Church and State,” and that in this respect, they fell into the very error from the effect of which they had been compelled to flee. *This, we maintain, is a mistake.* Groping in the twilight of the morning, they “saw men as trees walking;” they occasionally stumbled upon the rocks of error. Still we maintain, that *they never adopted the principles from which they had fled.* In England the Sovereign was, and still is, the head of the *Church*, as truly as he is of the *State*. Never was that true here. In England, ecclesiastical culprits were turned over to the civil arm. Not only was provision made for the support of the institutions of religion by law,—*religion itself* was a subject of legislation. Forms and ceremonies were prescribed by law, and enforced by pains and penalties of fines, imprisonments, stripes, and other bodily tortures, and even death itself, however conscientious an individual might be, or however peaceable as a citizen. All ecclesiastical matters were regulated by law, and were backed and enforced by the civil power. *Here*, the case was fundamentally different. Provision was indeed made for the support of the institutions of religion, but this was done in view of the public interests of the community and of the Commonwealth,—interests which all were bound to promote; as bachelors are now required to support institutions for common school education. In England

there was no toleration of any conscience which did not conform to the prescribed model. Here, as was shown in the preceding chapter, those who held and advocated principles essentially different from the dominant party, were tolerated, while it could be done with safety to existing institutions, and especially with safety to the commonwealth. In England, the people urged, in a petition, "that we are ready to prove our church order * * * allowable by her majesty's laws, and *no ways prejudicial to her sovereign power.* * * * We therefore humbly pray, that we may have the benefit of the laws, and of the public charter of the land, namely, that we may be received to bail, till we be by order of law convicted of some crime deserving bonds. *We plight our allegiance to her majesty,* that we will not commit any thing * * to *the disturbance of the common peace and good order of the land.*"* When did men ever suffer persecution here, who could urge a plea like that? Even in the case of Roger Williams, as we have shown, the action of the government was based, mainly upon *what was regarded by the government* as the *political* tendency of his principles. This they assert; and even though *he* was *right*, and *they* were *wrong* in judgment, yet it is evident that what they inflicted was not *religious persecution*. This is proved by the farther fact, that he was tolerated through a period of more than four years, while actually engaged in propagating his opinions. In 1665, the legislature of Connecticut declared, in a public document to the king, "that all men of com-

* Neal's Hist. of the Puritans, Vol. I. p. 199. (Note,) Harper's Ed.

petent estates, and of civil conversation, THOUGH OF DIFFERENT JUDGMENTS, *are admitted to be free-men, and have liberty to choose, and to be chosen officers, both military and civil; and WE KNOW NOT OF ANY ONE THAT HATH BEEN TROUBLED, BY US, FOR ATTENDING HIS CONSCIENCE, PROVIDED HE HATH NOT DISTURBED THE PUBLIC.*”*

Will any one pretend that there is no difference between the principles here professed, and the practice here asserted, and those complained of in the above quotation from Neal? Laws were enacted obliging every town, comprising “fifty families, to maintain a school, in which reading and writing should be well taught.”† Why not pronounce that *persecution for education’s sake*? A part of the public domain of this State has been appropriated to the support of common schools. Many are in circumstances to derive no *direct* benefit from the money thus taken or withheld from their pockets, for the public good.

No one would now adopt this mode of sustaining the institutions of religion, “for the public good.”

As for myself, I would leave the support of those institutions *to the freest action of every conscience*. Still, it is evident that our fathers adopted the same principles for the support of the institutions of *religion*, which they did for the support of those of *education*; and in part, at least, if not exclusively, for the same reasons. Hence, when other denominations were established, measures were adopted by which each individual might obey the dictates of his own conscience. It is not true, therefore, that there

* Trumbull’s Hist. of Ct., Vol. I. pp. 287, 283.

† Do. p. 303.

was ever "a religion of the State," *in the same sense* in which that was true in England. One denomination was, indeed, provided for by law, and only one; but it was because there was, at first, no diversity of opinion on that subject; there was no other denomination in existence upon this soil. This was totally different from the state of things in England. *There*, not only was one denomination provided for by law; all others were *prohibited*. And even *now*, although others are *tolerated* there, yet all are compelled, equally, by law, to support the religion of the State. It is difficult to suppress the risings of indignation at the insolent pratings about "*Puritanism*," by those who are skulking beneath the "poisoned mantle" of a Laud.

There is another fact in connection with the history of legislation on the subject of religion, in this country. As it was quaintly expressed by one of the Puritan historians, "civil officers and the clergy were like Moses and Aaron, coöperating for the attainment of the same great object,"—thus fulfilling, in their opinion, the prophecy in our motto. *But it was far more of a coöperation of friendship and of moral influence, than of authority and power.* Then, much more than *now*, magistrates regarded themselves, and were regarded by the people, as "*God's ministers.*" They were *expected* to exert their influence in favor of religion; they *were chosen for that object*; in doing so, they felt that they were but carrying out the modern doctrine of "*instruction.*" But many of their enactments, perhaps the most of them, certainly most of those which partook of a denomina-

tional character, were rather of the nature of *resolutions*, or *recommendations*, than of *laws*. Many enactments of this class never were regarded, even by their authors, as *penal* enactments; and hence they never partook of the nature of *law*. For example: at comparatively an early period, the church at Hartford was rent with divisions, the effect of which was not confined to that church. The matter was taken up by the Assembly, and various resolutions were passed, directing the church what course to pursue in the matter; but after all, the church acted its own pleasure.* No regard was paid to those legislative directions, farther than the church saw fit. The people never dreamed that those resolutions were *penal laws*.

Of a nature similar to this was the legislative interference which resulted in the "Saybrook Platform." The origin of the Platform was this. The churches of Connecticut had been for a long time agitated with unsettled questions. Experience had taught the importance of the principles of church fellowship, which are suggested in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. The State legislature took up the matter, in accordance with the spirit of the times, and proposed to the churches, or, in the language of the day, *directed* the churches to assemble, by their pastors and delegates, and endeavor to lay a foundation for future harmony.

Accordingly, arrangements were made for such a meeting, at Saybrook, in 1708. Delegates met, and *recommended* a Confession of Faith; a Plan of

* Trumbull's Hist. Ct. Vol. I. pp 312-323.

Union for the churches and ministers ; and what is called "Heads of Agreement." The Confession of Faith was no new thing of their composing, for the purpose of being enforced upon the churches. It was the old "Savoy Confession," which was drawn up in London many years before, and had been already very generally adopted by the churches in this country. The union of the churches and of the pastors, was just that union which now exists in Connecticut, in Consociations of churches, and Associations of pastors.

The "Heads of Agreement" were merely principles of union between Congregational and Presbyterian churches. *This was the Saybrook Platform.*

A Report was presented to the legislature by the Saybrook "Synod," which was accepted ; and it was "ordained, that the churches within this government, that are, or shall be thus united, in doctrine, worship and discipline, be, and for the future shall be owned and acknowledged established by law ; PROVIDED ALWAYS, THAT NOTHING HEREIN SHALL BE INTENDED OR CONSTRUED TO HINDER OR PREVENT ANY SOCIETY OR CHURCH, THAT IS OR SHALL BE ALLOWED BY THE LAWS OF THIS GOVERNMENT, WHO SOBERLY DIFFER OR DISSENT FROM THE UNITED CHURCHES HEREBY ESTABLISHED, FROM EXERCISING WORSHIP AND DISCIPLINE, IN THEIR OWN WAY, ACCORDING TO THEIR OWN CONSCIENCES."*

Now, what is there in all this, to justify the odium which has been heaped upon it? Grant, if you

* Trumbull's Hist. Ct., Vol. I. pp. 513, 514.

please, that it was inexpedient and impolitic ; and even that it was an impertinent intermeddling with matters of conscience ; still, there was *no coercing** of conscience. All such legislative action was *totally* different from every thing that was *ever* yet seen in England.

But notwithstanding all this formality of law, *no church felt itself compelled to adopt the Platform ;*

* The " Saybrook Platform " never was *designed* as a " Book of Discipline," in the sense in which that phrase is used by other denominations ; nor was it drawn up with any design to bind the consciences of men, except as the truths of God's word are obligatory. It was designed, indeed, to exhibit those fundamental scriptural principles upon which Congregationalists are united, as being taught in the Bible. But that the authors of the Platform did not intend to bind the consciences of men, authoritatively, is evident from the eighth Article of the Heads of Agreement, which is as follows :

" As to what appertains to soundness of judgment in matters of faith, we esteem it sufficient that a church acknowledge the Scriptures to be the word of God, *the perfect and ONLY rule of faith and practice*, and own either the doctrinal parts of those commonly called the Articles of the Church of England, or the Confessions or Catechisms, shorter or longer, compiled by the Assembly at Westminster, or the Confession agreed on at the Savoy, to be agreeable to the said rule."

" But the General Association of Connecticut republished it recently."

And does that prove it to be our " Book of Discipline ? " Or that we adopt all its phraseology ? Many ancient books are valuable, which yet contain many statements that we do not regard as expressed in the best terms, or even as in accordance with truth. There were sufficient reasons for republishing the Saybrook Platform. It is an important link in the history of Congregationalism ; it constitutes a basis upon which Congregationalists can stand, harmoniously ; and it furnishes established rules of Congregational order. But those who were engaged in the undertaking, stated, explicitly, that *it was not published as possessing " legislative or judicial authority."*

and none ever suffered any detriment, never brought down the wrath of an offended government, for refusing to adopt it. *And this single enactment* should forever silence the malignant, sectarian slanders of Connecticut, who charge our fathers with adopting the very principles from which they had fled. As early as 1666, resolutions were passed by the legislature of Connecticut, respecting the internal management of the churches, which were heeded, or disregarded by the churches with perfect independence.* The legislature, in subsequent acts, modified, or altered their resolutions, to meet the wishes of the people, *and thus aimed to guide their actions*; but the whole history of these matters shows that many, if not most of the so-called laws were rather the *advice* of deeply interested and influential *friends*, than *the authoritative enactments of penal law*. In England, laws were such, indeed; enacted under a monarchy in league with a hierarchy. Here, they were the acts of the *people*, through their own representatives, frequently they were the *mere recommendations* of the servants of the public to their constituents. Regarding, as they did, the institutions of religion as essential to the prosperity of a nation, they also regarded it as a dictate of *justice* that all should contribute their fair proportion for that object, especially as the way was open for each to appropriate his proportion for the support of whatever *forms* of religion he might see fit. And when, at length, all enactments for the support of the institutions of religion were abolished, the

* Trumbull's Hist. of Ct., Vol. I. pp. 481-486.

scale was turned by Congregational votes. Many were indeed opposed to a change, not because they were Congregationalists, but because they regarded the principle as a just one, that the recipients of a common benefit should aid in perpetuating it. None can deny that *that principle* is just. The mistake, *for there was a mistake*, lay here ; in the attempt to *compel men to be equitable*, in this respect. This is one of those cases in which it is, *doubtless*, neither *right or expedient* to employ compulsory measures. It is manifest to the discriminating reader of history that *from the first settlement of New England*, legislation, here, was conducted on different principles in respect to religion, from what it was in the mother country. The advanced position, which was assumed here in the outset, has been *more than maintained*. There are those who delight in the term "*Episcopal*," in the name of their Church organization, and who *delight equally*, however they may differ in other respects,—in casting odium upon Congregational New England. They seem to forget that where *Episcopacy* has held the reins of power, those reins have never been freely relaxed : and even *now* it retains the *very principles* with which they would reproach Congregationalism. In England, to this very day, all must support the Established Church.

But *Episcopal Methodism* is the last system which should lift up the cry for *popular rights* ;—that system which has not in it, or about it, even the *shadow* of popular rights ;—that system which places *all* ecclesiastical power within the grasp of

the clergy ; while Congregationalism places *no* power, *absolutely, no* power, in their hands, except the power of moral influence. But whatever was done in New England, either in civil or ecclesiastical matters, was done, emphatically, *by the people*, and was intended for the good of the people, and in view of the great objects for which they left their native land. They came here to establish their own institutions ; they provided means for perpetuating them ; they excluded none but disturbers of the public peace. As other denominations came in, and increased, they relaxed their system, reluctantly indeed on the part of many, still it was relaxed *while they were the dominant party*.

Our fathers had not learned to trust alone in the inherent power of religion to sustain its own institutions. Hence, too great reliance was often placed upon externals, to the *detriment* of true piety. Accustomed, as Religion was, to lean upon the civil arm, she naturally looked around for other supports ; and frequently she leaned upon broken reeds, which inflicted upon her serious and lasting wounds.

Among the innovations upon Congregationalism was the *Half Way Covenant*, as it was called. The first settlers of New England were distinguished in nothing more than in their deep-toned piety, and their high standard of church membership ; but their toils, their privations, their wars, gradually cooled the ardor of their piety ; while, for a long period, they remained unblest with any general outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In the mean time, many of their children had grown up unrenewed by

that divine Agent. Among the subjects which, in the course of time, agitated the churches, was *the relation of baptized children to the churches*. By degrees the principle was adopted, that parents who had themselves been baptized, might on one condition present their children for the same sacred rite. This condition was, "the owning of the covenant." This principle was first adopted in Massachusetts. It was not adopted in Connecticut till 1696. The commencement of the practice in this state seems to have been at Hartford. The covenant there was in these words. "We do solemnly, in the presence of God, and of this congregation, avouch God, in Jesus Christ, to be our God, one God in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and that we are by nature children of wrath, and that our hope of mercy with God, is only through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, apprehended by faith; and we do freely give ourselves to the Lord, to walk in communion with him, in the ordinances appointed in his holy Word, and to yield obedience to all his commandments, and submit to his government. And whereas, to the great dishonor of God, scandal of religion, and hazard of the damnation of many souls, drunkenness and uncleanness are prevailing among us, we do solemnly engage, before God this day, through his grace, faithfully and conscientiously to strive against these evils, and the temptations leading thereunto."*

Having thus "owned the covenant," many parents presented their children for baptism; though

* Trumbull's Hist. of Ct. Vol. I. p. 497.

they did not partake of the Lord's Supper, and were not members of a church, in full communion. This custom spread, by degrees, until it became *quite common*, though *not universal*. Parents were prompted to this course by mistaken notions of the nature and design of baptism, and of the Lord's Supper, and from a desire to participate in privileges and respectability which were conferred by church membership. But the effect of this custom upon the piety of the land was most disastrous. Men were lulled into spiritual slumbers; the power of godliness declined, and in many cases, the *form* was substituted for the *reality*.

We would remark, in passing, that this erroneous estimate of the nature and importance of Infant Baptism has doubtless been a main cause of the spread of the *opposite error*, viz., the disparagement and neglect of that ordinance. But on that reasoning the Lord's Supper should also be renounced; for views are entertained respecting the nature and importance of *this* Sacrament, which are quite as erroneous as any that were ever entertained respecting the *other*.

Intimately connected with this decline of piety in the churches, was a similar decline *in the ministry*; and thus the way was opened for other errors. One of these, and one of the most important, was *Unitarianism*. The spread of this error in New England has often been urged as evidence *that Congregationalism is, in its very nature, defective, as a safeguard of the truth*.

There are, really, but two other forms of church

government; Episcopacy, and Presbyterianism. One of the first ministers, (and it is believed, one of the first churches,) that became Unitarian, in Massachusetts, was an *Episcopalian*. Whoever knows any thing of the Puseyism of the Episcopal Church, and of its present tendency towards Rome, to say nothing of this and other errors in that Church, needs nothing further to satisfy him, that *Episcopacy is no safeguard against error*. Indeed, we shall not forget, while history lasts, that Episcopacy cast up the highway over which the "Man of Sin" rode in his triumphal car to the throne of universal dominion.

As to the conservative influence of Presbyterianism, the history of that organization, in England, and upon the Continent of Europe, shows a far worse defection than was ever exhibited by Congregationalism, either here or elsewhere.

But on what principle can *Methodism* plead advantage, in this respect? Will it be urged that it has a "Book of Discipline," and "articles of religion," which are unalterable? So have Episcopacy and Presbyterianism their books of discipline and articles of faith, orthodox enough, and remaining so still. So had the Congregational churches and ministers, who became Unitarian, *their* creeds. The fact is, error is not excluded from churches, nor from the hearts of men, by paper bulwarks. Or will any plead that Methodism is safe, because it places every thing at the control of the clergy? This argument has been urged from the pulpit, in this place,* in respect to the houses of worship; and the argument is equally sound in its application, universally. But

* South Norwalk, Ct.

what is the testimony of history, in relation to this argument? It is this: the defection, in Massachusetts, *commenced among the ministers*, and was far more general among them than among the people. In almost all cases, if not without exception, where there was found any great defection among the people, the pastor was found on the wrong side, and a leader in error.

And the reasons why Unitarianism has not spread in Connecticut as it has in Massachusetts, are, chiefly, two; 1st, The system of Consociation; 2dly, Episcopacy, which has operated as a safety valve, with enough of *formalism* to gratify the "natural man." In Connecticut, there was no opportunity for a "packed" council to smuggle in among the churches a pastor who was corrupted by the leaven of Unitarianism. Every sound pastor, and every church, here, were watchmen, and especially within their own prescribed limits, upon the walls of Zion. But in Massachusetts, if a church or a candidate for the pastoral office was corrupt in doctrine, it was comparatively easy to select a council from among those who were infected with the same error; and thus the leaven would spread in secret till it had infected the mass. And if all ecclesiastical power had been committed to the clergy, the downward tendency would have been more powerful, and unchecked; while there would have been no germ of spiritual life remaining. But there *was* that germ, and it was buried *in the hearts of the people*, while the reins of power were still in their hands. Look at facts. About thirty years ago the only orthodox

Congregational church remaining in Boston was the Old South. That church was a solitary star,—but it was the star of the morning. Now, a beautiful constellation is gathered around it; and every where through the Unitarian portion of the state, orthodox churches are rising and multiplying, because there is yet piety and power *in the people*.

Suppose the clergy had possessed the exclusive power of regulating these matters. Suppose the General Association of Massachusetts had possessed the same power with the General or Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church; stationing whatever pastor they pleased over any church; administering discipline as they pleased; with Cambridge to train their ministers,—where would have been the *hope* of a resurrection from this spiritual death? Congregationalism did not keep out error, because no system, not even the Bible, is, of itself, a safeguard against it; but it is equally true that we behold this moral resurrection, because *the Bible, in the hands of the people, is our only hope*. Look at the history of the Church in *any* age. Look at the times which followed the Apostles, down to the time when Popery was fully established. *The progress of the power of the clergy, is the scale of the Church's corruption*. The Reformation was accomplished by the people, throwing from their necks the yoke of the clergy, and resuming their own rights. And here we find the true scale of the Reformation. What reason or scripture is there in the principle, that the people are not to be trusted with the management of their own ecclesiastical affairs? And

that they are safe only as they yield up their understandings and their consciences to the guidance of others—to a self-constituted and self-perpetuating hierarchy—their churches, their articles of faith, their discipline, *all* to the safe keeping and management of the clergy?

Suppose that Puseyism should affect the Methodist Episcopal, as it has the so-called *Protestant* Episcopal Church; how would it be checked? Not by the people, except by renouncing the system; for they could have no agency in the matter. Suppose the bishops to become infected with error,—how many ways there are for them to operate unobserved. And if the attempt were made to call them to account, they decide what is law; and what does it avail that others make the *application* of law, so long as the criminal is the judge of what *constitutes* law. The bishops might do as they did in discussions upon the slavery question,—choke down all whom they pleased, by their decisions. The *application* of a principle is not a formidable matter, if it is left with the individual concerned to decide *what the principle shall be*. *Hanging* would not be a formidable matter, if it were left to the culprit to select the rope. Nothing is more certain than if the management of things is left to any class of men, exclusively, they will construct a system which will work most favorably for themselves. What knowledge of his own heart does that man possess, who *desires* such power? And what modesty is that, which suffers a man to come before the people to convince them that they are not to be trusted,—and

that their interests will be safe only as they are committed to himself and his brethren? One thing they can with truth assert, in the language of their spiritual father, "*We are no republicans, and never intend to be.*"

One singular objection to Congregationalism is in the form of the following inquiry: "If Congregationalism is the true form of Church government, why has it not prevailed more extensively?"

This is a peculiar mode of argumentation; as though *numbers* were a proof of truth. According to that, Popery is right, and paganism,—and even sin itself. If it is a valid argument that Congregationalism is wrong, because no more adopt it, then the *Gospel* is wrong; for it has been struggling two thousand years, and yet not one-fourth of the world has received it, even nominally. How few have received it *practically*! If *success* is the standard of truth, then Mohammed was a true prophet; and even Joe Smith *may* prove to have been one.*

But we are asked, "*Where has Congregationalism prevailed?*"

* An argument is sometimes offered in favor of Methodism, by an appeal to numbers, thus:

" There was, in New England, in				
1800 one Methodist (enrolled member, in every 211 of the whole pop-				
[ulation.				
1810	do	do	131	do
1820	do	do	94	do
1830	do	do	56	do
1840	do	do	34	do

" These ratios are obtained without including the thousands of New England Methodists in the New York and Troy Conferences. We have estimated the latter for 1840, at 22,000, and we are certain

Yes, where has it prevailed? In New England,—the land of the Bible, and of universal education,—the brightest spot within the circumference of the globe,—and, what is more, CONGREGATIONALISM, under God, MADE IT SUCH. *Where is Congregationalism found?* Here, in New England, nursed in the “*Cradle of Liberty*,”—HERSELF THE NURSE OF LIBERTY.

But after all, is it *true* that Congregationalism is confined to New England? Not to speak of England and Wales, where there are about 2500 Congregational churches, there are hundreds of others scattered through the State of New-York, and stretching onwards beyond the Father of Waters, towards the setting sun.

But there are *reasons* why New England Congregationalism has spread no more rapidly. *We have not been faithful to our trust.* We have been unlike every other denomination under heaven. So far from being sectarian in our spirit, we have thrown away the advantages of our system, and almost our denominational character. We have, literally, in this matter, “sought not our own, but our neighbors’” good. We were among the first to engage in Home Missions; the Connecticut Missionary Society having

that this estimate is short of the truth. Including these, our ratio for 1840, will be one in twenty-five.” * * *

“The Methodist Membership in New England has more than doubled every twelve years since 1776.”

“Congregationalists, in 1841, 153,413.

Methodists, in 1840, 87,000.

Baptists, in 1842, 85,146.”

(*Tracts for the Times, No. 2.*)

been formed forty-eight years ago. Massachusetts has not been behind Connecticut in her sacrifices of men and of means. But never have we gone forth with our denominational standard unfurled. The only device upon our escutcheon has been THE CROSS. Other denominations have preached Christ, indeed; and the cross has been emblazoned upon their standards. They have invited men to Christ, *but they have expected the new recruit to put on their uniform.*

The Presbyterian has usually remained a Presbyterian. If he organizes a church, it is Presbyterian. He seldom changes. More emphatically is this true of the Methodist; and his machinery is admirably adapted to its object. From the bishop, down to the class leader, and the humblest member, all are equipped with the Book of Discipline, and prepared for the "Class" and "Band." If there are but two or three or four, of the right sort, they may be organized and trained, weekly, till they grow into a "Society." Thus every member of the fold is preserved from straying into other pastures. This spirit is especially fostered by the Book of Discipline. It reminds their preachers not only that they are Christians and Christian ministers, but "*Methodists.*" It directs them to see to it that Methodist books are read, and Methodist publications circulated, and that Methodist "tunes are sung," and that the people do not attend "the singing schools of other denominations." In short, a rigid system of sectarian discipline embraces every thing,—*even to their business transactions.*

Totally different from all this is the spirit which has animated Congregationalism. In missionary labors we have been "more abundant," but nearly all has gone to swell the ranks of others. It has been calculated that *more than four hundred Presbyterian churches have been formed in the West, from Connecticut men and influence alone* ;* and "high Presbyterian authority" has acknowledged, that *more than fifteen hundred of their churches are Congregational in their origin*. And our liberality is a subject of bitter taunt, and is turned as an argument against us. What if we had acted from the first upon the principles which have been practised by others ; and these fifteen hundred churches had themselves been hives from which other Congregational churches had swarmed,—who could now compute their number ?

But this is not all ; what efforts have we made to retain possession *even of our inheritance* ? While the spirit of Sectarianism has been "walking," unceasingly, "up and down" in our midst, and intruding even into our families ; while every influence has been busily exerted in public and in private, by means of harangues and lectures upon "Calvinism," and "Presbyterianism," until the minds of our youth have been estranged from "the old paths," what antidote has been employed ? The contrast between the assault and the defence is exhibited in the accu-

* Mitchell. We cannot conceal an honest pride, that Congregationalism is, *and ever has been*, free from the stain of sectarianism. But in order to avoid *one* extreme, it is not necessary to run into the *opposite*,—*unfaithfulness to our principles*.

sation which has been thrust in our teeth, viz. "*You DARE not proclaim the peculiarities of your system.*" This accusation proves two things;—*our unfaithfulness to the cause of truth*; and that *this unfaithfulness has been construed into an argument against the truth*. We have been gored by the horn of sectarianism,—but the effect has been, instead of arousing us to self-defence, and to a defence of the truth, to drive us to the other extreme, and to produce within us a morbid sensitiveness, under the effect of which many have ceased to distinguish between "*sectarianism,*" and obedience to the apostolic injunction, "*Contend EARNESTLY for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*" Other denominations are prepared with denominational books and tracts, while scarcely any thing of the kind has been seen among us. *Even our Sabbath School books, with a few exceptions, have been carefully exviscerated of their New Englandism.*

If the principles of Congregationalism are merely those of a party, let them pass as the idle wind. If they are not important,—if they are not the principles of the Word of God, let them be buried in the graves of our fathers. But if they *are* the principles of the Bible,—if they are the principles which made New England what she is,—if they are the origin and basis of civil and religious liberty,—if they give tone, and energy, and efficiency, to all the doctrines of the Scriptures,—if they are the *only* principles which render us *truly freemen in Christ Jesus*,—if they have an important bearing upon the prosperity of the Redeemer's kingdom, and upon our

own eternal hopes, shall they be lightly esteemed, and even renounced, for a system of mere worldly wisdom? Does the principle, that all civil power is inherent in the people, involve our dearest earthly interests? and shall we resign our *eternal* interests to the control of others? Shall we be told, that in ecclesiastical matters, the people are not to be intrusted with the right of self-government and the management of their own affairs? High Methodist authority has, indeed, the assurance to make that assertion,—no less authority than Watson, in his *Institutes*. He would teach us that republican principles in the Church are “tolerable only in the purest ages, and even then only on a limited scale.” He scouts the idea of committing such grave matters to the “suffrages” of the people. “Is it so; that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? Do ye not know that the ^{holy} saints shall judge the world?” Will men tamely receive the “*Institutes*” which teach principles so much to “their shame?” Will men thus tamely submit to be bound to the car of a hierarchy, renouncing the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free? When the principles of our fathers are so evidently derived from the Bible,—and while we are reaping a golden harvest from their labors, why is it that some, even among their posterity, are more ready to exaggerate their faults than to honor their virtues,—mere moral scavengers, searching, with eagle eyes, for some spot or stain that may, perchance, have marred their characters or their actions, but blind to the great principles which were their

peculiar glory? Is this fair? is it honest? Is it not ungrateful, and unworthy of us as men?

We have thus passed over, in a very rapid and general manner, indeed, the Origin, the Nature, and the Tendency of the principles of Congregationalism. Often have they been marred,—and what has not been?—by human imperfection. We would not be blind to the imperfections of our fathers; we would learn even from their faults. But amid all these faults, which sectarianism and depravity delight to collect and to hold up to the ridicule of those who cannot estimate true greatness, we can trace the operation of certain *fixed and unchangeable principles*. The gold was mingled with much dross, *but it was gold still*. The men who dug it from its native bed, and elaborated it in the furnace of affliction, we delight to honor. Grant that they were not perfect experimenters in the science of political chemistry;—that some of their dreams were as wild as those of the ancient alchymists;—still, *it was real gold* which they discovered and purified from its dross.

From the time of Wickliffe downwards, there has been a constant contest of principles. The *mode* of the warfare has changed, as *military* tactics have changed; *but the principles which are in collision have never changed*. These are, *the rights of the people*, on the one side; and on the other, *the claims of the few against the many*—whether those few constitute a *hierarchy*, or a *nobility*, or both. *The contest still continues; and the reason why the Puritans are the objects of special assault is this; THEY ARE THE CHAMPIONS OF HATED PRINCI-*

PLES. Were it not for those *principles*, their enemies would care as little for the Puritans, as they do for their "round heads," or for the "square caps" of their persecutors.

But we must not forget that the errors with which many delight to reproach the Puritans, *were corrected by our fathers themselves*. Nor should we forget that the oppressive enactments which, under the influence of the times, sometimes marred the statutes of the colonies, were *not* the expression of the unanimous opinions of the people, nor in accordance with the true genius of Puritanism. Consequently, they were either soon repealed, or became a dead letter. Indeed, *the fathers of New England present the spectacle of a dominant party, gradually, but voluntarily resigning power*;—voluntarily resigning their special advantages, and admitting others to equal privileges. And this was the *natural operation of their fundamental principle, viz., all power is in the hands of the people, and they must exercise it in view of their own accountability*.

It is the principle which is the antagonist of this, that we shall next examine; a principle which transfers important rights of the people to the hands of a privileged few—*constituting a real religious order of nobility*.

VIII.

“NOW THIS I SAY, THAT EVERY ONE OF YOU SAITH, ‘I AM OF PAUL, AND I OF APOLLOS, AND I OF CEPHAS, AND I OF CHRIST.’ IS CHRIST DIVIDED? WAS PAUL CRUCIFIED FOR YOU? OR WERE YE BAPTIZED IN THE NAME OF PAUL?”—1 Corinthians 1: 12, 13.

John Wesley—Origin of Methodism—The United Brethren—Whitefield—Source of Power in Wesley’s System—His Anti-Republicanism—Progress of his System—Deed of Declaration—Organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States of America—Ordination of Dr. Coke.

EVEN the religion of the cross has often degenerated into mere partyism; some, under the guidance of ambitious, but false teachers, departing *entirely* from the Gospel; while others, though retaining more or less of true religion, have yet been “corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ,” through an overweening confidence in the opinions and “doctrines of men.”

We have reviewed, briefly, the leading features of Congregationalism, as they are developed in its origin and its progress; and, however the names or opinions of men have appeared upon the pages of its history, no man, or body of men has been permitted, nor have they ever *attempted*, to bind the consciences, or control the conduct of others by creeds and ecclesiastical laws, authoritatively enacted. We have not forgotten the parting instructions which were

given to the first company of Puritans, as they embarked for these shores. *Call no man Master on the earth*, says the venerated Robinson, *neither imagine that all truth has yet been disclosed to your minds. Be ready to receive whatever light "the Father of lights" may lift up upon you.* LET HIS WORD BE YOUR ONLY GUIDE. Noble sentiments! worthy of a monument like that of Bunker Hill.

These principles have constituted the theme of the preceding chapters; *but they are only one side of the subject before us*; and the witness who leaves half untold, even though what he utters is *truth*, is yet a *false witness*. To omit essential testimony, is to mislead. The question before us is not merely whether the principles of Congregationalism are based in the word of God; strange as it may seem, there is a farther inquiry, viz., *Shall Methodism be substituted in its place?* As this is not a question of my seeking; as it has been brought to our doors, and thrust upon our churches, our families, and ourselves, I shall not be turned from my purpose by the cry of "*persecution*," or the charge of "*Sectarianism*." But in my statements and arguments, *I shall refer to a system, and to a system only.* Whenever names or individuals are introduced, it will be only as an illustration of the nature and spirit of that system. Neither shall I appear as a gladiator, either to exhibit my own prowess, or to amuse others. These subjects involve the highest personal responsibilities, in which all are alike concerned. It will not be enough in the day of judgment, that we have followed Paul or Apollos. It will not be *enough even that we have*

followed Christ, if our services have been marred by doctrines and commandments of men. We may, indeed, in such a case, "be saved as by fire." We are not to rest satisfied, therefore, with the mere fact that we have attached ourselves to a system; we must decide whether that system is of Christ, *and of Christ only*; or whether it is marred by human wisdom which clashes with important principles of the word of God.

It is not enough, therefore, that John Wesley was a great and good man; this is freely admitted. We trust he is shining as "a star in the firmament." Far be it from me to pluck a gem from his crown, or to dim the radiance with which he reflects the glory of the Lamb.

But we may not be blind to his imperfections, either intellectual or moral; nor to the imperfections of his system. Notwithstanding his greatness, he had points of weakness,—of *remarkable weakness*. This is evident from his belief in witchcraft, and kindred delusions, long after the night had passed from so great a portion of the Christian world. Few men, however, have possessed, in greater perfection, the qualifications requisite for acquiring an ascendancy over the minds of others. The reasons for this, and the principles upon which he founded his system, will be best perceived by a brief review of historical facts. Besides, it is impossible to gain a perfect acquaintance with the genius of Episcopal Methodism, without a previous study of the spirit in which it was conceived and brought forth.

John Wesley was the son of an Episcopal cler-

gyman, and was born in 1703. His early impressions in favor of Episcopacy, and of the national church of England, were never effaced from his mind. He was educated at Oxford University, where he was distinguished in most departments of literature and science. But "he was no great friend to metaphysical disquisitions; and I must own, that I always thought he held metaphysical reasoning, even when modestly and properly conducted, in too low estimation."* This accounts for the inconclu-

* Whitehead's Life of Wesley, Vol. II., p. 286.

It will be noticed that I depend, chiefly, upon *Dr. Whitehead* as my authority respecting Wesley and his principles. My reasons will appear in the following facts and remarks.

"I give all my manuscripts to Thomas Coke, Doctor Whitehead, and Henry Moore, to be burnt or published, as they see good." (Extract from Mr. Wesley's will.)

Dr. Whitehead was selected as the Biographer. He "determined to write, not only the Life of Mr. Wesley, but a history of Methodism, with the utmost impartiality; to describe things as they have been, and as they are, without the false coloring that the spirit of party will always give to history; but * * Mr. Wesley never met with a more malignant opposition in the whole course of his labors, than I have experienced for attempting to describe them."—(Author's Preface, p. 11.)

At the Conference in London, in 1792, a Committee of preachers reported, in part, as follows: 4. "When some of the preachers opposed Dr. Whitehead in the performance of his engagements, * * * the steps they took to injure his reputation appeared to this committee unjustifiable, and if tolerated, would take away all security for the character of every member of the Methodist Society; the members of the committee, therefore, thought it their duty to oppose such proceedings, and to support an injured man, who bore a public and respectable character, from the violent and unjust attacks made upon him."—(p. 8, Advertisement.)

"This was the first written Life of the Wesleys, prepared from au-

siveness of much of his reasoning, for his crude and confused views in theology, and for his misunderstanding, and misrepresentations of many important distinctions which were made by the acute and discriminating mind of Calvin.

The name and influence of Charles Wesley are intimately connected with the rise and progress of Methodism. "My first year in college," he writes, "I lost in diversions; the next, I set myself to study. Diligence led me into serious thinking. I went to the weekly sacrament, and persuaded two or three young students to accompany me, and to observe the method of study prescribed by the statutes of the University. This gained me the harmless name of Methodist. "In half a year,"* his brother John, who had graduated

thentic documents, and it is the only one which has been written which can rightfully claim the merit of impartiality,"—(American Publisher's Preface, p. 5.) * * "Considering the *partial* statements and *false colorings* in reference to important matters, which prejudiced and selfish biographers and historians have embodied in nearly all the books extant purporting to be the lives of Wesley, and the histories of Methodism, this truthful sketch of Whitehead shines out from among the mass of error, like a sparkling diamond from the unseemly rubbish of its native bed."—(Ibid.)

"Dr. Whitehead's Lives of the Wesleys is still the standard work. * * In no other volume can we find an equally graphic, and probably truthful narrative of the rise and progress of Methodism during the life of its distinguished founder. The author's familiar acquaintance with the Wesleys affords the best guarantee of general accuracy in the delineation of their characters, and in the record of their opinions and measures. On the whole, the work is the most valuable source of information," &c.—(New Englander, Vol. III. p. 479.)

The Princeton Review for July, 1845, expresses a similar opinion of the work, in language equally decisive.

The "opposition" of which Dr. Whitehead speaks, has not ceased. Respecting its justice, or the design of its authors, we will not decide.

* Whitehead's Life of the Wesleys, Vol. I. p. 72.

some time before, returned to Oxford, and became the leading spirit among the religious young men.

In 1735 the two brothers sailed for Georgia ; and on the voyage they commenced an acquaintance with the Moravians, or United Brethren, from whom they received impressions which exerted an important influence upon all their subsequent lives, both in respect to doctrine and discipline. From them John Wesley appears to have received the idea of *love feasts* ; and it is from the record of his labors in Georgia that we discover the origin of "Classes" and "Bands." The Wesleys remained in Georgia but a year or two ; and on their return to England, they commenced a more active course of labors, in connection with the celebrated George Whitefield, who had been associated with them in their religious meetings while in college.

Some seem scarcely to know that any other agency was employed to arouse the public mind to religion than the Wesleys. The fact is, the commencement was, in reality, made by Whitefield, while the Wesleys were in Georgia. He was the first to engage in field-preaching, and was the most prominent individual in that department of labor, and by far the most effective and popular preacher of his time, if not of *any* time. It was his fervid eloquence, to a great degree, that, by the blessing of the Spirit, broke up the fallow-ground, and sowed the seed of the harvest which the Wesleys reaped and gathered into the garner of Methodism. These facts, as well as others of the same kind, appear to have been overlooked in an "account" of "two young

men," and of "God's design in raising up the preachers called Methodists in America, to reform the continent."* But Whitefield was a Calvinist. For a while, however, they labored harmoniously together, in connection with the United Brethren. It was during this period, and at the advice of Peter Bohler, the leading individual among the United Brethren, that the system of classes and bands was in a great measure matured; in which "the old Methodists and the Moravians were indiscriminately blended in one body;"† but the Moravians not keeping pace with Mr. Wesley, particularly in his doctrinal opinions, he withdrew from them. About this time Mr. Wesley published a sermon on the doctrine of election, that drew from Whitefield a letter of decided, but fraternal expostulation; in which he expresses his most earnest desire that they may still be permitted to co-operate in a common and all-important cause,—regretting that a firebrand had thus been thrown in between them, and saying that, as the sermon was scattered abroad assailing and misrepresenting important truth, he was laid under the necessity of preaching in vindication of that truth. A superficial reader might overlook this point in the history of Methodism; but it discovers an element which seems inherent in the very nature of the system.

Another fact worthy of notice in this connection, is the nature of the opposition which was called forth by field-preaching, and similar efforts. The

* Meth. Book of Discipline, pp. 3, 4.

† Whitehead's Life of Wesley, Vol. II. p. 48.

idea is commonly conveyed, from certain quarters, that this opposition was aimed at *Methodism* ; and the odium thus excited has been applied indiscriminately. But there *could* have been no "persecution" of those men, as "*Methodists*," for the plain reason that the denomination was not then organized. Those scenes of violence were just the exhibitions which depravity has always been accustomed to make, *whatever* might be the causes which excited its malignity. The men who were guilty of those disturbances were men of a particular *character*, and not of a particular sect or party. Whitefield, who was a Calvinist, received his full share of opposition ; and the attempt to create sectarian capital, on the one hand, or to excite odium on the other, from such materials as these, is strikingly in keeping with management, of which we have already seen too much.

In studying the nature of the Methodist system, one thing is important to be understood and remembered, viz., that in its progress, and in its present form, *it is entirely a creature of circumstances* ; though moulded and modified by the views and feelings of its distinguished founder. The founders of other sects usually *claim* to have been guided by Scriptural precepts and examples. The architect of Methodism was guided simply by *expediency* ; rearing, at first, an edifice sufficient for present purposes, and then adding a "wing," or a "lean-to," or another "story" from time to time, as circumstances required,—having an eye, however, to such a communication of all its parts as to enable him to exercise the most perfect

supervision. Other denominations, usually, *claim* to trace the peculiarities of their systems to the Scriptures. The advocates of this system plead "experience" in support of its peculiarities, together with certain analogies and arguments from the Bible, which appear to us as simply "*afterthoughts.*"

The nature and spirit of the system cannot be better exhibited than in the language of Mr. Wesley.

"Question 19. What power is this which you" (Mr. Wesley) "exercise over both the preachers and societies?"

"Answer. In Nov. 1738, two or three persons who desired to flee from the wrath to come, and then a few more, came to me in London, and desired me to advise and pray with them. I said, if you will meet me on Thursday night, I will help you as well as I can. More and more then desired to meet with them, till they were increased to many hundreds. The same was afterwards true at Bristol, and many other parts of England, Ireland and Scotland. Here commenced my power; namely, a power to appoint when, and where, and how they should meet; and to remove those who showed that they had not a desire to flee from the wrath to come. And this power remained the same, whether the people meeting together were twelve, twelve hundred, or twelve thousand.* But this multiplication of numbers created a necessity for a division, and subdivisions; and these created a necessity for assistants. Here we have the origin of "classes," and of class leaders, though this part of the system appears

* See Whitehead's *Life of Wesley*, Vol. II. pp. 198-200.

to have arisen in connection with the Moravians. This increase of numbers rendered appropriate buildings necessary, and this required *funds*, and another sort of "assistants" to aid in managing them. Hence Mr. Wesley adds :

2. "Afterwards I desired one or two more to assist me as stewards, and in process of time a greater number. Let it be remembered that it was *I myself, not the people*, who chose these stewards, and appointed to each the distinct work wherein he was to help me, as long as I desired. And herein I began to exercise another sort of power, namely, that of appointing and removing stewards." It was probably under the influence of these feelings that he records the declaration, "I am no republican, and never intend to be. While I live, the people shall have no voice in choosing either stewards or class leaders." "*He being dead, YET SPEAKETH.*"* What sort of

* The spirit of anti-republicanism which conceived the system of Episcopal Methodism, which moulded its form, and breathed into it the breath of life, and *which animates it still*, is strikingly exhibited in Southey's Life of its founder. Our limits compel us to condense more than we desire.

In respect to the Revolutionary contest, Mr. Wesley argued *against* the principle, that *representation* must accompany the right of *taxation*;—he argued that the people had a *right to nothing* but PROTECTION from the government to which they owed obedience; that the *Tea-tax* was *legal* and REASONABLE, (p. 306;) that THE WAR OF THE REVOLUTION IS *to be traced to the PURITAN ORIGIN OF THE COLONIES*, (p. 308.) Fletcher thought that *republicanism* is equivalent to ANARCHY, (p. 309;) and Wesley, that the greater the share of the people in the government, the less was there of liberty, both civil and religious, (p. 312.) The *greatest* degree of *liberty* is enjoyed under a limited *monarchy*; less under an aristocracy, and *least of all* under a democracy, (p. 312.) His opposition to the American Revolution

republicans are they, who *submit* to such arrogant dictation, in levying contributions upon them, and then denying their right even to *a voice* in the management of their own money?

3. "After a time a young man came, and desired to help me, as a son in the Gospel; soon after a second, and then a third. These severally desired to serve me as sons, and to labor when and where I should direct. *Observe*: these likewise desired me, not I them,—but I durst not refuse their assistance. And here commenced my power to appoint each of these when, and where, and how to labor; i. e. while he chose to continue with me. For each had a power to go away when he pleased, as I had to go away from them, or any of them, if I saw a sufficient cause. The case continued the same when the number of preachers increased. I had just the same power, still, to appoint when, and where, and how each should help me, and to tell any, (if I saw cause,) 'I do not desire your help any longer.' On these terms, and no other, we joined at first, and on these terms we continue joined."

was "earnest." It was "pleading the cause of *my king* and country, yea, of *every* country where there is any regular government." It was "*pleading against those* PRINCIPLES that naturally tend to *anarchy* and confusion," (p. 313;) and with these views he "earnestly endeavored to enlist his followers in this country *against the American cause*, and in favor of *his king*." (We have already alluded to a pamphlet written by him for this object.) In a letter dated 1782, he says, "Two or three years ago, when the kingdom was in great danger, I MADE AN OFFER TO THE GOVERNMENT, OF RAISING MEN," &c. This, it will be noticed, was in the midst of the Revolutionary struggle.

This is the origin of that prominent and boasted feature of Episcopal Methodism, *the Itinerancy*. The power here claimed and exercised, still exists in its full force, being transferred unimpaired from the hands of Mr. Wesley to the bishops. It is their *absolute* right "to fix the appointments of preachers, provided they do not allow any preacher to remain in the same station more than two years successively; and, in the interval of the conferences, to change, receive, and suspend preachers, *as necessity* may require, and as the Discipline directs." Neither the wishes of preacher or people are regarded, further than accords with the pleasure of the bishop, or with his ideas of "necessity." This, we shall have occasion to notice, is the sum total of Christian liberty, according to Methodism,—the liberty of submitting to arbitrary dictation; or of renouncing the system when you became weary of the yoke.

4. "In 1744, I wrote to several clergymen, and to all who then served me as sons in the Gospel, desiring them to meet me in London, and to give me their advice concerning the best method of carrying on the work of God. And when their number increased, so that it was not convenient to invite them all, for several years I wrote to those with whom I desired to confer; and they only met me, at London, or elsewhere;—till at length I gave a general *permission*, which I afterwards saw cause to retract."

Here, again, we have exhibited the true genius of the system. Never were "sons" held more perfectly in "leading strings." They are "permitted" to come, or commanded to stay away; and no one

lips, except at his spiritual "father's" nod. "Observe," he continues, "I myself sent for these of my own free choice; and I sent for them to *advise*, not to *govern* me. Neither did I at any time divest myself of any part of the power above described."

5. "What is that power?"

"It is the power of *admitting into*, or *excluding from the societies* under my care; of *choosing* and *removing stewards*; of receiving or not receiving helpers; of appointing them *when* and *where* and *how* to help me;—and of desiring any of them to confer with me when I saw good." That is, every part of the system, even to church membership, was under his absolute control. With the exception that this "power" is transferred from Mr. Wesley as *supreme head*, to *the clergy*, the system, in all these points, remains virtually unchanged.

6. "But it is objected, several gentlemen are offended at your having so much power." After disclaiming any search after, or desire for that power, he adds: "If you can tell me any one, or any five men to whom I can transfer this burden, who *can* and *will* do just what I do now, I will heartily thank both them and you." Here we are furnished with another demonstration not only of the *nature of the system*, but of the man who moulded it. We will not question his conscientiousness; but the man who has "power" thrown into his hands, is no more to be expected to resign it, than the man of wealth is expected to resign his gold. John Jacob Astor may feel the burden of his twenty-five millions; but it would require more grace than even John Wesley

possessed, to prepare him to admit that he is not the man to manage it, or that Providence has not imposed that duty upon him. Above all would it be difficult to persuade any man to relieve himself of the "burden," either of wealth or "power," who regards himself as more capable than "any five men," though it is not every man who will *avow* "the conceit" that he is "wiser than seven men who can render a reason." Was this the *natural* disposition of the man? or was it in part the blinding effect of power? That it is, *the common effect of the system* on weaker minds, is abundantly manifest. In the case of Wesley there could have been nothing to modify the effect upon his mind, of this exercise of arbitrary power; for he was only obeying, as he believed, the dictates of conscience and the call of God. He must literally have believed himself "predestinated" to this "high calling." No king on his throne ever reigned with more absolute sway. The arbitrary principles to which we have alluded, gave character to the entire system, from the foundation to the topmost stone. While reading of the organization, and the proceedings of his conferences, one is reminded of a general in his tent, surrounded by his officers in a council of war. They are called upon to give their opinion, indeed,—but the final decision as truly belongs to the commander-in-chief, as does his sword. The spirit of the system is condensed into one brief sentence in the Book of Discipline, transcribed from his memoirs, "*Do not mend our rules, but keep them ;*"* and it is a specific ground of

* Book of Discipline, p. 39.

discipline for a member to exercise an influence that may produce dissatisfaction with the system.*

It was remarked that the system of Methodism was a creature of circumstances, shaped by a master spirit according to the exigencies of the times. Mr. Wesley was a strong Episcopalian; was ardently attached to the Church of England, and lived and died a regular clerical member of it. He never designed to lead others from it. Up to the last years of his life, he labored and preached, and wrote against all separation. "He has declared again and again, in the most express terms, that the design was not to form a new party in the nation; not to form the societies into independent churches, or to draw away those who became Methodists, from their former religious connections. The *only* intention was, to rouse all parties, the members of the church in particular, to a holy jealousy, and spirit of emulation, and to assist them as far as possible in promoting Christian experience, and practical religion through the land. The times of preaching and of other meetings were so ordered as not to interfere with the times of public worship in the church, or among the dissenters."† These sentiments Mr. Wesley repeats, in terms still more emphatic, if possible, so late as 1789. Whitehead says, "The very nature and design of a Methodist society differ essentially from the definitions hitherto given of a church."‡

But Mr. Wesley could not always continue; and

* Book of Dis. pp. 95, 96.

† Whitehead's life of Wesley, vol. II. pp. 206-209.

‡ Vol. II. p. 101.

in the last years of his advanced life he lost much of that decision by which he had been able to control those under him. "He now saw the religious societies which he had been the happy instrument of forming, spread rapidly on every side, and the preachers increasing in almost an equal proportion. He became, therefore, every day more and more solicitous to provide for their unity and permanence after his decease, wishing to preserve, at the same time, the original doctrines and economy of the Methodists. He knew the views, the opinions, and *the jealousies of the preachers* concerning each other, better than any other individual could possibly know them, *as he had persons in all places*, who constantly informed him of every thing of importance that was said or done. From the beginning he had stood at the head of the connection ; and, by the general suffrage, *had acted as* DICTATOR, in matters pertaining to the government of the societies. He had often found that all his *authority* was barely sufficient to preserve peace, and the mere external appearance of unanimity ; and therefore concluded, that if his authority were to cease, or not to be transferred to another at his death, the preachers and people would fall into confusion."* In a letter on this subject, Mr. Wesley says, "*It is not good that the supreme power should be lodged in many hands ;*" (we must remember "he was no republican ;") "*let there be one chief governor.*"†

But there were those among the preachers, who

* Whitehead's Life of Wesley, Vol. II. p. 217.

† Whitehead, Vol. II. p. 218.

were disposed to urge certain rights of the conference. "Mr. Wesley, at first, resisted this encroachment on his power with great firmness." "I read to the society," says he, "a paper which I wrote nearly twenty years ago, on a like occasion. Herein I observed that the rules of our preachers were fixed by me, before any conference existed, particularly the 12th, viz. '*Above all, you are to preach when and where I appoint.*' I permitted them to join me on these conditions. Whoever, therefore, violates these conditions, particularly of being directed by me in the work, does, by *that act*, disjoin himself from me.'"^{*} When some of the preachers ventured to intimate that they had a *right* to some voice respecting the duties of their stewardship, Mr. Wesley replies: "So they have. They have a right to disjoin themselves from me, whenever they please. But they cannot, in the nature of the thing," (i. e. in the nature of Methodism,) "join with me any longer than they are directed by me."

We need not dwell longer upon this part of the subject, in order to understand the system of Methodism *in its bearing upon popular rights*—the rights of the people. *It is a system which neither possesses or admits any such element.* Its grand aim is the most perfect condensation of uncontrolled power. "*Obey or depart,*" was the brief sentence which settled all differences.

But the sceptre was at length to fall from the trembling hand of Mr. Wesley, without his being able to declare a successor. He had prepared a

* Whitehead's *Life of Wesley*, pp. 231, 232.

paper for that object, but he could not induce the preachers to sign it. Obey him they must, while he lived, or be excluded from the ranks of Methodism; but he could not induce them to sign away their liberties after his decease.

Another plan was therefore devised, which his biographer, Whitehead, thinks could never have originated with Mr. Wesley. By this plan, all legislative and executive power was vested in the Conference. The year 1784, seven years previous to the termination of Mr. Wesley's advanced life, marks an era in the history of Methodism, in which two important changes occurred. These respected "the *Deed of Declaration*," so called, and *Ordination*. The Deed of Declaration is entitled, "The Rev. John Wesley's Declaration and Establishment of the Conference of the people called Methodists." This "Deed" is the key to another peculiarity of the system, viz. the tenure by which the church property is held. It says "that *whereas* divers buildings called chapels, with a messuage and dwelling-house, situate in various parts of Great Britain, have been given and conveyed from time to time, by the said John Wesley, to certain persons and their heirs,—upon trust, that the trustees for the time being, to be elected as in the said deed is appointed, should permit the said John Wesley, and such other persons as he should for that purpose nominate and appoint, *to have and enjoy* the free use and benefit of the said premises, therein to preach and expound God's Holy Word." After associating Charles Wesley with his brother John, the deed proceeds: "After the decease of the survivor

of these brothers, then, upon farther trust, that the said trustees, &c. should permit such persons, and for such time and times as should be appointed by the yearly Conference of the people called Methodists, and no others, *to have and enjoy* the said premises, for the purposes aforesaid." As an explanation of the phrase, "the Conference of the people called Methodists," it is added, "The said John Wesley doth hereby declare, that the Conference of the people called Methodists, ever since there hath been any yearly Conference of the people called Methodists, hath always heretofore consisted of the preachers in connection with and under the care of the said John Wesley, whom he hath thought it expedient to summon to meet him." Then follow the names of one hundred preachers who constituted the Conference at the date of the deed; and then the deed proceeds: "Those persons and their successors for ever, to be chosen as herein after mentioned, are, and for ever shall be construed, taken, and be the Conference of the people called Methodists."* The manner of the choice is, essentially, as now stated in the Book of Discipline.

Upon this deed the biographer remarks: "The first thing that strikes me is, the title itself. 'A Declaration and Establishment of the Conference of the people called Methodists!' This, surely, is a most incongruous title. It is well known that the people called Methodists never held a Conference since Methodism existed. The Conference is an assembly of *itinerant preachers only*; and its members are not as-

* Whitehead's Life of Wesley, Vol. II. pp. 248-250.

sembled *by any authority derived from the people.* When sitting, *it exercises powers which are neither derived from the people, nor under any control by them.* It makes regulations, or laws, not only for the itinerant preachers, but for all ranks and orders of persons in the societies; and while these things are transacted, neither local preachers, trustees of chapels, stewards, leaders, *or any of the people, have a single voice or a single representation in the assembly.* *The people* have no check, no balance of power, against any regulation or law which the Conference may choose to decree. It is difficult, therefore, to conceive why this assembly is called *the Conference of the people called Methodists,* unless it was to give the people a hint that they *ought* to have some representatives in an assembly where laws are made by which they, as Methodists, are to be governed.”*

This Deed was the *organic law* of Methodism, in respect to the organization and powers of the Conferences both Annual and General, and in respect, also, to the control of the church property.

On the latter point, it is the precise model of the “Deed of Settlement” in the present Book of Discipline; though additional guards have been thrown from time to time around this buttress of the system.

Hitherto, Mr. Wesley had never assumed for the people under his care, nor had they assumed for themselves, the title of *Church.* On the contrary, he carefully refrained from every act that would imply a separation from the Church of England.

* Whitehead's Life of Wesley, pp. 253, 254.

But under the influence of others he at length, in the eighty-second year of his age, proceeded to perform what has been called ordination. It was at first performed upon those who were to officiate in this country. There were already those here who exercised the office of "elder," but it was conceived to be necessary that some individual should be invested with the office of "bishop." Dr. Coke was the most prominent aspirant for that title, and he made special and direct application to Mr. Wesley for ordination at his hands. He says, among other things, "I may want all the influence in America which you can throw into my scale. I think you have tried me too often to doubt whether I will, in any degree, use the *power* you are pleased to invest me with, farther than *I believe absolutely necessary* for the prosperity of the work."*

I have italicized a few words, to call attention to the fact that it is *power* which is placed in the hands of these men; and that it is power to be exercised according to *their views* of necessity. The existence of *rights* on the *part of the people*, is an idea that seems never to have entered their minds. This is evident from the manner in which this ordination was performed. It was performed in secret, in the chamber of a private dwelling. Both the *fact* and the *manner* of it, excited strong feelings in the Methodist connection. An old preacher, in writing to a friend says, "It is neither Episcopal, nor Presbyterian, but a hodge-podge of inconsistencies."† Mr.

* Whitehead's Life of Wesley, Vol. II. p. 255.

† Ibid. p. 258.

Wesley, in justification of that act, plead the example of the primitive churches, and of modern Presbyterians. But it was replied, that there is a fundamental difference between his act, and the ordination of elders in those churches. *They* supposed that *the people* had something to do in the matter. Mr. Wesley refers us to the example of the ancient Church at Alexandria. But the doctrine of that Church, on this point, was, that the ordination of an individual over a particular people, in order to be just and lawful, must be approved by “the *suffrage of the people* ;” a very different thing from Mr. Wesley’s secret chamber ordination of Dr. Coke, by which he was endowed with the absolute power of a Methodist bishop. Clemens Romanus testifies that “the custom was, to ordain with the consent of the whole church.”* But what have *the people* to do, under the system of Methodism? “In direct opposition to the practice of the primitive churches, at the ordinations among the Methodists, the people were not assembled, they were not consulted, nor so much as even acquainted that ministers were to be ordained as their proper pastors. The whole was performed by an arbitrary power, in the exercise of which no regard was had to the rights of the people, as having either judgment or choice in the matter. But Dr. Coke tells us ‘they have the same qualifications for an Episcopal Church, that the Church at Alexandria possessed; bishops having been elected or received by the suffrage of the whole body of our

* For the above quotations from Lord King and others, see Whitehead’s Life of Wesley, Vol. II. p. 263, (Note.)

ministry through the continent, assembled in General Conference.' " *Elected or received !*" Do these words mean the same thing? The Methodist societies "*receive*" their preacher from the hands of the bishop :—is that the same as "*electing*" him? "*Elected or received* by the suffrage of the whole body of *our ministry !*" Is that an election by "*the people ?*" "*Elected or received !*" When a writer thus links words together, as though the meaning amounted to the same thing, we have just cause to suspect that he intends to deceive us, and lead us into false notions of the subject he is discussing. *Received* perhaps they may be, *under a system of arbitrary government which leaves no alternative to the people, nor to many of the preachers, but that of passive obedience*, or to go about their own business, and quit the connection. It is indeed manifest, that this whole affair, from first to last, bears no resemblance to the mode of electing and ordaining ministers in the purer ages of the primitive church.*

This, let it be remembered, is the language of the biographer chosen by Mr. Wesley himself; and it is the language of an honest, independent man, who is writing in view of the actual workings of the system, and in view of his accountability for the influence of his work upon the world.

Charles Wesley was warmly opposed to these ordinations by his brother, constituting, as they did, in fact, a new sect. He says, "I scarcely yet believe that my brother, in his eighty-second year, should have assumed the episcopal character, and conse-

* Dr. Whitehead's *Life of Wesley*, Vol. II. p. 264.

crated a bishop," &c. "I was then in Bristol, at his elbow, yet he never gave me the least hint of his intention."

"What are you frightened at?" John inquires.

"At Dr. Coke's rashness," replies Charles, "and at your supporting him in his ambitious pursuits;—at an approaching schism, as causeless and unprovoked as the American rebellion."* "It was *age*" that performed that act, "not he."

"So easily are bishops made,
By man, or woman's whim;
Wesley his hands on Coke hath laid,
But who laid hands on him?"†

But we must pause. Having discovered the essential characteristics of the spirit which was originally breathed into the system of Episcopal Methodism, our next object will be to show that the same spirit animates it still. Whatever may be said of the talents, or the piety of Mr. Wesley,—and we have no disposition to call either in question,—still, that system is marred, and must for ever remain marred, by arbitrary power, on the part of the clergy, and by debasing submission on the part of the people. It was once a monarchy; it is now an aristocracy, *the few* usurping the rights of *the many*.

* Charles, it seems, was as little of a republican as his brother.

† Whitehead's *Life of Wesley*, Vol. II. pp. 268, 269.

IX.

HE THAT IS FIRST IN HIS OWN CAUSE SEEMETH JUST; BUT HIS NEIGHBOUR COMETH AND SEARCHETH HIM." Prov. 18: 17.

Episcopal Methodist Theory of Church Government—"Tracts for the Times"—
Episcopal Methodism an Aristocracy—"Divine Rights" of the Clergy—Rev.
Dr. Bascom—Declaration of Rights—"A Cloud of Witnesses"—Secessions.

HOWEVER confident men may be of the correctness of their own denominational peculiarities, and however grateful they may feel for the privileges which those peculiarities are supposed to confer, it is seldom, indeed, that we hear one "thank God," in public, that he is an Episcopalian, a Presbyterian, or a Congregationalist. This spirit of confident boasting appears to be a characteristic of Methodism.

It may seem invidious to disturb this feeling of self-complacency; and we would not, if its obtrusiveness did not force itself upon us.

"The enlarged liberty of Episcopal Methodism!" There is, to a superficial observer, *the appearance* of liberty; and there is, *in reality*, great laxness of restraint in many important respects, as might be expected where all power and public responsibility are taken from the *many*, and conferred upon the few.

The preceding chapter exhibited the rise and progress of Methodism under Wesley. We saw

that every thing, from the highest to the lowest, was under his absolute control; that preachers, stewards, and class-leaders were merely his agents, receiving their appointments at his hands, and holding them solely at his pleasure; and that Conferences were merely the bringing of satellites to revolve around him as their common centre, in contracted orbits. No rule was adopted, no law was enacted, except as decreed or sanctioned by him. And this was his *theory* of church government. *The people* were excluded, *by system*, from any participation in the management of church affairs. Their duties and responsibilities, in reference to these matters, were comprised in one word, *obedience*.

Many seem scarcely aware that such principles of church government as Wesley adopted, ever had an existence; or, if they ever did exist, they are supposed to have passed away with the shadows of the dark ages;—or, that time, and the influences of our republican institutions—to say nothing of the effect of scriptural precepts and examples—have gradually modified and changed the original spirit of the system, in these respects, till it accords, somewhat nearly, with our civil institutions, and with the model of the primitive churches. Few, even of the members of the Methodist Church, understand the nature of that system; that it is *the theory*, THE VERY BASIS OF THE SYSTEM, *that THE PEOPLE possess no rights in the management of church affairs*.

Wesley's plan, as we have seen, was, to appoint a successor, after the example of his favorite system

of civil government, a monarchy. But this point he could not carry. The true old Saxon spirit, though depressed, was not annihilated.

In Thibet, when the Grand Lama dies, his spirit is supposed to enter the body of some infant, and it is the business of the priests to discover the particular individual. In like manner, it is our next duty to discover the body which has been entered by the spirit of the departed Wesley. We shall find that the spirit which controlled the Methodist connection with absolute sway, instead of "waxing old and vanishing away," with his decaying energies, has sprung into new life, "like the phœnix from its ashes."

To exhibit the proof of this is the object of this chapter. My proof, and the *only* proof which I shall exhibit, will be taken from their own standard works, or furnished by their own men, some of whom still adhere to the system; while others have been driven from it, by its own operation.

My first authority will be, "*Tract for the Times, No. II.*" published at *Zion's Herald Office*: and entitled, "*Government of the Methodist Episcopal Church.*" But the chief weight of authority, possessed by this tract, lies in the fact that it was sold at the Methodist Book Concern in New York, in 1845; thus receiving, in fact, the sanction of the General Conference, which is the highest authority of Methodism itself.* I desire that these facts may be re-

* This is not saying, that *every thing* which is sold at the Book Concern, is to be regarded, *from that fact*, as receiving the sanction of the General Conference; but, that *such a work*, compiled from such

membered when we are told, as we doubtless shall be told, that these authorities are merely the opinions and arguments of irresponsible individuals.

The starting point in the Tract is the query, "whether the Government of the Methodist Episcopal Church should be *modelled after the representative system of the nation.*" "Let it be distinctly understood in the outset, that the question is not *whether the LAITY SHOULD HAVE A DUE CONTROL OF THE GOVERNMENT of the church*—we shall show in the sequel that in the M. E. Church they have this abundantly*—but whether this control shall be put in the representative form of our civil system." (p. 3.) Our author declines "discussing here the *abstract right* of individuals to such a claim, in a compact which they voluntarily entered, and can voluntarily leave, and *which stipulated no such arrangement when they entered it.*" (p. 3.) We have it, thus, *distinctly admitted*,—whatever may be said of the "abstract rights" of the people to some such voice in *ecclesiastical* matters as they possess in *civil*,—it is here distinctly admitted in the outset, that *Episcopal Methodism tolerates no such principle.* It is distinctly asserted, that whoever enters the Methodist Episcopal Church, enters "a compact" which "stipulates no arrangement" by which the people can utter their voice as freemen in Christ Jesus. "But," says some simple-hearted republicans, and thus, in reality, adopted through the medium of special agents, is justly regarded in the above light.

* "We shall" see, "in the sequel," what, according to Episcopal Methodism, constitutes "an *abundant control* of the Government of the Church" by "the laity."

can, who is not initiated into the mysteries of the system, "if Methodism does not '*stipulate for* an arrangement' which recognizes the rights of the people, surely it was not designed *to exclude* them from those rights, and even to deny the *existence* of any such rights." Let Dr. Bond* reply: "Whoever enters the communion of our church is entitled to all the immunities which the articles of association" (Book of Discipline) "hold out to him, AND NO MORE."† But the Tract has just asserted, what the Book of Discipline (pp. 21, 22) is careful, in the outset, to establish, that "the compact stipulated no arrangement," in which is recognized any such republican principle as a representation of the people in the government of the M. E. Church. Much more would it deny the *exclusive right* of the people to the management of their own affairs.

Our author proceeds to argue his cause thus:—
 "The Methodist polity is based on a mutual surrender of rights; and if the principle should be admitted, that the proposed change *ought* to be made *because it is a natural right*, it is obvious that the most valued features of the system must be at once sacrificed, *and Methodism be no more Methodism.*
 * * *Unquestionably*, the claim of these rights by the people on the one hand, and by the preachers on the other, *would reduce us at once to Congregationalism.*"

Let it be remembered, then, that while Methodism exists, no "lay" member of that church can claim a

* Editor of Christian Ad. and Journal.

† "Bond's Appeal, Balt. 1828," quoted in the above Tract, p. 5.

right to any participation in the management of its affairs. If any thing is granted to the people, *even in appearance*, it is all of *grace*, and *not of right*. These principles the author of the Tract, aided by Dr. Bond, proceeds to fortify.

“There is no such analogy between the relation of Methodists to their church, and their relation to the state, as is asserted by the advocates” of republicanism in the church. “The two governments are *totally dissimilar* in their *origin*, their *authority*, and their *design*.”

“*They differ in their origin*. Our civil government originated with the people. They were the sources of power and of change in the government. The government of our church originated, providentially, with Wesley and his colleagues. It was *originally* and of *necessity* in their hands, and its subsequent administrators are such by virtue of its provisions as then established.”

“*They differ in their authority*.”

“There arises from the nature of our civil obligations a *right* to participate in the enactment of laws by which we are to be governed. * * But change the nature of these obligations, * * and these rights no longer remain. * * Where obedience is *necessary*,” (as in the state,) “the corresponding rights are inherent, but where obedience is voluntary” (as in a connection with the Methodist Church,) “the privileges are *conditional*, and are in extent no more than are stipulated for in the contract between *those who govern*, and *those who are governed*. Now this is precisely the relation which we sustain to the Metho-

dist Episcopal Church. We could not carry into this voluntary association any natural rights *which are incompatible* with the contract we then entered into, and * * *the right to participate in the legislative power was no part of the conditions we stipulated for.* The rights which a Methodist possesses, as such," (as a Methodist,) "are purely conventional, * * and they are determined by the articles of association contained in our Book of Discipline. Whoever enters our church is entitled to all the immunities which the articles of association hold out to him—and *no more.*" (pp. 4, 5.)

Here we have Methodist doctrine by authority; and the English language cannot express more positively the fact, that in the Methodist Episcopal Church, the people have not now, never had, and never can have, while "Methodism remains Methodism," "a right to participate" in the government of that church. Certain privileges may be *granted* as "a sop" to keep them quiet, but they possess no *rights* in the matter. The "relations" existing between the Methodist clergy and "the laity" are relations which exist between *governors*, on the one hand, and the *governed*, on the other. It is the *right* of the clergy, according to this system, to GOVERN; *the rights* of the people, summed up in a word, are—to be GOVERNED.

This doctrine demands a farther consideration. We should wrong ourselves, we should wrong truth, and civil and religious liberty, if we should pass on without noticing, for a moment, the *grounds* on which such principles are based by their advocates.

What are the grounds of church authority, according to this system? On what do its defenders base this *right of the clergy to govern, and the obligation of the people to obey?*

“The rights which a Methodist possesses,” says Dr. Bond, and as published upon the wings of the Book Concern, “*are purely conventional,*” i. e., “he is entitled to all the immunities which the articles of association hold out to him, *and no more.*” The ecclesiastical rights of Methodists, then, depend altogether upon agreement,—upon “*contract,*” to use their own word. The rights of those who “govern,” and the obligations of those who obey, “*are purely conventional.*” Now, if this is a *right principle*, it is *universally* right. The *Mormon* organization is right,—for it is “conventional,”—it is a matter of agreement,—of “contract.” “Those who enter” the *Mormon* community, enter it “*voluntarily.*” *Jesuitism*, and all the ecclesiastical principles of Popery¹ are right, for they are matters of “contract.” The Jesuit swears implicit obedience to the general of his order: the Catholic is bound to believe and obey “Mother Church;”—and the Methodist candidate for ordination binds himself, in the language of the Book of Discipline, to “act, *not according to his own will,*” but to do “that part of the work, in the place, at the time, and in the manner” which others “direct.”* These things are all equally right, according to the argument; for they are all equally “conventional,”—they are all equally matters of “contract.” It is the *right* of the

* Book of Dis. pp. 39, 40, 127, 137.

governor to *command*; it is *the duty* of the “*governed*” to *obey*. And this is not the *incidental* operation of the Methodist system; *it is the system itself*. It is the Methodist *theory* of church government; and it comes to us as a matter of *obligation*, binding the conscience, and annihilating the judgment and the will,—chaining the entire man, body, soul and spirit, to the galley of a hierarchy. It is on this principle, that the itinerant clergy “submit to the *absolute disposal* of a general superintendent (bishop), whom they have clothed with *authority* to send them to any part of the land.”* It is on this principle that the people are under obligation to submit to the “*absolute*” *government* of the clergy whom they have *clothed with authority*,—no, not clothed with authority,—but whom they have acknowledged in “the contract” *to be* clothed “with full powers to make rules and regulations” for the Methodist Episcopal Church.†

Can any principles be more utterly subversive of both civil and religious liberty, than such principles as these? Has the Christian—the freeman in Christ Jesus—no *rights* in the church, except those which are “conventional,”—except those which he may secure by “contract?” Is that man a free man, who *is*, and *must be* bound by obligation to “submit to the absolute disposal” of others? Is this the nature of the Christian’s rights? Has he none that are inherent, and inalienable as his nature? But more than this; *has he no responsibilities?* *May* he, as a subject of the great Head of the Church, thus re-

* Tract, p. 6, (Dr. Bond.)

† Book of Dis. p. 21.

sign himself, his rights, his duties, his creed, his personal faith, "to the absolute disposal" of others? *Can* he thus transfer his responsibilities, as a steward of God?

Hear how Methodism answers these questions, and decides these principles, in the Tract under examination. "We observe farther, that such a conformity to the model of our free institutions" (by which the people would have a voice in the management of church affairs) "is not considered necessary or desirable in most of the voluntary organizations of a secular character in the land. They adapt themselves to their designs and emergencies, and are contented with such checks and balances as will prevent abuses. *This is precisely the arrangement of the Methodist Episcopal Church.* Nay, our civil government itself presents, in some of its collateral branches, similar deviations from its general model. It maintains an *army* and *navy*. The power of military command is *absolute*;—the only maxim of the soldier is to "*obey*," if it carries him to the cannon's mouth. How would the representative principle work amidst the emergencies of the camp, or of the high seas? What propriety is there then, in this indiscriminate cry of 'republicanism,' in reference to *voluntary* compacts? We are sure that no American citizens love republicanism better than the members of our church, but this *boisterous fallacy* has always proved too flimsy to beguile their *sound discernment*. They believe, that being under the broad shelter of a free civil system, to which all other organizations are responsible, the latter"

(i. e., church organizations as well as others) “ may assume any form that convenience or efficiency may justify, without serious danger. Their church system is altogether *militant*, requiring great sacrifices, great energy, and decisive promptness ; they believe they can have such a system, under the civil system of the land, with as much, nay, more propriety, than the latter can maintain an army or navy, or than pecuniary companies, involving the property of thousands, can deviate from the precise model of the state.”*

Comment would but hide the deformity of principles such as are here admitted and defended, though designed to be covertly and plausibly stated. “The voluntary secular organizations of the land adapt themselves to their *designs* and *emergencies*, and this is precisely the arrangement of the Methodist Episcopal Church.” And the most natural and appropriate illustrations are, *the army and the navy*, and the *absolute power of military command*, and the only maxim of the soldier, to *obey*, if it *carries him to the cannon's mouth* ; and this followed by the sneering interrogatory, how would the representative principle operate amid the emergencies of the camp and of the high seas ? and the declaration that their church system is altogether *militant*,—not merely aggressive, but “military,” in its *spirit of command* and of *obedience* ; together with the admission that their only effectual “shelter” from oppression is the civil system of the land,—that they are left, absolutely, with no efficient check, except

* Tract, pp. 6, 7.

on those points which may be reached by the civil power. In plain terms, the clergy may extend their power just as far as the civil law will permit. Can clerical ambition desire a broader field in which to range? What "shelter" from spiritual oppression does the Catholic find under our "civil system?" Wherein does it interfere with the fastings, and confessionals, and penance, and priestly domination of Popery? What "shelter" does he find under the "civil system," in countries where the spiritual power is dominant? Be not repelled by these implied conclusions; the principles here advanced are none of my fabricating; they are the living spirit of Methodism, and are proclaimed upon the trumpet-tongue of the Book Concern.

One element more is wanting, to render the system complete, and that is furnished by Dr. Bond in his famous "Appeal." He says, "We arrogate no authority to enact any laws of our own, either of moral or of civil force."* Dr. Bond cannot mean to oppose the Book of Discipline, which declares (p. 21) that the itinerant clergy, in General Conference, "have *full powers* to make rules and regulations for the Church." The key to his assertion must be found in the word "arrogate," and that is explained by what immediately follows. "Our *commission* is to preach the Gospel, *and to enforce* the moral discipline established by the one Lawgiver, *by those spiritual powers vested in us as subordinate pastors.*" * Whether laymen or ministers are the *authorized expounders and administrators* of those laws,

* Tract, p. 10.

we can confidently rely on the good Christian sense of the great body of our brethren to decide.”*

Charity requires us to suppose that Dr. Bond has deceived himself here. We would not impute to him any improper motive; but could a Jesuit, or *the Pope himself* assume or require more? Or could he have stated his claims in other, or better terms? What doctrine of papal tyranny and of abominations, is not found, or pretended to be found, in the Bible, or sanctioned by it? What ghostly pretender to *absolute spiritual power* NEEDS more than the claim here assumed, viz. than “his COMMISSION to ENFORCE *the moral discipline established by the one Lawgiver, by* THOSE SPIRITUAL POWERS VESTED IN HIM AS A SUBORDINATE PASTOR,”—Christ’s real vicegerent,—“*and as an authorized expounder and administrator of the laws*” of God’s house? Where, in the history of Christendom, can broader claims be found to exclusive spiritual dominion, than are here assumed and advocated?

But the system of Methodism is based upon principles which are as subversive of *civil* as they are of *religious* liberty. Says Dr. Bond, “Civil government is instituted to promote the welfare of those included *in the compact*.” “It claims our allegiance from the very circumstances of our being born within its jurisdiction; there arises therefore, from the nature of our civil obligations, a *right* to participate in the enactment of the laws by which we are to be governed, as soon as *we are deemed capable* of exercising that right.”† The principle here advanced—

* Tract, pp. 10, 11.

† Tract, p. 4.

and it is a fundamental one—is, that the civil rights and obligations of the people depend upon “a compact,” and “upon the *circumstance* of their being born” under civil government. Of course *the practical exercise* of these rights, and even *the rights themselves*, will vary, as “the compact” or the “circumstances” vary. Let a people grow up under the idea that, in respect to all *spiritual* matters they possess *absolutely no rights*, but must look up to, and obey others who claim, and who are supposed to be “*vested with authority*” to “*govern*” them, by a divine “commission;” and let this idea be accompanied and modified by the further idea that their *civil* rights are to be regulated, in some indefinite sense, by “a compact,” and “by the circumstance of their birth;” and who can fail of seeing that the very foundations of civil liberty are loosened? Could ambition itself desire more ample materials, already fitted to its hand, with which to erect for itself a throne of power;—especially when those materials have been shaped and moulded by spiritual domination? We have an illustration, in the career of the great Irish agitator, swaying the assembled myriads, as the ocean is agitated and upheaved by the earthquake; but when one of his spiritual lords utters a word of constructive rebuke, he descends from his magic throne, crouching and fawning like a whipped spaniel. And yet a set defender of Episcopal Methodism coolly assures us, that “no American citizens love republicanism better than the members of that church;” “that this boisterous fallacy” of republicanism in the church, “has always proved too

flimsy to beguile their sound judgment." And is it so, that the people will swallow this civil and ecclesiastical poison, if it is sugared over with "*the love of republicanism?*" Will they bare their foreheads to the brand of an "absolute" dictator,* provided it read, "*The love of republicanism?*" It is false and delusive to say, "There can be no danger, for the great body of Methodists are good republicans, in their politics." As well might it be said, there is no danger in embarking on board a leaky ship, provided you have a good crew. As well might it be said, there is no danger to the mariner, though the chart and compass and chronometer are all wrong, and the captain is guided by false principles. The ship *may* not be lost, indeed,—but who, in his senses, would regard it safe to take passage on board of her?

But is it *true* that the rights of the people depend on "a compact," and "the circumstance of birth," and "the necessity of obedience?" Is it not, rather, that these rights are based in our very natures, as intellectual, social, moral, and accountable; that man, *as man*, is *entitled, is possessed, inherently*, with the *right* of self-government? And if this is true in respect to the interests of *time*, as those interests are affected by *civil* government, how much more is it true in respect to those things which affect his interests *for eternity?*†

* Tract, p. 6.

† Since this chapter was written, the following has been met with in the N. Y. Observer for December, 1843. It is from a notice of a "Review of Bishop B. T. Onderdonk's Address, in respect to a late Ordination. By Observer. Philadelphia: Stavely and M'Calla."

"The Bishop's theory of the Church, then, when stript of its mys-

Dismissing now the Tract, let us summon another witness, also from the ranks of Methodism, and no less a name than the Rev. Dr. Bascom. In addi-

tification, is simply this—the government is of God. He gave all power and prerogative to Bishops—they (the Bishops) under sanction of the Scriptures and the Fathers, granted to Presbyters and Deacons, and to the laity generally, a certain interest in the administration of the polity of the Church. Hence Presbyters and Deacons are responsible to God through the Bishops, and these are responsible to their own order; and in this whole matter the Laity have nothing to do as ‘of right.’

“ ‘ Our readers need not be told that all this is despotism,—despotism, with scarcely a softening feature. All power is given to the Bishops; they have indeed *conceded* somewhat to the other orders of the ministry and to the laity; but of these concessions the Bishops themselves are, after all, the sole judges, because responsible for their conduct only to their own order;—which responsibility, therefore, is practically, and, so far as the Church is concerned, no responsibility at all. A more perfect theory of arbitrary power, it would be impossible to frame. It out-popes the pope.

“ ‘ Of the account of the origin of civil governments here presented, we need say but little. Fidelity, however, to the cause of truth and right, compels us to object to it, as altogether erroneous, and full of mischief. It is a revival of the old exploded doctrine of the Social Compact, first prominently presented, we believe, by the Atheistic Hobbes, in the seventeenth century, and afterwards advocated by Locke, in order to overthrow the tyrannical assumptions of the favorers of the political *jus divinum* theory. It was subsequently adopted by Rousseau, just because it suited the infidel turn of his mind, and took away all divine sanctions from human government. It is, moreover, the very notion now unhappily prevalent among so large a class in our country, manifesting itself in irreverence for civil authority, and reckless assaults upon the first principles of social order.’ ”

“ This is well. Spiritual despotism—lording it over the consciences of men, sanctifying error, and crushing the aspirations of truth—will be swept away when the spirit of this Review animates the hearts and minds of American Episcopalians. Why, in England—old England—where the moss of centuries grows upon the walls of

tion to the individual character of the witness, *his testimony exhibits the grounds upon which more than one hundred thousand individuals have renounced some of the leading principles of Episcopal Methodism.* Dr. Bascom, therefore, but echoes the *experience* of one hundred thousand independent witnesses.

“In every community there is a power which is *sovereign*, a power which is not subject to control. Those members only of the community are free, in whom the sovereign power resides. If this power is confined to a few, freedom is necessarily confined to the same number.” Compare this with the sentiments which have been exhibited above from the organ of Methodism. “A prescriptive legislative body,” Dr. B. continues, (a body of men not appointed by the people,) “making laws for the government of the people, IS A DESPOTISM.” Who appoint the members of the General and Annual Conferences?

Church and State—the tyranny of American Puseyism would not be tolerated a single hour. And the wonder is, when the New-man-ia of Oxfordism has been arrested in the land of its birth, and some of its earliest victims have been cured of their madness, (see Palmer’s Narrative of Events,) that here, in this republican country, the very genius of whose institutions has unhappily been regarded as a protection against Popery, the most arrogant assumptions of ecclesiastical tyranny are set up, and unblushingly defended by such men as can always be found under the shadow of civil or spiritual despotism.”

We have only to substitute in the appropriate places, the words, “*Itinerant clergy,*” for “*Bishops*” and this extract has a *perfect appropriateness* to the Methodist Episcopal “theory of the Church.”

There are many who would hail the sentiments of “Observer,” as manly, and well uttered. Will those sentiments be maintained, without “respect of persons?” We shall see.

“Legislators without constituents deputing them, as their representatives—thus constituting themselves a legislature beyond the control of the people, is an exhibition of *tyranny* in one of its most dangerous forms.”

“A government uniting the *legislative, judicial, and executive* powers in the hands of the same men, is an *absurdity* in theory, and in practice *tyranny*. Whenever, therefore, it happens that these three departments of government are in the hands of the same body of men, and these men not the representatives of the people, first making the laws, then executing them, and finally the sole judges of their own acts, there is no liberty, *the people are virtually enslaved*; whether they are well or ill-treated, they are in fact *slaves*, and such a government *cannot fail to be injurious*. Such a government must always lead to *mental debility*, will depress the *moral vigor* of a people, and necessarily abridge the liberty of *reasoning and investigation*.”

“*The right to be represented*, where law is made to govern, is not only essential to *civil* freedom, but is equally the basis of *religious* liberty. Civil and religious liberty are intimately connected; they usually *live and die together*, and he who is the friend of the one, cannot consistently be the enemy of the other. If liberty, as is admitted on all hands, is the perfection of *civil society*, by what right can religious society become despoiled of this crowning excellence of the social state? The New Testament furnishes the principles” (and, I add, in many cases the *forms*, furnishing the entire outline) “of church government.

The will and mind of the Great Head of the Church, on this subject, so far as clearly revealed, whether by express statute, or clear implication, *cannot be contravened without impiety*. Ministers and private Christians, according to the New Testament, are entitled to an equality of rights and privileges. A monopoly of power, therefore, by the ministry, is a *usurpation* of the rights of the people. As the ministry cannot think and act for the people, in matters of principle and conviction, so neither can they legislate for them, except as their authorized representatives. The assumption that absolute power in the affairs of church government is a *sacred deposit*," (*"vested,"* in the language of Dr. Bond,) "in the hands of the *ministry*, libels the genius of the New Testament. Whenever a Christian people place themselves under a ministry which claims the right of thinking and deciding for them, in matters of faith and morality, they are guilty of impiety, however unintentional, to the Great Head of the Church, inasmuch as it is required of every Christian to reflect and determine for himself, in *all* such cases, and the duty cannot be performed by another. And those ministers who aim at *principality* of this kind, in the personal concerns of *faith* and *practice*, are plainly guilty of *usurping dominion over the rights and consciences of the people.*"

In the next sentence, Dr. Bascom doubtless aims at the great argument which has been drawn in favor of Methodism, from the rapidity with which it has spread.

"Expediency and right are different things.

Nothing is expedient that is unjust. Necessity and convenience" (and, he might have added, *human policy*) "may render a form of government effective for a time, which afterwards, under a change of circumstances, and an accumulation of responsibility, may become oppressive and intolerable. That system of things which cannot be justified by the Word of God, and the common sense of mankind, can never be expedient. Submission to power, gradually and insidiously usurped, should seldom or never be received as proof of the legitimate consent of the people to the peculiar form of government by which they are oppressed; as submission may be the result of principles, attachments, and energies," (in two words, *power* and *prejudice*,) "which owe their existence to causes foreign from" those which are "supposed to produce them; for, as men by birth and education, may become the subjects of a form of civil government they do not approve, so thousands may be born into the kingdom of God, and nurtured in his family, under forms of ecclesiastical policy, materially inconsistent with Revelation on this subject. The continued sufferance and submission of the people, so far from proving the divine right of those who govern," only "proves" the people's ignorance, or prejudice, or "forbearance."

In the face of "those portions of the New Testament, which go directly against the rights of the ministry to exclusive rule in the Church, in all ages since the times of the apostles, and in" almost "all parts of the world, a large majority of those calling themselves Christian ministers have shown a dispo-

sition," especially "in ecclesiastical affairs, to maintain an influence in matters of government, independent of the people. It is lamentably true, that in the various divisions of Papal and *Protestant* Christendom, both duty and veneration for the dead have been urged as sufficient reasons for withholding the rights of the people, and lording it over God's heritage."

"It is true, to a great extent, that throughout all divisions of the Christian world, the subject of *church government*" has been lightly appreciated and imperfectly understood; "and this affords the ministry an opportunity of misleading the people on the subject of their rights, and, in too many instances, they resign themselves the passive subjects of their religious teachers, without once inquiring whether, in doing so, they do not dishonor the Great Head of the Church. Whenever the members of a church resign the right of discussing" and controlling their own ecclesiastical affairs, "whether it be done by direct concession, or indirectly, by attaching themselves to, or continuing within the pale of a church, where such a system of polity obtains, *they renounce*, to a fearful extent, *one of the first principles of the Protestant religion. The rock on which the Christian Church has split for ages, is*, that the sovereign power to regulate all ecclesiastical matters, (not decided by the Scriptures, and which of right belongs to a Christian community as such,) has, by a most mischievous and unnatural policy, misnamed expediency, been transferred to the hands of a few ministers, who have been, in part, the patricians of the

ministry, and the aristocracy of the church. Whenever a system of church government is adopted, which calls off the attention of the governed from the general welfare, by depriving them of all control in the enactment of laws, the *natural and unavoidable tendency* of a government of this description is *vicious and demoralizing*. The maxim which assumes that the ministry has a *right* to rule and dictate exclusively, in the great concerns of religion, is *the fruitful source of implicit faith*, which, tamely and without inquiry, receives instruction at the hands of men as authoritative and final—impiously receiving for doctrines the commandments of men, and perverting the oracles of God.”

“That form of church government under which *the revenues of the church* proceed from the people, when *they have no participation in the enactment of its laws*, furnishes no constitutional balance of power. No power possesses so fatal a principle of increase and accumulation in itself, *as ecclesiastical power*.” “When the ministry avail themselves of the indifference, or ignorance of the people brought under their charge from time to time, to constitute themselves their legislative masters and executive guardians, *they usurp the dominion of conscience*, and, although never complained of, are, in fact, religious tyrants, because they assume and exercise rights that do not, and *can not*, in the nature of things, belong to them. Such a monopoly of power by the ministry, tends directly *to mental debasement, to indecision of character, to insincerity,* AND MISGUIDED ZEAL.”*

* These quotations from Rev. Dr. Bascom have been condensed

This witness has been detained the longer, not only from the importance of the truths which he utters, but *because he utters the testimony of such a "cloud of witnesses."* This "Declaration of Rights" *was designed to intimate the grievances on account of which* the various other organizations of Methodists have abandoned the Methodist Episcopal Church. Their reforms are, indeed, but *partial* ones; but that fact does not invalidate, or even diminish the importance or correctness of their testimony. None will question their competency as witnesses on this subject, for they have grown up under the system, and their strongest prejudices have all been in its favor.

As early as the year 1791, complaints began to arise in "the Connection," against certain features of the Methodist system. These murmurs, like the deep rumblings of a volcano, have been constantly increasing, and have occasionally found vent in

from "The Wesleyan Companion, Vol. I. No. 2." Efforts have been made to break the force of these sentiments, from the fact that their author is found a reconciled son of the M. E. Church. But how can these "self-evident truths" be affected by the consistency or *inconsistency* of those who utter them? Would the principles contained in the "Declaration of Independence" have been rendered false, if their authors had followed the example of Benedict Arnold? Those who have the means of knowing dates have asserted, that it was soon after the above "Declaration" by Dr. Bascom, that he received his professorship in Augusta College. We by no means assert that this was any part of Methodist management of refractory members; or that it had any thing to do with his reconciliation with "Mother Church." But we must be permitted to question, whether there is another system *in the Protestant world* that can, so uniformly, produce such results.

an explosion. The complaints have been directed, chiefly, against two points, viz., the *powers of the bishops*, and the *exclusion of the people from a participation in the government of the church*. The General Conference has been the battle field in this warfare; and the actual contest has been chiefly waged against the bishops, for the good reason that no warriors could enter there but from the ranks of the clergy, and they have appeared to feel more sensibly the weight of the bishop's foot upon their own necks, than the combined weight of the itinerant clergy, bishops and all, upon the necks of the people.

During the period from 1791 to 1793, within eight years after the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church, two considerable secessions took place in Virginia and North Carolina, under Rev. Wm. Hammet, and Rev. J. O'Kelley. At the sessions of the General Conference in 1800, 1812, '16, '20, '24, and '28, the contest was continued—chiefly, however, in respect to the powers of the bishops—when it was, in effect, decided, and decided in favor of the bishops. It was probably in view of this long contest, and their final triumphs, that one of the bishops, when refusing to put a resolution, said to the Conference—yes, and to the NEW ENGLAND Conference—“*It is too late in the day for me to give my reasons*”!*

During these discussions, and these unavailing efforts, repeated secessions occurred. One body, called “the Reformed Methodist Church,” originated in New England, and numbers about fifty ordained, and

* Wesleyan Companion, Vol. I. No. 2, p. 56.

twenty-five licensed preachers, and two or three thousand members. The next prominent secession took place in 1827, '8, under the name of the "Methodist Protestant Church." At the present time it numbers about seventy-five thousand members. The Wesleyan Methodist Church was organized in 1843. In March, 1844, it consisted of six Annual Conferences, extending from Maine to Illinois, and numbered between 300 and 400 preachers, and more than 15,000 members.

From about the year 1824, the people urged their *rights to a representation* in the management of their church affairs. The reply of the Conference—not of the bishops only, but of the clergy assembled in General Conference—was, "PARDON US IF WE KNOW NO SUCH RIGHTS: IF WE COMPREHEND NO SUCH PRIVILEGES."* And when the people urge

* For the above facts and statistics, I depend upon the Wesleyan Companion, Vol. I. No. 2, pp. 89-97.

At this point we are grateful for another extract from the Review of Bishop Onderdonk's Address, already referred to.

"With this theory of Church government and Episcopal responsibility before us, we are at no loss to explain the monstrous outrage by the Chair upon the rights of one member of the New York Convention—John Duer—and the equally monstrous avowal of another member, Mr. Ogden—that the matter of admission to the ministry was entirely in the hands of the Bishop, the others had nothing to do with it, only so far as he might choose to ask their counsel. Clerical arrogance and Lay obsequiousness, go hand in hand; they are the natural results of such views. But a free people will ever abhor such theories and the practices growing out of them."

"Observer" may decide whether the "one million members" of the Methodist Episcopal Church are "*practically*" "a free people." We presume he would not adopt the principle, that "to take the life of an individual constitutes a murderer; to take the life of a million, a hero."

their claim, as a *natural* right, they are told that *the foundation of rights in ecclesiastical bodies rests on a different basis*. But they are also denied all "*acquired* rights;" and thus the petitioners are repulsed with an utter denial of *all* ecclesiastical rights, on the part of the people.

Why may not a Congregationalist engage in the discussion of these subjects without being denounced, as a wanton disturber of the peace, as "turning the world upside down"? Are not the principles here discussed important, *fundamentally* important? Is there not a *duty* in respect to these matters, which is solemnly binding upon those who are "set for the defence" of the truth? Can it be, that *New England men*, and *New England Christians*, will be blind and deaf to these subjects? And when the attempt is made, by trifling criticisms, and cavils, and cries of falsehood, to break the force of truth and defend error, let them, as *free* men, and as *accountable* men, remember their origin; let them remember the sires from whom they sprung; let them remember their rights; and above all, let them remember their accountability.

X.

“A WHEEL IN THE MIDDLE OF A WHEEL.”—Ezek. 1: 16.

The Mechanism of Episcopal Methodism—The Ministry, Itinerant and Local—Bishops—Elders—Deacons—Presiding Elders—Preachers in Charge—Clerical Organizations—General Conference—Annual Conference—Quarterly Conference—The Church—Societies—Classes—Bands—Class Leaders—Exhorters—Trustees—Stewards—Circuits—Districts—Control of Churches—Book Concern—Organization of Quarterly Conference—Nothing left with the People—A Case—Dr. Bangs—Church Funds—“Hands in the People’s Pockets.”

THE *simplicity* of the Gospel scheme is one of its most striking characteristics. No complicated system of machinery is contrived to redeem and sanctify the soul. There is the naked cross, and the divine Comforter to apply its virtues. So it is in the *externals* of religion; all is simple, and equally free from intricate forms and pompous ceremonies. There is the family of Christ, united by the simplest bonds, and governed by the fewest possible laws. Wherever believers were found, they were gathered into a church; and that church was the simplest of all organizations. No multiplicity of offices and titles was established, on the one hand; and on the other, no lordly dictator usurped the reins of government. The Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles, record just one class of men set apart to the sacred ministry, who are called, indiscriminately, bishops, elders, and presbyters. Their office is to preach the gospel,

and to administer its ordinances, and to guide the flock by truth ; not to rule by authority. To attend to the pecuniary matters of the church, another class of officers was instituted, viz., deacons. They were ministers, not of the word, but of tables. *The officers of a church* are particularly mentioned, and their duties defined. Therefore, however *special* duties may have been performed by the apostles, and by those whom the apostles appointed to those special duties, as evangelists, or temporary residents, all is clear, if we adopt what we *know*, and rest satisfied with it—if we confine ourselves to what is specifically decided, and do not add to these things *human inferences* and *human expediency*. Equally clear is it, that all power in the administration of affairs was with the brethren. The truth of this appears in the history of the appointment of an apostle, in the place of Judas, and in the appointment of deacons. Is a grave question to be discussed, affecting the interests of the churches? The brethren are associated in council with their pastors. (Acts 15.) Is discipline to be performed? The brethren are to perform it. (Matt. 18 :—1 Cor. 5, &c.) Are pastors needed for the churches? Their election by the brethren is specifically stated, (Acts 14 : 28,)—and the record teaches that this is the *common* fact ; and finally, affairs were not “ set in order ” in the churches, until pastors were appointed to the exclusive care of particular churches. In proof of this, the passage last referred to, may be taken in connection with Acts 20 : 17, 28, and similar passages.

The *importance* of this “ simplicity which is

in Christ" is perceived, if we look at the multiplication of offices in the church, in connection with the corruptions with which it was marred in its early history. As corruptions increased, offices were multiplied to meet the demands of ambition. There were patriarchs and metropolitans, bishops and archbishops, city bishops and country bishops, deacons, and subdeacons and archdeacons, doorkeepers, readers and exorcists, "and others," in common phrase, "too numerous to mention." And just in proportion as the number of the rulers increased, the powers of the people declined.

Having examined the Methodist *theory* of church government, our next object is to examine its external organization, and see how it compares with the simplicity of the gospel.

1. The ministry.

This is of two kinds, or classes;—the *itinerant*, and the *local* ministry.

1. The itinerants. These are expected to devote themselves exclusively to the work of the ministry. They are called *itinerant*, not because they all "travel" through "circuits," preaching at particular points, regularly, in succession; but because their "appointments are fixed" by the bishop anew every one or two years; and, indeed, may be changed at any time by him "in the intervals of the conferences." (pp. 26, 28.)* It is the *itinerant* clergy in whom those "spiritual powers are" exclusively "vested," which furnished the theme of our last chapter.

* The "pages" referred to, are Book of Discipline, Edition of 1844.

They have been called the "*standing army of the Methodist Episcopal Church.*"

2. Local preachers. These are regularly ordained ministers, and are expected to devote themselves to the work of the ministry, as circumstances may require, though still pursuing some worldly calling. In the absence of an itinerant, a local preacher may be appointed, temporarily, in his place, to perform his duties, and receiving his compensation. (p. 72.) The local preachers have been called the *militia* of the Methodist Church. A local preacher possesses no right to a participation in the supreme government of the church, and occupies but a subordinate place in the ministry.

Another peculiarity of Episcopal Methodism is the division of the ministry into different *ranks*. Methodist writers admit, technically, of *two* ranks in the ministry, and *but* two, viz., elders and deacons. But they have, in addition, the *office* of *bishop*. The difference between a bishop and an elder is made to consist, not in "*ministerial rank,*" but in "*office.*"

1. A bishop. "A bishop is constituted by the election of the General Conference, and the laying on of the hands of three bishops; or at least of one bishop, and two elders. If, by death or otherwise, no bishop is remaining in the church, the elders, or any three of them, appointed by the General Conference for that purpose, shall perform the rite of ordination." His principal official duties are, "to preside in the conferences,—to fix the appointments of the preachers for the several circuits,—in the intervals of the conferences to change, receive, and suspend

preachers,—to travel through the connection at large, —to oversee the spiritual and temporal business of the church,—to ordain bishops, elders, and deacons, and to decide all questions of law in an Annual Conference, subject to an appeal to the General Conference; though in all cases, the *application* of law shall be with the conference. A bishop is amenable to the General Conference, who have power to expel him *for improper conduct.* “If a bishop be accused of immorality, three travelling elders shall examine him on the subject, and if they verily believe him guilty, they shall call to their aid two presiding elders from two districts in the neighborhood of that where the crime was committed, each of which presiding elder shall bring with him two elders, or an elder and deacon; and if two-thirds of this ‘conference’ regard him guilty, they shall suspend him till the ensuing General Conference.” (pp. 26–30.)

2. An elder. “An elder is constituted by the election of a majority of the yearly conference, and by the laying on of the hands of the bishop, and some of the elders present. The duties of a *travelling* elder are, to administer the sacraments,—to perform the office of matrimony, and all parts of divine service, and to perform all the duties of a travelling preacher.” (p. 33.)

3. A deacon. A deacon is “constituted” in the same way as an elder. The duties of a travelling deacon are, “to baptize, and perform the office of matrimony, in the absence of an elder,—to assist an elder in administering the Lord’s Supper,—and to perform all the duties of a travelling preacher.” (p.

34.) The difference between the *ecclesiastical* character of *itinerant* and *local* elders and deacons, seems to relate to their *legislative* and *executive* capacity.

A travelling preacher is instructed, among other things, “not to *mend*” the “rules,” but to “*keep* them,”—for “a Methodist preacher is to *mind every point*, great and small, in the Methodist discipline,” and to “act in all things *not according to*” his “*own will*, but as a son in the gospel,”—“to employ” his “time,” “and to do that part of the work, at those times and places” which his brethren and superiors “judge most” for God’s “glory.” (pp. 39, 40.)

4. Besides the above distinctions in ministerial rank, there are other distinctions of office. Among these are,

Presiding elders. They are a sort of *sub-bishops*; they are chosen by the bishops, and are appointed by them to particular “districts.” The duties of a presiding elder are, “to travel in his district,—in the absence of the bishop, to change, receive, and suspend preachers, and to preside in the conference,—to be present, as far as practicable, at all the quarterly meetings,—to call together, at each quarterly meeting, a quarterly meeting conference,—to oversee the spiritual and temporal business of the church in his district,—to take care that every part of the discipline is enforced in his district,—to decide all questions of law in a quarterly meeting conference, subject to an appeal to the president of the next Annual Conference, though in all cases the application of law shall be with the conference,—to at-

tend the bishops when present in his district, and give them, when absent, all necessary information, by letter, of the state of his district." (pp. 30, 31.)

5. There are also those who have "the special charge of circuits." These may be "elders, deacons, or preachers." Their duties in their respective "circuits," among other things, are, "to see *that the other preachers behave well and want nothing*,—to renew the tickets for the admission of members into love-feasts quarterly, and regulate the bands,—to meet the stewards and leaders as often as possible,—*to appoint all the leaders*, and change them when necessary,—*to receive, try, and expel members*, according to the form of discipline,—to overlook the accounts of all the stewards,—to appoint a person to receive the quarterly collections in the classes," besides taking certain other measures for raising money,—"to enforce vigorously, but calmly, all the rules of the society,—and to license such persons *as he may judge proper*, to officiate as exhorters in the church, provided, no person shall be so licensed without the consent of the leaders' meeting, *or* of the class of which he is a member, where no leaders' meeting is held." (pp. 43, 48.)

From the ministry, thus constituted, there are formed certain clerical organizations.

1. The General Conference.

This body meets once in four years, and "is composed," at present "of one member for every twenty-one members of each Annual Conference;" but such "representatives must have been travelling preachers at least four years."

“The General Conference shall have *full powers* to make rules and regulations for the Church, under the following limitations, viz. (1.) They shall not revoke or change the articles of religion, nor establish any new standards or rules of doctrine, contrary to the existing and established standards of doctrine. (2.) They shall not allow of more than one representative for every fourteen members of the Annual Conferences, nor less than one for every thirty, and no conference shall be denied the privilege of two delegates. (3.) They shall not alter any part or rule of the government, so as to do away with episcopacy, or destroy the plan of the itinerant general superintendency. (4.) They shall not revoke or change the general rules of the United Societies. (5.) They shall not do away the privilege of the ministers of trial by a committee, and of an appeal; neither shall they do away the privileges of the members of trial before the society, *or* by a committee, and of an appeal.* (6.) They shall not appropriate the product of the Book Concern, or of the Charter Fund, to any other purpose than *the benefit of the travelling preachers and their families.*” But all this is followed by a provision, by which all these restrictions except the first may be swept away. “Upon the recommendation of three-fourths of all the members of the several Annual Conferences, who shall be present and vote on such a recommendation, then a majority of two-thirds of the General Conference shall have power to alter any of the above restrictions except the first article;” or the recommendation may

* The *value* of this provision will be seen hereafter.

proceed from the General Conference, and be ratified by the Annual Conferences. (pp. 20, 22.) Thus, *with one single exception, the most unlimited power*, is placed in the hands of the itinerant preachers and that one only fixes the creed of the Church unalterably ;* so that in *no case is a particle of power* possessed by the people.

2. The Annual Conferences. Of these there are at present forty. They are composed of all the travelling preachers, who are in full connection, and those who are to be received into full connection.

Their powers are partly legislative, but are chiefly judicial and executive. Reports are made respecting the state of the church ; they consult respecting its general interests ; and adopt measures for raising supplies, and apportioning the avails. (pp. 23-26.)

3. Quarterly Meeting Conferences. These bodies are partly cleric, and part laic, consisting of all the travelling and local preachers, exhorters, stewards, and class-leaders of the circuit, *and none others*, except the presiding elder, who shall be present when practicable. The powers of this body are, to hear complaints, to receive and try appeals, to examine the character of exhorters, to license local preachers, to take cognizance of all the local preachers,—to recommend suitable candidates for deacons' or elders' orders in the local connection, and *for admission on trial in the travelling connection*,—to

* At least such appears to have been the original design. No change may be introduced which shall substitute "rules" or "doctrines contrary" to the original ones. But who is to decide whether the proposed change is contrary, or otherwise? THIS SAME GENERAL CONFERENCE.

try, suspend, expel or acquit any local preacher in the circuit or station against whom charges may be brought; provided that no person shall be licensed to preach without the recommendation of the society of which he is a member, *or* of a leaders' meeting, nor shall any one be licensed to preach, or recommended to the Annual Conference to travel or for ordination, without being first examined in the quarterly conference on the subject of doctrine and discipline." (pp. 31, 72, 73.)

The organizations which include, or are composed exclusively of, lay members, are various.

1. The Church. The term *church*, when used with strictness in this denomination, refers to the whole "connection,"—"The Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States of America." This is evident from the habitual use of the phrases "*our* Church,"—"The Church;" especially when its use is considered in contradistinction from another term, viz.

2. Society. "A *Society* includes all the members of *the Church* in any particular place."* This definition accords with the language of the "General Rules." "Each *society* is divided into smaller companies, called classes."† The correctness of this statement might be corroborated by any amount of proof.

3. Classes. These, as just intimated, are a portion of a local society united for religious conference, and usually consisting of about twelve persons.

4. Bands. "Two, three, or four believers, who

* Polity of Meth. Ep. Church. By David Plumbe, p. 19.

† Book of Dis. p. 81.

have confidence in each other, form a band. In each of these bands, all must be men, or all women ; and all married, or all unmarried." "The design is, that they may confess their faults one to another, and pray one for another." (p. 88.)

Among the other peculiarities of the system are,

5. **Class Leaders.** A class leader receives his appointment from the preacher of the circuit or station. It is his duty to meet his class weekly, or at stated times, and to exercise over them a sort of pastoral supervision. "There is but one condition previously required of those who desire admission into these societies, viz., a desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins." None are to be received as members of the church, until they have been acceptable members of a class six months. (pp. 82, 87.)

6. **Exhorters.** They are authorized to hold meetings for exhortation and prayer.

7. **Trustees.** These have charge of the church property. According to the Discipline, when a new board is to be appointed, it is done "by the preacher in charge." Whenever a vacancy occurs, he is to nominate a candidate, whose nomination is to be confirmed by the remaining members of the board. (pp. 167, 168, 169, 171.) But by the laws of some of the states, trustees of church property are to be appointed by the people. Under the Methodist Discipline, however, this is a matter of very little importance, as the simple duty of the trustees is, "to hold the property for the use of the members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the U. S. A., and in farther trust, that

they shall at all times, for ever hereafter, permit such preachers belonging to the said church, as shall from time to time be appointed" by the bishop, "to preach and expound God's holy word therein," (p. 167,) provided, that if they have advanced money on account of said premises, they are authorized to sell the premises; the balance, (if any,) however, is to be placed at the disposal of the Annual Conference, to be appropriated by them for the use of the society. (p. 168.) "The trustees are responsible to the quarterly meeting conference." (p. 171.)

8. Stewards. The Stewards are a board in every circuit or station, who have charge of moneys collected for the support of the ministry, and other purposes. Various other official duties are assigned them, rendering their station one of considerable influence and importance. "The Stewards are nominated by the preacher in charge, but the quarterly meeting conference confirms or rejects such nomination; *and to this body the Stewards are accountable;*" though they are "*subject to the bishops, the presiding elder of their district, and the elder, deacon, and travelling preachers of their circuit.*" (pp. 171, 172.)

9. "A *circuit* is composed of several local societies, scattered over a number of villages or towns, and is under the pastoral care of one, two, or more preachers, one of whom is called the preacher in charge."

10. "A *district* is composed of a number of circuits and stations, and is under the supervision of a presiding elder."*

* Polity of M. E. Church, by D. Plumbe, p. 18.

But there are other peculiarities of the denomination, equally subordinate to the grand wheel of the system.

11. It is the design of the system that all the churches shall be held for the use of *the denomination*, and of those who are appointed to carry out the principles of Methodism. The form of the "deed of settlement" is designed to give to the preachers who are sent "from time to time" by the bishop, *the exclusive control* of the church edifice,—or, what is the same thing, of the pulpit. It secures to them, "*at all times for ever hereafter,*" the right to occupy it, (p. 167,) and of course to control it. This peculiarity will be noticed more particularly in another chapter. It is alluded to now, as one of the main "wheels" in the system. It would be difficult to estimate, accurately, the value of the property thus held at the perpetual control of the clergy. It has been estimated by those who are familiar with the system, at five millions of dollars. "*Money is power.*"

12. The "Book Concern." The amount of capital invested in the chief establishment and its branches, it is difficult to state. Intelligent Methodists say, they have never known. Reports are presented at some of the Annual Conferences, and also at the General Conference; but these bodies are composed exclusively of the clergy, and these reports are given, as we are told, usually, if not always, *verbally*.

The reporter of one of the secular papers gave a partial report in 1844. According to that, the net assets of the establishment at New-York were six hundred and forty-six thousand dollars. The amount

invested in the various branches was not given :— but, from some comparisons, the amount at Cincinnati must have approached the above. The reporter gave us nothing from the other branches, which are established at Charleston, S. C., Pittsburg, Pa., and at Boston, Mass. The principal periodicals are published at New-York ; but there are newspapers published also at Cincinnati, Charleston, Richmond, Va., Nashville, Tenn., Pittsburgh, Pa., and Auburn, N. Y. These establishments must be sources of an immense revenue, as they possess almost an exclusive monopoly of subscriptions to periodicals, and of the sale of books, for one-twelfth of the population of the country. An examination of prices will show a vast profit, when compared with the trade generally. One single periodical is supposed to yield “ forty thousand dollars a year, net income.” The subscription price of their *periodicals* does not vary greatly from those published by others ; but as they all are published at a few establishments, the profits must be vastly greater. The control and management of these funds is solely with the travelling preachers.

The profits, after retaining such a proportion as may be deemed expedient for carrying on operations, are appropriated exclusively for the support of the travelling preachers and their families.

13. The Chartered Fund. This amounts to about fifty thousand dollars, and the income is applied also, to the support of the travelling preachers and their families.

What a contrast is here exhibited between the spirit and complexity of this system, and the spirit and

simplicity of the Gospel. Many of the peculiarities and agencies here enumerated, might be well enough in themselves, if they were left where the Bible places the affairs of the Church—in the hands of the people. But under this system, *every* thing—*absolutely every thing*—pertaining to the Church, is placed at the unlimited control of the ministry. *Nothing—absolutely nothing*—is left to the final action of the people. Even if they are called upon to aid, or consent, in any matter of discipline, or otherwise, the system provides, that if the preacher is not satisfied, the matter shall undergo a review under the *direct control* of the clergy. Indeed, there is not “a wheel,” in all this *system* of machinery, which is not connected with and dependent on *the main wheel*, viz., *the itinerant clergy*. The Scriptures make provision for the reception of members to the church, by *the brethren*. For while *the form* is not prescribed, the *principle* is clearly established. The case of the excommunicated person, mentioned by the Apostle, would be decisive, even if no other directions were given. The apostle directs *the brethren* to restore the penitent offender to church privileges. He does not himself restore him: he does not direct the pastor to restore him. That duty belongs to “the church.” But what says the organ of the Methodist Episcopal Church? “*We know nothing of the right of the society* to admit members into Church fellowship; and the Methodist preacher who *concedes* that right, betrays his trust, and should be held amenable for delinquency to his brethren.” Such a principle “would so alter the re-

lation between pastor and people, as *to subvert our whole economy*. The *admission and expulsion of church members by a vote of the society, is as absurd in theory, as it would be ruinous in practice.*"* "*Ruinous,*" indeed, that principle would be *to Episcopal Methodism*; but who presumes to pronounce it "*absurd?*" It is the very principle which is laid down by our Lord in the 18th of Matt., and by the Spirit of the Lord, in the 5th of 1 Cor. So directly opposed are the Bible and this system on these points. According to Methodism, the duty of discipline commences with the preacher, or his agent, the class leader. If the offender is not reclaimed by private effort, he may be brought before the society, or a committee. Says an individual who has been fourteen years a member of the M. E. Church, and six years a travelling preacher, "I never knew *one* case conducted by the society. * * But how is this committee constituted? *By the sole will of the preacher in charge.*"† But whether the trial is before the society or a committee, if the preacher is dissatisfied with the decision, he may refer the case to the ensuing quarterly meeting conference. (Dis. pp. 95, 96.) To say nothing of such a violation of the directions of our Lord, was there ever such a judicial trifling. Nearly every member of the quarterly conference is appointed to that body *by the preacher himself*, or holds his seat at the preacher's will; while *not an individual* of them is chosen by the accused, or by

* Ed. Christian Advocate and Journal, Nov. 25, 1840. Quoted in the Wesleyan Companion, Vol. I. No. 2, pp. 116, 117.

† Polity of the M. E. Church, by David Plumbe, p. 26.

the people. The organization of the quarterly conference has already been mentioned. The presiding officer is the preacher himself, or the presiding elder. The class leaders—the most numerous portion of the body—are all appointed by the preacher. The exhorters were selected by the preacher, with the consent of the leaders, whom he has appointed, unless the *class* grants the requisite “*consent.*” The stewards were nominated by the preacher, and confirmed by this body. The local preachers were selected by the itinerant preachers, with the consent of the class leaders, and were licensed by this body. (pp. 43, 48, 73, 171.) If the accused feels himself aggrieved by the decision of the committee or society, he may appeal to this conference. *And this is the boasted right of trial before the people, and of appeal!* Is this according to the Bible? Is it in accordance with justice? *It is Methodism.* Where does the Bible give to the ministry the power to set aside the decision of the brethren, and arraign an accused brother before the aristocracy of the church—those who hold their office as judges totally independent of any action of the people? That is a power which is possessed by no civil judge in the land.

Suppose the accused is unjustly condemned; how is he to obtain redress? As an illustration, allow me to give a brief history of an actual case. A member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, having failed in business, was charged with dishonesty. A committee was appointed to try the case; the accused pleading not guilty. The evidence was mostly *common*

fame. After spending several evenings, the committee decided "that they *believed* the accused had acted dishonestly;" though they afterwards all signed a declaration that there was *no positive evidence* to sustain the charge. On this evidence, and in view of such a decision, the preacher excommunicated the accused member; for we must remember that according to this system, it is the prerogative of the *preacher*, and not of the brethren of the church, to perform this, as well as *every other*, judicial act. The defendant appealed to the quarterly conference at which the presiding elder of the district presided. The conference was directed to decide the case by the minutes of the previous trial. The presiding elder was asked, "whether *opinion expressed* was a sufficient verdict upon which to expel a member?" He replied "that the opinion of the brethren, expressed as in the above case, *was* a sufficient verdict, and was actually *finding a person guilty*, according to the Book of Discipline." After some discussion, the former decision was confirmed.

As there were those in the Methodist Church who were not prepared to bow their necks quietly to such principles, a petition was presented to the N. Y. Conference, requesting information whether this case exhibited a correct view of the Book of Discipline. The first year, no answer was returned to the petition. The petitioners pressed the matter more strenuously the next year, Bishops Hedding and Roberts being present. The petition was referred to a committee, who made a report justifying the course which had been pursued. Their report was adopted without discussion. The petitioners requested a copy of the report, but it was

refused. As a reason for that refusal it was remarked, "*We are afraid to trust it in your hands ; you might make a bad use of it.*"*

This case made no little stir at the time ; and whatever attempts may be made to gloss it over, the material facts are regarded as unquestionable. Whose character and religious standing are safe, under the operation of such principles ?

Before retiring from this exhibition of the system of Methodism, let us notice two of its most important features, viz., the adaptation of each of its parts to concentrate all ecclesiastical power in the clergy ; and, what is equally characteristic of the system, the placing of every farthing of its funds in their hands. Lest my remarks should be regarded as severe or invidious, I will employ the language of Dr. Bangs,

* "*Thoughts on some parts of the Dis. of the M. E. Church, with a statement of some transactions and usages in said Church, by John W. Barber.*"

As a further illustration of the subject before us, we instance a case alluded to in the "*True Wesleyan*" for Oct. 18th, 1845. While a certain appeal to a quarterly conference, was pending, one of the clergy, discovering "that a majority of the members of the conference differed in opinion from himself, removed a sufficient number of class leaders from office, and placed others in their stead, who he knew had the same view with himself, and thus secured a majority of votes on his side of the question ; and this was perfectly legal."

And this is the *Quarterly Conference* which is paraded before us in so many different forms ; that "*body of laymen,*" which exercises such a "*controlling check*" upon the clergy ; which "*makes all the preachers !*" Who can longer doubt, that the religious character and ecclesiastical standing of the people are "sufficiently" guarded, are perfectly safe ; even though they are held, primarily, in the fist of the preacher in charge, *while the system allows "the right of appeal" to such a body as this !*

when opposing *Protestant Episcopacy*; and he is only commenting on the assumptions of the bishops, as constituting a third "rank" in the ministry, in whom is "vested" the *exclusive "right of ordination."*

"I have said that the assertion of this exclusive right was a USURPATION which did *not* originally belong to them; that therefore it proved a *curse* to the church; that *God has frowned upon it*, and exercises the awful prerogative of *dashing it to pieces*, whenever it stands in his way of working." The doctor waxing warm, repeats the assertion, "that the bishops *usurped* powers which did not belong to them;" and in proof of this, he quotes from the "accurate historian, Mosheim."

"Speaking of these haughty prelates, Mosheim says:—'Their first step was an entire *exclusion* of the people from all part in the administration of ecclesiastical affairs, * * * and principally, that they might either engross to themselves, or distribute as they thought proper, the possessions and revenues of the church. Hence it came to pass, that at the conclusion of this" (fourth) "century, there remained no more than a mere shadow of the ancient government of the church. Many of the privileges which had formerly belonged to the *presbyters* and *people* were USURPED by the bishops.'"*

Substituting, now, "travelling preachers" for "bishops," we would ask, what is it that so excites the holy indignation of Dr. Bangs? Why, the bish-

* Methodist Episcopacy Vindicated. By Nathan Bangs, D. D. pp. 26, 27.

ops of the Protestant Episcopal Church claim "the exclusive right of ordination!" Truly, the pillars of the heavens are shaken! What sacrilegious "usurpation!" O, "the haughty prelates!"

Let Dr. Bangs "pull the *beam* out of his *own eye*, and then shall he see clearly the *mote* that is in his brother's eye." What matters it to us, that others lay their hands on the heads of our pastors, if we have no voice in their election,—if others may impose them upon us, not only *without* our consent, but, if they please, even *against our expressed dissent*? This "exclusive right of *ordination*," is but "the mint and anise and cummin," in comparison with the *other "rights"* of freemen in Christ Jesus,—not the mere right of "*submitting to the absolute control*" of others, but of "administering" our own "ecclesiastical affairs." It is all well enough, when the "rights" of the *people*—in respect to the admission, and discipline, and exclusion of members; in respect to the choice of pastors, and other officers; in respect to the *practical* ownership of their churches; in respect to *every* natural and scriptural right belonging to us as men, and as Christians;—it is all well enough when all these are "usurped by the" clergy; but "usurp" the *least* of their "rights," lift up "a little horn" from their midst, speaking more "swelling words,"—and it is the very "beast," "the dragon" of Revelation. So long as it is only "*the people*" whose rights, *even of representation, and of trial by their equals*, are "usurped," and the whole clergy of the church, assembled in conference, can exclaim, with united voice, "PARDON US IF WE

KNOW NO SUCH RIGHTS, IF WE COMPREHEND NO SUCH PRIVILEGES."

"And principally," quotes Dr. Bangs, "that they might engross to themselves, or distribute as they thought proper, the possessions and revenues of the church." WHO *engross to themselves, or distribute as they think proper*, "the possessions and revenues" of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and the millions vested in church property, and the hundreds of thousands in the Book Concern, and the chartered Fund? Look at the Book of Discipline, under the head, "Raising Supplies." Every thing, from their "annual" and "quarterly collections," and their "fifth collection," in class, and society, and congregation, down to the accounts of the humblest steward, *absolutely every thing* is under the supervision and control of the clergy. There seems to us some slight inconsistency in these expressions of regard for the "rights" of the "dear people," and of such holy horror of touching the funds of the church, while both hands are up to the elbows in the people's pockets.

Look where we may in this system, and what a contrast do we behold with the simplicity of the gospel? According to the Scriptures, a minister of the gospel is a mere preacher of the word, and an administrator of Christian ordinances. According to Episcopal Methodism, he is not only an expounder of the *gospel*, but an *authoritative expounder and administrator* of ecclesiastical *laws*. A system of machinery is contrived, with its wheels "within" wheels, embracing *every thing*,—that "*usurps*," in

the language adopted by Dr. Bangs, "*all the rights and privileges of the people.*" Others prescribe to the people their articles of faith, and mark out for them the path of their duty. What room is left for the free exercise of the conscience and the intellect? The preachers bind themselves, in the most solemn manner, to yield to the guidance, not of their *own* convictions, but of others. What rights can such a system leave to the people, where their churches, their pastors, the very truth which they are to hear, their publications, their Sabbath-school books, *every* thing, is yielded up to the control of others? This system might be labelled, "*A system for transferring responsibility from the people to the clergy, and from the clergy, individually, to the bishops and General Conference.*" How can a preacher of the everlasting gospel, who takes upon himself such an ordination vow, be prepared to "give account of himself to God?" How can the *people* be prepared to give account of themselves "as stewards of God," when they have placed millions of their property beyond their control? above all, when they have resigned to others the discipline of the church, and the most solemn personal responsibilities?"

These subjects, then, relate, not only to our dearest *rights*, they have a fearful bearing upon our final account, and upon our eternal rewards.

XI.

“ AND THE TWELVE CALLED THE MULTITUDE OF THE DISCIPLES UNTO THEM, AND SAID ; ‘ IT IS NOT REASON THAT WE SHOULD LEAVE THE WORD OF GOD AND SERVE TABLES. THEREFORE, BRETHREN, LOOK YE OUT FROM AMONG YOU SEVEN MEN, OF HONEST REPORT, FULL OF THE HOLY GHOST AND WISDOM, WHOM WE MAY APPOINT OVER THIS BUSINESS. BUT WE WILL GIVE OURSELVES CONTINUALLY TO PRAYER AND TO THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD.’ ”—Acts 6: 2-4.

Who control the use of the Church Edifices ?

A PRINCIPLE of fundamental importance in the organization of local churches, has been recognized and established by inspired authority, viz., *the entire separation of the ministry from the secular affairs of the churches*. And the reason is twofold. It is not “reasonable,” that those who have been set apart to the all-important work of the ministry, should be cumbered with matters which are entirely out of their appropriate sphere of duty, and which belong, in their very nature, to others ; neither should they be placed, unnecessarily, in circumstances where their reputation and influence may be impaired, either by their own imperfections, or by the unreasonableness or prejudice of others. The secular affairs of the church *belong to the people*,—the people are *responsible* for the management of them, as truly as they are for the discharge of any other personal duty. As they are to “give account of themselves to God,” so

they should decide all questions pertaining to these matters. This is the principle inculcated in the quotation which is prefixed as the motto of this chapter, and in accordance with which the apostles always acted. The phrase, "whom we may appoint," refers, simply, to the public acknowledgment by the apostles, for themselves, and in behalf of the church, of the individuals thus set apart, as the servants of the church. There was, evidently, no authoritative interference by the apostles; for they expressly referred the whole matter to the brotherhood. It is equally evident that no church is, *on these points, Scripturally* organized, in which these principles are violated. Whether these principles are followed in the system of Episcopal Methodism, it is easy to judge from our last chapter, in which that system was unfolded.

Allusion was there made to the manner in which *church property is held*, according to that system. The importance which is attached to this point, by the organs of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and their representations of it, render a more particular examination of it necessary. In Congregational Tract No. I. the writer was led, by his subject, to notice "*that system which does not leave even their houses of worship in the hands of the people who erected them.*" This remark, with others of similar import from other sources, have called forth expressions and epithets, which are not regarded, in *some* circles, as indicating either the gentleman or the Christian. Misrepresentations of our language,—we do not say intentional,—are spread abroad upon

the wings of the Book Concern; and these are followed by representations and arguments which are calculated to leave, what we regard as totally false impressions respecting the question at issue.

What, then, is meant when it is said *that the system of Episcopal Methodism does not leave the churches in the hands of the people who erected them?*

We do *not* mean, that the "ownership" of the churches is transferred to the "itinerant clergy," in such a sense, as that they may be said to "own" them, as they do their horses, which they may sell, and then purchase others with the avails, or may purchase mules instead, or may put the money in their pockets, and "travel" on foot.

But we *do* mean, that *according to "the system,"* the churches are erected for the people only *as Methodists*, and for the *interests of Methodism*; that they are so secured, or it is the *design* of "the system" so to secure them, that "*the people,*" even though they remain Episcopal Methodists, cannot control their use *as churches*; that if the people should renounce Episcopal Methodism, they would *forfeit all claim* to churches so secured, and that, from the first, according to the system, the churches are "in the hands of Trustees, who are *not appointed* by the people, and who are *not accountable* to the people; whose office it is to secure the churches to the interests of Methodism, and for the use of those, as preachers, *and those only*, who are appointed for that purpose, according to the Book of Discipline.

This is what we mean; and that any intelli-

gent Methodist should deny this statement, or any part of it, is marvellous.

“To the law, and to the testimony.”

1. “What shall be done *for the security* of our preaching-houses, and the premises belonging thereto?” (Book of Discipline, p. 165.)

This starting question, of itself, shows the true genius of the system on the point in debate; viz. that, in this matter, “the Episcopal Methodist connection” is a joint stock concern. These edifices are “our preaching-houses.” Indeed, if we considered the authorship of the Book of Discipline, we should be led to suppose that the “travelling preachers” laid *exclusive claim* to these buildings, for those who make that inquiry are all travelling preachers, and they call the “houses” “*our houses.*” But we are willing to put a liberal construction upon their language.

In answering the above question, they prescribe “the plan of a deed of settlement,” which is to “be brought into effect *in all possible cases, and as far as the laws of the states respectively will admit of it.* But each annual conference is authorized to make such modification in the deeds, *as they find the different usages and customs of law require* in the different states and territories, *so as to secure the premises firmly by deed, and PERMANENTLY TO THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, according to the true intent and meaning* of the following form of a deed of settlement; *any thing in the said form to the contrary notwithstanding.*” (p. 165.)

This language is certainly unequivocal. The design is, to secure the premises, *not* "to the people who" may have "built" these "preaching-houses," but "to the Methodist Episcopal Church," and to secure them *permanently*, however the builders may change their religious opinions. It is to be noticed, also, that whatever change may be made in this "form" of a deed, to meet the demand of any statute, it is made *not* for the purpose of securing any rights of the builders, but "so as to secure the premises firmly and permanently to the Methodist Episcopal Church."

2. Another argument, confirmatory of our statement, may be drawn from the method prescribed for the appointment of Trustees, and from the qualifications which are requisite to render an individual eligible to that office.

"In all cases when a new board of trustees is to be created, it shall be done (except in those states and territories where the statutes provide differently,) by the appointment of the preacher in charge, or the presiding elder of the district." (p. 171.)

Who, with that paragraph before him, will pretend that it is the design of "the system" to leave a *shingle, or a nail*, "in the hands of the people?" As to the *value* of the above proviso, we shall see, as we proceed, that it is of *no manner of consequence*, so far as the points in debate are concerned. If, *in respect to any thing in dispute*, the least discretionary power was reserved in the trustees, which might be exercised for the benefit of the people, in that case, the statutes *might, possibly*, result in some advan-

tage to them. *But there is no such discretionary power.* The only discretionary power (and respecting this there is no debate,) which is reserved to the trustees, is found in the following proviso :

“If the trustees, or any of them, have advanced, or are responsible for any sum of money,” they may, if necessary, sell the said premises, after due notice, and, “after paying the debt, and other expenses, they shall deposit the remainder of the money in the hands of the stewards of the society belonging to, or attending divine service on said premises ; *which surplus shall be at the disposal of the next annual conference*, which annual conference shall dispose of the said money, according to the best of their judgment, for the use of the said society.” (pp. 168, 169.)

The judgment and fidelity of these trustees may be of some consequence to the people, in respect to the contracting of debts, and the sale of the premises ; but these things do not affect the points in debate, *whether the system leaves the houses of worship in the hands of the people who have erected them.* For example : it is of importance to a minor, to have a wise and faithful guardian ; but however wise or unwise, faithful or unfaithful the guardian may be, or however he may be appointed, it is still true, that the minor's property is “not left in” his own “hands.”

But there is another item in respect to the appointment of trustees. In case of a vacancy or vacancies, “the preacher” in charge, having called a meeting of the remaining trustees, “shall proceed to nominate one or more persons” for the vacant office. “And the

said trustees, so assembled, shall proceed to elect, and by a majority of votes *shall* appoint the person or persons so nominated, to fill such vacancy or vacancies," and, in case of a tie, "the stationed preacher shall have the casting vote." (pp. 167, 168.)

Thus it appears, that it is the design of "the system," that *no question*, affecting their interest in the "said premises," *shall ever be brought before the people*.

Allusion was made to certain qualifications for the office of trustee, as indicating the design of "the system" on the points in debate. "No person shall be eligible as a trustee to any of our houses, churches, or schools, who is not a regular member of our church." (p. 164.) "As often as one or more of the trustees * * shall die, *or cease to be a member of the said church, according to the rules and discipline aforesaid,*" the office is pronounced vacant, and is to be filled by a new election, as above described. (p. 167.) "*Provided* the person or persons nominated (by the preacher,) shall have been one year a member or members of the said church immediately preceding such nomination." (p. 168.) Thus it appears that "the system" is *as inexorable as death*, in excluding all those from its privileges who renounce its "discipline, by ceasing to be members of the said church."

3. We sustain our statement from the duties which "the system" prescribes to these trustees.

"That they" (the trustees) "shall erect * * a house or place of worship, *for the use of the members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United*

States of America, according to the rules and discipline which from time to time may be agreed upon, and adopted by the ministers and preachers of the said church, at their General Conferences in the United States of America ; and in farther trust and confidence, *that they shall at all times, forever hereafter, permit such ministers and preachers belonging to the said church, as shall from time to time be duly authorized by the General Conferences* of the ministers and preachers of the said Methodist Episcopal Church, or by the annual conferences, authorized by the said General Conference, to preach and expound God's holy word therein.* (pp. 166, 167.)

Here are three particulars, all coinciding to show the design of the system. 1st. The house is "for the use of the members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America." Thus it appears that those "who erected" the house of worship, are to enjoy "the use" of "the premises" *only on the supposition* that they are members of the above church ; or at least, whether *technically* members or not, none are to worship there in the character, or under the name, of any other denomination. 2dly. They are to be governed by, and worship according to the rules and discipline of the above church. 3dly. "The preachers of the said church" are to have a *perpetual and unlimited* "use" of "the house," in the discharge of the duties of their office.

* This is an extract from "the form of the deed" by which the trustees hold "the premises" upon which they are "to erect the house of worship."

How the perversion of premises, thus held, to any other purposes, is consistent with all this, or any part of it, it is difficult to conceive. If church property *can be held*, "permanently," in any way whatever, so as effectually to secure the original design, we would ask how that method would differ from "the form" here prescribed? If law is of any avail, and possesses any thing of definiteness, for the purpose of securing property vested in churches, then it would be difficult to conceive how property held as above, is subject to the caprice or the religious changes of subsequent generations. But however this may be, *the designs of the contracting parties* are unequivocally expressed; and if they are, eventually, disappointed, then the only question which can be raised, hereafter, respecting the ownership of church property will be, "*Who has possession?*" A deed can possess no value whatever.

It appears, also, that so far as the question of the right of occupancy of the churches is concerned, either in respect to the preacher, or the people, *no discretionary power is vested in the trustees*; so that *the mode of their appointment* is, in these respects, of *no consequence whatever*. They are hedged in, not by the opinions of the people, but *by the stronger authority of statute law*. How, then, are churches, thus held, "*left in the hands of the people who erected them?*"

4. The design of "the system" is farther evident from another fact, which has already been intimated, viz., that if churches are sold, the avails are not left *at the control of the people*, to be used by themselves,

as they think proper, or not used at all; but the "surplus," after the payment of debts and expenses, shall be deposited in the hands of the steward, or stewards, to be held by them at the disposal of the annual conference, "which said conference shall dispose of the money, according the best of their judgment, for the use of the said society." (pp. 168, 169.)

We have been accustomed to suppose, that men, who could not dispose of property for their own use, according to their *own* "judgment," did not regard that property as being in their own hands.

5. Another fact tending also to the same conclusion, is worthy of particular notice, viz., that the trustees are "responsible," *not to the people*, but "to the quarterly meeting conference of the circuit or station," where the premises are located, to which they are required to make a yearly report. (pp. 170, 171.) Now, when we recollect that *not a single member* of that conference holds his seat dependently upon the people, we see that it is the design of this "system" to cut off the last hold of the people from their houses of worship.

6. We have the arguments of Episcopal Methodists themselves confirming our statement.

A certain preacher, reviewing this statement from the pulpit, as found in Congregational Tract No. I, and waxing warm in his praises of Episcopal Methodism, forgot, apparently, the point at which he was aiming, and with characteristic modesty, congratulated his hearers that THEIR "system" did *not leave their churches to the caprices of the people*, but preserved them safe from the possibility of change, by

placing them "in the hands" of a few *wise and good* men, (himself, of course, being of that number.) In order to secure a permanent impression upon his audience, he contrasted the system of Methodism with that of the Puritans; and here he became pathetic, while his imagination portrayed the feelings of the departed Puritans, as they looked down upon churches which they had dedicated to the Trinity, now perverted from their original purposes.

We leave others to judge of the bearing of his argument upon the question, whether that "system leaves the churches in the hands of those who erected them?"

But lest some should set this testimony aside, as being merely the opinion of an individual, we will exhibit an argument which is endorsed by the General Conference, through their agents at the Book Concern. "In respect to our *free houses*," (and most of them *are free*,) "investments of property in them were *voluntary benefactions*, BY WHICH THE DONORS ACQUIRED NO PROPERTY *in such free churches*. They were erected for any and all who choose to use them," (i. e., who choose to use them according to "the terms of their erection,") "and if *they are secured by the terms of their erection to the doctrines and usages of Methodism*, this, also, must have been the voluntary act," (or must have been done with the implied consent,) "of the donors. The original design being fulfilled, no complaint can be just, on the part of those who may choose, after such *charities*, to leave the cause to which they were given. It should be remembered also, that many

who are dead, and many who are not members of the church, have contributed to such *free* houses, on the same terms, and for the same beneficent purpose. Has a man a *right* to reclaim a *charity*, which, by being blended with that of others, dead and alive, CANNOT BE RETURNED WITHOUT FRUSTRATING AN OBJECT of *public beneficence*? and that, too, WHEN THE ORIGINAL TERMS OF THE GRANT ARE FULLY ADHERED TO? *Such a claim*, it is clear, *by destroying all grounds of the permanency of charitable bequests*, would soon suppress all similar liberality. *Such a claim is no more admissible in THIS case, than in ANY OTHER BENEVOLENT FOUNDATION.*"*

The whole of this argument hinges on this point, viz., if the premises have been secured according to the Book of Discipline, they are secured, *not to the "donors,"* by whose "benefactions" the churches were erected, but to "*the doctrines and usages of Methodism.*" "Such investments were voluntary benefactions, *by which* THE DONORS ACQUIRED NO PROPERTY IN SUCH FREE CHURCHES."

This, we must remember, is spoken "by authority." It exhibits *the design of "the system,"* ITS AUTHORS BEING JUDGES. It PROVES that "*the system does not leave the churches in the hands of those who erected them.*"

7. But the above argument is not a mere expression of opinion; it is an operative *law* of "the system," a law which has been enforced (how successfully we cannot say) by repeated suits instituted for

* Tract for the Times, No. 2, Gov. of M. E. Church, p. 5.

the purpose of recovering church property which seceders from the Methodist Episcopal Church endeavored to retain in their possession, on the ground that they had purchased the premises, and erected the buildings. "No!"—the officers of that church reply,—"Our *free houses* are secured, by the terms of their erection, to the doctrines and usages of Methodism." Your subscriptions were not "investments; they were *voluntary benefactions*, by which the donors acquired no property in such free churches."*

But it is attempted to break the force of all these arguments by a play upon the name of the church, as given in the "form of a deed of settlement." This attempt may be thought too ridiculous to be noticed; but as it is formally and pompously paraded by those who are interested to keep the people quiet,

* It is not certain that seceders from the Methodist Episcopal Church will retain possession of "their houses of worship," or escape vexatious and expensive law-suits, even though their churches have not been "secured to the doctrines and usages of Methodism," "according to the plan of the deed of settlement." The very best of authority has made the statement in a public paper, that a suit has been recently instituted for the recovery of a church, under the following circumstances:

A stone chapel had been erected by a Methodist Episcopal Society; but BEFORE it was "secured to the doctrines and usages of Methodism," according to the principles prescribed in the Book of Discipline, a very large majority of the society, participating in the disaffection which is now agitating the Methodist Episcopal Church, seceded, and joined the Wesleyan Methodist Connection, retaining possession of their house of worship. The seceders had been at the entire expense of purchasing the premises, and erecting the building, with the exception of about eighty dollars; and this sum they offered to repay, both principal and interest. "No!" says the presiding elder, "WE WILL HAVE THE WHOLE OF IT."

it is necessary to notice it, as one of the shifts to which they are compelled to resort.

It is said "that the words 'Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America,' as used in the deeds by which Methodist Churches are held, according to the book, *merely indicate the name of the religious society* for which the premises are held."

Let us examine this barefaced assertion. "According to the rules and discipline which from time to time may be agreed upon and adopted by *the ministers and preachers of the said church*, at their General Conferences in the United States of America," &c. *Of the said church. What church? "Why, the society,"* (say these interpreters), "*for whose particular use* the house of worship, which is indicated in the deed, was erected."

The preachers who assemble in "General Conference," then, are "the ministers or preachers of" *this particular, local society!* "According to the rules and discipline which may be adopted by the ministers and preachers of *the said*" local society, "at their General Conferences!" "And in farther trust that they" (the trustees) "shall at all times for ever hereafter permit such ministers and preachers belonging to *the said*" local society (!) "as shall from time to time be duly authorized by the General Conferences of the ministers and preachers of *the said*" local society (!) "to preach and expound God's holy word therein." If this looks like the most ar-rant trifling, it is not our fault.

But "the form of the deed," itself, as given in

the Book of Discipline, shows the inconsistency of the above interpretation, in another way. The local "society" is referred to, *in contradistinction* from "the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America." The directions respecting the use of the money produced by the sale of any church, require it to be placed "in the hands of the steward or stewards of *the society* belonging to, or attending divine service *on said premises*." Here "the *society*" is indicated under its appropriate name; and *not* as "the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America!" But this subterfuge is too barefaced and contemptible to require farther notice.

Nothing is more evident, then, than that it was the design of the framers of the system of Episcopal Methodism, to place the houses of worship of that denomination *at the control of the clergy*, and to *secure* them there "*for ever*." The tongue of man or angel could not be more explicit. *The very nature of the itinerancy*,—that grand peculiarity of the system,—*requires* this corresponding principle. "The absolute power" of sending the preachers wherever expediency may require, would be nugatory, if the churches which they are to occupy may, at any time, be shut against them. "This absolute power," alone, would be of less practical value than Franklin's odd half of a pair of scissors; but put these two powers together, *and they will cut*. This provision is the crowning act, which places *every* thing, in effect, in the hands of the clergy: they are firmly fixed in their seats, with the reins in their grasp.

It may be inquired, why the liege subjects of this system are found, at times, *claiming* "that their churches are left in the hands of those who erected them,"—thus "blowing both hot and cold."

It is because the people, in our degenerate times, when these "steeped idols" find unaccustomed worshippers—the more zealous *because* unaccustomed, in this respect—are not *passive* at the intimation, that the control of their churches, which have been erected by such unusual efforts, is really "vested" in others. Or, to express the fact in their own language, "the people would not be so ready to contribute their money" to erect churches purely as "voluntary benefactions."

But it is asserted, that *the statutes of some of the states* secure to societies the possession of their churches; particularly by securing to them the right of electing their own trustees. Now, if this assertion were in accordance with *fact*, no thanks would be due to "*the system*." Indeed, this plea is, of itself, an *admission*, that "*the system* does *not* leave the churches in the hands of those who erected them." It comes to this; those who erect Methodist Episcopal churches, must plead, in order to retain them "in their own hands," that one of the peculiar features,—one of the fundamental principles of their "system," is *not* "*tolerated*" by the laws of some "of the states and territories."

It is, indeed, most certain that the statutes of this state are designed to secure the churches in the hands of the people, if they avail themselves of the appropriate means, and unless they *renounce* the

protection of the law by some act of their own ; but how *any thing* can avail those whose churches *have been* "secured to the doctrines and usages of Methodism," it is not easy to perceive. We have heard, indeed, of "the glorious uncertainty of the law." But the framers of our Constitution were, probably, most of them, plain Congregationalists, accustomed to think it a privilege to manage their own ecclesiastical affairs in their own way. They, probably, had never been permitted to thank God for the enlarged liberty of Episcopal Methodism. At any rate, none will pretend that the statutes of this state were designed to *coerce* men into any particular form or system of church government, or to offer the least interference with any system ; or to throw its arm of protection over those who, for any cause, were disposed to interfere with the action of any system, which is compatible with "the peace and safety of the state." The third section of the "Declaration of Rights," prefixed to the constitution of this state, places this matter, it would seem, beyond cavil.

"Sect. 3. The exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination, shall for ever be free to all persons in this state ; provided, that the right hereby declared and established shall not be so construed as to excuse acts of licentiousness, or to justify practices inconsistent with the peace and safety of the state."

Now, is it to be admitted, that the system contained in the Book of Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, comes within the above proviso ?

Or is it permitted to every other denomination to adopt whatever system they please, untrammelled in respect to any of its features, while the "poor, persecuted Methodist" beholds the grand peculiarity of his favorite system struck down by the strong arm of statute law? Is it so, that *our legislators have drawn their pen across six pages of the Book of Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States of America?* Have the days of the Inquisition returned? or, more terrible still, have the "Blue Laws of Connecticut" been revived, in the nineteenth century, with the addition of the Index Expurgatorius of Popery? Alas, that the dying Methodist should find his "liberality suppressed," because "all grounds of the permanent security of charitable bequests" for "the erection of churches, which he *wishes to secure* "to the doctrines and usages of Methodism," "*are destroyed.*" Is *that statute law in Connecticut?* It cannot be. Whatever privileges the system of Methodism confers, every man has a right to enjoy. Whatever *disabilities* that system imposes, every man has an equal right to suffer. If men please to place themselves under the irresponsible ecclesiastical control of others, or if they please to "*secure*" their property, or any part of it, "*to the doctrines and usages of Methodism,*" shall the laws interfere with these *natural* rights? May not the good people of this state bow their necks to any yoke ecclesiastical they please, of wood, or of iron; or adopt any *name* they please—*Issacher*, if they like it—and *bow down between their burdens?* And will not the "Declaration of Rights"

sustain them in this, *any statute "to the contrary notwithstanding?"* Is it so, that church property cannot be "secured *firmly by deed, and permanently,* to the Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States of America, *according to the true intent and meaning*" of the *Book of Discipline, of the said church?"*

XII.

“JESUS SAID, ‘YE KNOW THAT THE PRINCES OF THE GENTILES EXERCISE DOMINION OVER THEM, AND THEY THAT ARE GREAT EXERCISE AUTHORITY UPON THEM. BUT IT SHALL NOT BE SO AMONG YOU.’”—Matth. 20 : 25, 26.

Powers of the Bishops—Springfield District—Lowell Case—“Checks” upon the Bishops.

THE history of the world has been little else than the history of Ambition. And this remark is scarcely less true of the history of *the Church*, than of the history of nations. With a few bright exceptions, “princes,” *ecclesiastical* as well as political, “have exercised dominion” over *the people*. Kings have claimed this “authority” by “divine right.” But they are not *alone* in urging this claim. There are ministers of the Gospel, who would share it in common with kings. This is their language. “*Our commission is, * * to enforce the moral discipline, established by the one lawgiver, by those spiritual powers vested in us.*”*

This assumption is the corner stone in the system of Episcopal Methodism. We have examined, with some particularity, the complicated machinery of that system. We have noticed how every thing

* Gov. of Meth. Ep. Ch. p. 10. Quoted from the Report of Gen. Con. 1828.

is made to play into the hands of the clergy; how their power is guarded at every point, against all encroachment of the people; and how that power is *secured*, by associating "the *purse*" with "the *sword*."

But our examination has, thus far, been made while the machinery was at rest. Our conceptions must necessarily be imperfect, unless the "wheels" are seen in motion. I call attention, now, to one of the main wheels of the system; or, dropping the figure, and adopting language synonymous with that in the motto of this chapter, we will examine some of the "prerogatives" which are "vested" in the chief of these ecclesiastical "princes," in their practical operation.

The elements of Episcopal Methodism in this country, were all furnished when Dr. Coke had received his appointment, or, as it is commonly called his ordination, from the hands of Mr. Wesley, aided by two or three of his friends, who were all presbyters of the Church of England. Charles Wesley saw that this act was the establishment of a Methodist Episcopal *Church* in America,—constituting an entire separation from the Church of England,—and that Dr. Coke was, *in fact*, a *bishop*. On the modern Episcopal theory, he was not, indeed a bishop; and neither he, or his brethren in office, are acknowledged as bishops by those whose special glory it is, that they can trace their pedigree through a parentage* to which *we* claim no relationship. As that chain of honorable ancestry is thus again broken, our Metho-

* Rev. 17: 1, 5.

dist brethren are driven to the necessity of splitting hairs upon the difference between the terms *bishop*, and *superintendent*. The word translated "bishop" means, literally, an overseer; and what is a *superintendent* but an *overseer*? They contend that *bishops* are of the same *rank* with *elders*, or presbyters, and that the distinction consists in their *offices*. But this looks to us very much like a distinction without a difference; for so long as their bishops are, *in fact*, a grade above their elders, receiving an additional ordination, with even more of ceremony than that of elders, taking precedence of them, and directing them in all their official duties, all this belaboring of *Protestant* Episcopacy seems to us a mere beating of the air, or a wielding of blows which only rebound upon themselves.

We are told that the title of *bishop* was not used in the Methodist Church until about three years after the ordination of Dr. Coke; and when, at length, that title was assumed, it called forth strong opposition, from Mr. Wesley as well as from others. Mr. Wesley's feelings were greatly aroused. Writing to Francis Asbury he says, "*How can you, how dare you be called a bishop? I shudder at the very thought. Men may call me a knave or a fool, a rascal, a scoundrel, and I am content; but they shall never, with my consent, call me bishop. For my sake, for God's sake, for Christ's sake, put an end to this.*"

We can discover no adequate cause for all this warmth. The difference between them was a very unimportant one, merely a matter of order, viz.

whether the presence of a bishop should be insisted on at ordinations whenever it was possible for one to be present? Powers of unspeakably greater practical importance, had been claimed and exercised by Mr. Wesley, and communicated by him, through Dr. Coke, to Mr. Asbury.

But both the *name* and the *thing* were fully established. Says the Book of Discipline, "Mr. Wesley having determined to ordain ministers for America, preferring the episcopal mode of Church government, he solemnly set apart, by the imposition of his hands and prayer, one of them, viz., Thomas Coke, doctor of civil law, late of Oxford, and a presbyter of the Church of England, for the episcopal office; and, having delivered to him letters of episcopal orders, commissioned and directed him to set apart Francis Asbury, then General Assistant of the Methodist Society in America, for the same episcopal office; he, the said Francis Asbury, being ordained deacon and elder. In consequence of which, the said Francis Asbury was solemnly set apart for the said episcopal office by prayer and the imposition of the hands of the said Thomas Coke, other regularly ordained ministers assisting in the sacred ceremony. At which time the General Conference held at Baltimore, did unanimously receive the said Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury as their bishops, being fully satisfied of the validity of their episcopal ordination."*

This extract would lead us to suppose, that the General Conference regarded themselves as carrying

* Book of Dis. pp. 7, 8.

out the wishes and "directions" of Mr. Wesley. Their use of the term *bishops* appears perfectly natural, notwithstanding Mr. Wesley's burning denunciation of it. It is no part of our duty to reconcile this discrepancy. But these bishops have shown themselves to be "*every inch*" bishops, whose weight both the inferior clergy and the people have often been made to feel.

If one were to judge of the powers and prerogatives of these bishops, by the writings of their advocates and apologists, he would conclude, in his simplicity, that a Methodist bishop was almost as destitute of authority as a Congregational pastor, only possessing a more extensive pastoral charge; while the fact is, *there is not another individual in all Protestant Christendom, who is clothed with such ecclesiastical power.*

1. The bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church have the *absolute power* of determining the appointments of the whole travelling ministry. Neither the preachers nor the people may interfere with this right in any way whatever, except by *petition*. To say nothing of the families of these preachers, the bishops have at their "*absolute control*"* a body of men one-half as numerous as the standing army of the United States, whom they may march to any part of the land they please, and whenever they please.

The attempt is made to gloss over the odiousness of this feature of the system, by the assertion, that as the bishop is appointed by the itinerants, and is liable

* Dr. Bond.

to be brought to trial before them, they hold "a check" upon him.

What does this *check* amount to? The bishop was chosen to his office *for the very purpose*, among others, of allotting their destiny. This their constitution prescribes; they themselves admit it. They even *boast* it as the strength and glory of their system. It is the ground of a specific claim of superiority over the Wesleyan Methodist system, which prescribes a different mode of stationing their preachers. How, then, is a charge of arbitrariness in the exercise of this stationary power to be substantiated, when the system itself makes it the *duty* of the bishop to exercise his *own judgment* in this matter, and his own judgment *only*? He may, of course, seek information, and even advice; but the responsibility of the decision rests on his own shoulders. We may safely assert that there is not a charge, except, perhaps, the charge of immorality, which would sooner hurl a bishop from his episcopal throne, than that he did not, *as bishop*, determine the location of the travelling clergy. So far from his being influenced improperly by them, the very reverse must be the truth. If the argument of the apologists of this system is good for any thing, viz., that one of the parties will be rendered subservient to the other, then the "travelling deacons and elders" are the ones to be rendered truckling, trimming time-servers.

We are not left to mere inference on this subject; we are supplied with practical illustrations. It is well known that the Methodist Episcopal Church has been violently agitated by internal dissensions.

I shall not occupy time by multiplying cases; but shall only give enough to illustrate the system. And lest the statements, when clothed in my language, should be regarded as distorted or discolored by improper considerations, I will give the publicly recorded testimony of Rev. J. D. Bridge, of the New England Conference.

“Another strange thing to be recorded in all our periodicals, is the CAUSE of the *Springfield District Controversy*. And what is it? Ecclesiastical domination,—an unwarrantable exercise of episcopal and clerical power. Had almost any other man beside the incumbent now on that district, been appointed supervisor of its interests,” (Mr. B. refers to a presiding elder,) “the painful breaches of confidence and fellowship would not have been realized, at least to such an extent as we now behold them. There are some points to which we should pay special attention. 1. The bishop had *good reason* for apprehending that Mr. Dorchester would *not be acceptable* to a large portion of the brethren of this district, when he first appointed him to be its spiritual head. 2. It is *known* that in the town of Springfield, when the news arrived that Mr. D. was appointed successor of Mr. Joseph A. Merrill, both Abolitionists and Anti-Abolitionists were roused and filled with feelings of regret and disappointment. 3. Mr. D., in those quarterly meeting conferences where Anti-Slavery resolutions were introduced, *did go* to the utmost limit of his power, in his endeavors to crush the subject. He trampled upon the *feelings* and CONSCIENCES

and RIGHTS of his brethren.* 4. This course roused the dormant energies of all the *freemen* in the district, and they determined never again to submit to such *tyranny* and *dictation*. 5. But at the next " (Annual?) " Conference, this presiding elder was FULLY SUSTAINED by the 'prime ministers' of our church, and sent back to stretch the rod of oppression another year over the fair fields and churches of Springfield District! 6. It has been said that Mr. D. resisted this appointment, as far as it is consistent for a man to do, who has vowed 'reverently to obey the godly advice' of his 'seniors in office;' but still, these 'reverend seniors in office' knew better than *the people* on Springfield District, *what kind* of a presiding elder they needed; and so they decided that Mr. D. must *must go back*;—and to make his berth more comfortable, *some of the more unmanageable of the preachers on the district were removed*, that they might not so easily annoy the bishop's vicegerent in the exercise of his official power."

"Here I pause, and ask, *Is this METHODISM?* If it is, good Lord deliver me from it. Such powers as our bishops are now exercising, never ought to be invested in the hands of any man, or body of men; for power depraves the heart, blunts the conscience, darkens the understanding, freezes the philanthropy of the soul, and converts its possessor into an *unfeeling tyrant!* Will an Abolition preacher and people

* We are thus furnished, incidentally, with an illustration of the power which can be brought to bear upon the Quarterly Meeting Conferences, which are posted in the forefront of the boasted guards of the rights of the people.

submit to such dominion as is claimed by bishops and presiding elders? *Never*; unless we mean to be slaves outright."

"But, I may be answered, '*It is Methodism.*' So much the worse; for if this *is* the case, Methodism has deceived us until now, but she can deceive us no longer. The slumbers of bigotry and attachment to church polity are broken; and some, at least, will henceforth stand disenthralled. For one, I am fully determined never to submit to the present exposition of the Methodist economy. When I do, may my right hand forget her cunning. Ecclesiastical thunder falls terrorless on my ears."

"In view of the astonishing powers which have been exercised, is it not *high time* that the fundamental principles of our church government were fully discussed?" (Amen!) "Why should we *fear* to do it? * * * Let our lay brethren come out boldly, and assert their *rights*, and discuss them, proclaim them, and defend them. * * Persecution we shall have, it is true, but what of that? *Martyrdom* were better than *slavery*."*

This is not mere theory; it is actual life, practi-

* Wesleyan Companion, Vol. I. No. 2, pp. 125-128. And yet this same man was induced, by "a more comfortable berth" or by "ecclesiastical thunder," or by something else, "to eat his own words" of truth, and of defiance, and to wear, passively, the chains which his own experience led him to denominate the chains of "*slavery*."

But what led Mr. Bridge so certainly to expect "persecution?" And what was there to be feared, "under the broad shelter of a free civil system?" Even if we do not discover answers to these questions, as we proceed, we should not be in haste to accuse Mr. B. of bearing false witness against a system, with the *spirit* and *operation* of which he at least had an opportunity of becoming acquainted.

cally demonstrating the true nature of the system; and it matters not what may have been the *cause* which produced such developments. The power of the Russian autocrat is the same, whatever may call it into exercise. The power which can thus be called into exercise to "crush" "abolition," is equally efficient when directed against any other object. And we may here see the value of this boasted "check" upon the exercise of episcopal power; for the bishop, it seems, had "good reason" to apprehend dissatisfaction on the part both of the clergy and the people, from the appointment of a particular individual; but that was no efficient "check" upon his "absolute power." These feelings of dissatisfaction arose to remonstrances, and to open opposition, and yet the same individual was reappointed, while those who would not peaceably submit, were transferred to some other field of labor; as refractory slaves are sold to a southern market. This is not to be regarded as an isolated case, or as an unauthorized assumption of power, which will not be tolerated under that system. It is openly avowed to the world, by at least one bishop,* as the final resort for curing troubles in the Methodist Episcopal Church. One almost imagines himself carried back 2500 years, to the time when Nebuchadnezzar, in true eastern despot style, in order to root out the spirit of rebellion, transported those whom he saw fit to foreign lands, and filled their places with others. Or we may see the same principle practiced by the Emperor Nicholas, banishing refractory Poles to Siberia. What

* Wesleyan Companion, Vol. I. No. 2, pp. 61, 62.

should hinder these men from making a Botany Bay of Oregon, or Texas, to curb refractory spirits? And this is that "check" bridle with which the inferior clergy curb the bishop! Our Puritan eyes can discover nothing but the bishop's spurs. But those who have thus submitted their backs to the rider, cannot, after an example of old, crush his foot against the wall. They must "reverently obey," or they will feel the rod of power.

If such are the powers of the bishops over *the clergy*, what shall limit their power over *the people*? We will answer this question, and at the same time illustrate our answer, by giving a case which occurred at Lowell, Mass. The people had applied to the bishop for particular preachers, but were refused. They then requested permission to supply themselves with preachers. This was also refused; and the very preachers against whom they had objected, were actually forced upon them. But the people of Lowell were too near *Bunker Hill* to submit to such dictation without a struggle; and they were too harmonious and powerful to be easily subdued. Persisting in their rebellion, they were publicly declared, through the medium of *Zion's Herald*, to be "without the pale of the Church"—excommunicated. And this was done by the rejected preachers, with the approbation of the presiding elder. The case was "carried up" to the bishop, and he confirmed the decision, and pronounced it Methodism. At length, those churches rescinded certain resolutions which had given offence, and were graciously restored to church privileges "by another stroke of the same"

pen.”* Other cases of a like nature might be added, but it is not necessary.

The above case exhibits the *efficacy* of the “check” upon the bishops, when in the hands of the people. They were made to feel the power of that arm against which they had arisen. This case demonstrates the fact, that both preachers and people may be crushed by the overgrown weight of episcopacy.

Says one, who has been intimately connected with the system, and seen its workings, and felt its effects, “what a tremendous power for five men,” (bishops,—now seven in number) “to exercise over their brethren in the ministry! How dangerous to liberty of conscience! And yet scores of young ministers are annually bowing their necks at the feet of the episcopacy, and taking upon themselves ‘ordination vows’ which oblige them to obey their ‘chief ministers,’ without making any provision for the exercise of a ‘good conscience towards God!’ Dependent as they are, primarily, upon the bishops, and secondarily, on the presiding elders, for their appointments, and consequently for their bread, they are ever tempted to conciliate their spiritual lords by flattery, false respect, and fawning around the sources of power, hoping by these means to obtain a more favorable disposition of their lot.”†

Says another, “The present system of government among the Methodists requires such arts of human policy and chicanery to carry it on, as, in my opinion, are totally inconsistent with the openness of

* Wesleyan Companion, Vol. I. No. 2, pp. 58-60.

† *Ibid.* pp. 63, 64.

gospel simplicity. * * The hope is, that this mode of government will soon be altered.”*

Having bound themselves by their ordination vows to act, “not according to their own will,”† the preachers *must* submit to “the absolute” direction of the bishop, or they are perjured men.

But we must pass on to other powers of the bishops. In the intervals between the conferences, they can receive preachers, independently of all control. Every preacher must have his license signed by a bishop, or his agent. At the trial of members or preachers, if the bishop is present, it is his prerogative to preside, and to decide all questions of law. By his very office, as *general superintendent*, wherever he is, he takes precedence of all others, absorbing, in fact, all the powers of the presiding elders and preachers. Nor is this all. The system provides for a *multiplication*,—so to speak,—of these powers. The presiding elders are simply *agents of the bishops*; to perform in their absence what the bishops would perform, if present. Thus this “tremendous power” becomes almost omnipresent.

In the Annual Conferences, the bishop is the authorized expounder of the Book of Discipline, and decides all questions of law,—subject to an appeal to the next General Conference, which sits once in four years. If any one is oppressed by an incorrect or unjust decision, he is consoled by the reflection that he can appeal to another body, in from one to four years, if he is not in his grave!

* Whitehead's Life of Wesley, Vol. II. pp. 293, 294.

† Book of Dis. pp. 39, 41.

The arbitrary and almost unlimited power which the bishops possess in the Annual Conferences, is exhibited by the remark of Bishop Waugh, in the New England conference in 1842. A certain resolution having been offered, the bishop refused to put it to the conference; and all the reply which he condescended to give, was, "*It is too late in the day for me to give my reasons.*"* Using his episcopal authority as a gag upon free discussion, and coolly leaning upon the dignity of his office, he says to the assembled conference, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther, and here let thy proud waves be stayed." No matter what may be the question,—no matter what may be the feelings and opinions of perhaps two hundred men composing the conference, the bishop may interpose his veto as effectually as the President of the United States. "O," exclaims the apologist of this system, "*they may appeal to the next General Conference, four years hence!*" Such provision is an insult to freemen. It is a burlesque upon all our ideas of free discussion, and would be tolerated nowhere else among Protestants.

Another illustration, of the same sort, was furnished at a late meeting of the Virginia Annual Conference. "Bishops Soule and Andrew were both present, the latter by the invitation of the former. Bishop Soule said, 'he invited Bishop Andrew, in full view of his responsibilities;—that he stood upon the broad platform of the Discipline, and wished to bear, alone, the consequences of his course.' He thus claims for the episcopacy, nay, for any one of

* Wesleyan Companion, Vol. I. No. 2, p. 56.

the bishops, a right to decide on the legality of any act of the General Conference, and to veto it, if, in his judgment, it is not in accordance with the discipline of the church. The Advocate speaks of episcopal claims of this nature, as more to be feared in the Methodist Episcopal Church, than high church prelatical pretensions in the Protestant Episcopal Church.”*

But the duties of the bishops are not confined to the *spiritual* affairs of the church: it is their prerogative “to oversee,” also, its “*temporal business*.” (p. 28.) The nature and extent of these duties are not defined in the Book of Discipline; but from the illustrations of these episcopal powers in respect to *spiritual* matters, we may infer what they are in respect to *temporal*. Some light may be thrown upon this subject by the fact, that the bishops are accountable to the General Conference, and to that body only.

And yet an apologist for this system, speaking by authority, tell us, “*that if there is any oppression in the Methodist Episcopal Church, it is on the bishops*. No officer of any other enlightened body on earth, civil or religious, is so severely restrained; and it is questionable whether any man should expose himself to the liabilities which may result from such peculiar restrictions.”† (!)

We are tempted to ask whether this is an example of what is meant by “*fawning around the sources of power*?”

But what are the “severe restraints,” and “oppres-

* New-York Observer.

† Government of M. E. Church, p. 33.

sion," and "liabilities, which may result from such *peculiar restrictions*?"

"1. The bishops, who have this power, itinerate through the land, and are therefore cut off from local or selfish partialities in making the appointments."

But do not the four thousand men, and the families that are connected with them, who are sent wherever these seven bishops please, "itinerate" also? Where, then, is the *peculiar* "oppression" which they endure?

"2. They have no superior salaries."

Neither are their salaries *inferior*. Where, then, is the *peculiar* "oppression," in this respect? Is it in *the fact*, that their salaries are paid out of "the revenues of the church," *before* the division is made among the inferior clergy, and thus their salaries are *infallibly paid, in full, and punctually*, while the salaries of the latter *may not* be thus paid?

"3. They have no vote in any question to be decided in General or Annual Conference; not even in making rules by which they are themselves to be governed."

Is it common, in other "enlightened bodies," for the presiding officer to vote, except in case of a tie? and especially in matters of personal interest? But if the bishops are denied the privilege of casting their solitary vote, they can, as we have seen, veto or nullify the acts of the whole body; and where fall "the *peculiar restrictions*?" What other "enlightened body on earth," would tolerate a presiding officer, who should refuse to put a decent and orderly resolution, and then add the audacious reply, "*It is*

too late in the day for me to give my reasons." "It is" *not* "questionable" whether the presiding "officer of any other enlightened body on earth," would "expose himself to the liabilities which" would "result from such" an assumption of arbitrary power.

"4. Their conduct, both private and official, is examined at every General Conference, by a committee of one from each Annual Conference."

Is it a "severe restraint" that one's official conduct is examined, once in four years? As to an examination of one's private conduct, *that* is no "*peculiar*" hardship, for an honest man. But there is no examination of a bishop's *private* conduct, as a private individual; it is only in relation to his office as a bishop.

"5. Any person, lay or clerical, can appear before this committee and accuse the bishop, and that too in his *absence, and without giving him any previous notice.*"

Is it common, in "other enlightened bodies," to give an officer notice of an intended impeachment? It cannot be that the bishop is *tried* in his absence, or without sufficient notice.

"6. A bishop may be *accused and expelled*, not only for *immoral*, but for *improper* conduct, a severity used toward no other member of the church; for no one but a bishop, not even a child or a slave, can be expelled for the first improper act of that character."

"Expelled" from what? The language implies that he is expelled from "the church;" but the nature of the case teaches us that it is an "expulsion"

from his office, as bishop. And the question, in that case, is, not how many times he has been guilty ; but, Is there sufficient grounds for his "expulsion ?" Where, then, is the "peculiar severity ?"

"7. If a bishop be expelled, he has no appeal."

To what could he appeal ? For he is already at the top of the ladder, and is tried by the highest ecclesiastical court, and the only court which has a right to try the case.

These seven reasons have been dwelt upon longer than their intrinsic merits would justify, because they are formally exhibited through the agency of the Book Concern, as *the "checks"* which are laid upon the bishops, and which we are desired to regard as offsets to their episcopal powers. We are therefore to regard this as the best apology that can be offered. And this is a portion of that "sequel," which was to "show that the laity have a *due* control of the government of the church." The only remaining portion is, the withholding of contributions, which we shall have occasion to notice in another connection. It was necessary that *something* be said to gloss over principles, which are irreconcilably at war with the instructions of our Saviour, and with the genius of our free institutions. But with what face do they tell us that the clergy hold a "check" upon the bishop in his disposal of their destiny ? Of what avail is it, except to blind unthinking minds, to say that "the clergy elect the bishop," when he is elected for the very purpose of being a perfect Cæsar in this matter ? Of what avail is it, except to deceive, to say "that they can modify or utterly abolish his

power in the General Conference," when he not only holds all their individual destinies in his fist, but can control, and *actually has* controlled them all combined, in Annual Conference,—gagging discussion, and, in effect, even vetoing the acts of the General Conference itself? Who, that is not blinded by prejudice, can fail of seeing that the mantle of John Wesley has fallen upon these bishops? Says Dr. Whitehead, "Mr. Wesley would not submit to any control in admitting preachers into the connection, in appointing them to the different circuits, or in governing the societies. It appears to me, that after the first difference with his brother, who disappointed his intended marriage, he had made up his mind not to suffer either a superior or an equal in these respects. From that time he seemed determined to be, '*Aut Cæsar aut nihil.*'"*

And yet men will arise from the dust and tell us, *they have a sufficient check upon the bishop!* Either their ideas of what constitutes a *sufficient check* are very different from ours, or else they find an *equivalent* in the fact that, the more arbitrary the powers of the bishop are over themselves, the more arbitrary their powers are over the people.

Allow me to illustrate some of the principles upon which these powers are wielded, in the language of a most competent witness.

"During the time that Mr. Wesley, strictly and properly speaking, governed the societies, *his power was absolute.* There were no *rights* or *privileges*, no offices of power or influence, but what were

* "Either Cæsar or nothing." Life of Wesley, Vol. II, p. 167.

created or sanctioned by him ; nor could any person hold them but during his pleasure. The whole system of Methodism, like a great and complicated machine, was formed under his direction, and his will gave motion to all its parts, and turned it this way or that, as he thought proper. His influence, like a mighty torrent, gathered strength in its progress, at every intermediate step between him and the people. Let us suppose, for instance, that on some important matter, that concerned all the societies, or the nation at large, Mr. Wesley gave his orders to his assistants," (presiding elders,) "dispersed through the three kingdoms ;" (over two hundred in number, in this country,) "these would impress them on the other itinerants, in number together," (in this country,) more than four thousand. "With the influence of this body, these orders would pass on to" more than seven thousand "local preachers, in a vast variety of situations ; who, in connection with the itinerants, would impress them on the class leaders and stewards,* and these, by personal application, might, in a short time, enforce them," literally, on *the million*. "In addition to this, we may suppose the itinerants and local preachers, in the course of ten days or a fortnight, publicly address" two millions of people, "when the same matter might be farther urged upon them. Now what could stand against such an influence as this—so combined, diffused, and rapid in its progress—when once put in motion ?

* I have no means of stating the number of these ; but if the whole membership comprises only 1,000,000, and if the classes average 10 individuals, the number of class leaders would be 100,000.

If directed against any individuals in the societies, whatever might be their character or influence, their opposition could only be like the pebbles before a torrent rolling down the side of a mountain; it would be swept away without being perceived.* I do not say that Mr. Wesley ever exercised his authority on as extensive a scale as is here represented; all I mean to show the reader is, that had any occasion of sufficient importance required it, he had *the power* to do so; and that, in the Methodist economy, the influence of the ruling preachers operates this way, and *has actually been exerted*, since the death of Mr. Wesley, on a larger scale than here mentioned.†

This, let it be noticed, is the language of Mr. Wesley's chosen biographer. It is, manifestly, the language of an honest man, who feels the responsibility of his station. The principles here unfolded, carry to every unprejudiced mind the convictions of self-evident truth. There is nothing that looks like passion or exaggeration. What a power is this to be wielded by seven men—a power to rouse the slumbering elements of this mighty mass, and then “to ride upon the tempest and direct the storm.” No marvel that they *feel* their power, seated upon their episcopal thrones, like Jupiter on Olympus hurling his thunderbolts among the gods. No marvel that

* Is this the way that we are to account for certain facts which would, otherwise, be *unaccountable*? Rev. Dr. Bascom, for example—not to mention names of lesser note—has published to the world a clear and manly “Declaration” of *ecclesiastical independence*; but where do we now behold him? His own language, which we have already quoted, furnishes the answer to that question.

† Whitehead's *Life of Wesley*, Vol. II. pp. 292, 293.

we hear the scornful reply, "*It is too late in the day for me to give my reasons.*" Above all, what an influence is this to be possessed and wielded in a republic; when we consider "the central organs of information," with perhaps a dozen steam-presses, and hundreds of thousands of capital to raise the steam, and "the archly constructed machinery, set in motion by the great central wheel, the General Conference, and communicating with tens of thousands of subordinate wheels, which are connected with every society and class throughout the Union."

XIII.

“FOR I ALSO AM A MAN SET UNDER AUTHORITY, HAVING UNDER ME SOLDIERS; AND I SAY UNTO ONE, GO, AND HE GOETH; AND TO ANOTHER, COME, AND HE COMETH; AND TO MY SERVANT, DO THIS, AND HE DOETH IT.”—Luke 7: 8.

“Principle of Compensation: its application to the subordinate Clergy,” to Lay Officers. to the People—Support of the Clergy—The Clergy “made” by the People—The Starvation Argument.

THIS language of the centurion has a peculiar appropriateness in illustrating the system of Episcopal Methodism. That system contains the principle which, in the natural world, is called “*the principle of compensation.*” That is, wherever privations or disadvantages are experienced, there is, in some way, *a compensation.* For example,—the elephant has a very short neck—so short that, without some other contrivance, he must absolutely perish, for he would be unable to obtain either food or drink,—and that contrivance is his trunk. The camel was created for the desert; and he is provided with a peculiar stomach, like a natural water tank.

We find something similar to this in the system of Episcopal Methodism. Those who are “set under” the absolute “authority” of others, are compensated, in a measure at least, either by as absolute authority over those still lower in the scale, or in

some other way. At the ordination of an elder, the bishop asks the candidate, "Will you reverently obey your chief ministers, unto whom is committed the charge and government over you: following with a glad mind and will their godly admonitions, submitting yourselves to their godly judgments?" Ans. "I will so do, God being my helper." This has been already sufficiently explained, in previous chapters, by quotations from the Book of Discipline.

Now, we would ask, what more could be promised by a candidate on his admission to the order of Jesuits? And this is not a dead letter upon the statute book of Methodism. Every year the entire "standing army" of the itinerant clergy, repair to Head Quarters, and await their destiny; and every two years at farthest, all receive marching orders. And wherever they are, they are liable to have their labors, and their stations changed, by their "chief minister," at any moment.

But those who are thus "under authority," enjoy an equivalent; they "have soldiers under" them. They hold, essentially, in as arbitrary a manner, the ecclesiastical destiny of every private member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, within the limits of their respective locations. Is an individual proposed for admission to the Church? The preacher in charge holds the keys; for although the examination is in the presence of the society, yet, according to the system, no voice may be uttered upon the question of admission, except the preacher's. Is a member to be disciplined? The preacher, or one whom he appoints, must commence the process. Is

the accused brought to trial? The preacher decides whether the trial shall be before the whole society, or a committee. And when they, like a jury, bring in a verdict, he, with more than the power of a civil judge, can, by delay, nullify their decision, or refer the case, for a new trial, to another tribunal, a majority of whose members may be men of his own appointment, or at least, in whose appointment the accused has not had the least agency.

To aid him in his pastoral supervision, the preacher in charge can appoint a staff of class leaders, whom he can change at pleasure. To secure a full and prompt collection of his quarterage, he can nominate a corps of stewards, whose accounts he can "overlook." He may appoint persons to receive the quarterly collections of the classes. If money is raised to build churches in his circuit, he may appoint a committee to manage it. He is empowered to license as exhorters in the church, such persons as he may judge proper,—thus collecting materials, and putting them in a course of training, from which his own order, the itinerant clergy, may be reinforced,—the only limit to his discretion being the class leaders whom he has himself appointed, or the class over which one of his servants presides. He is empowered "to enforce vigorously, but calmly, all the rules of the society." And finally, as one of the itinerant clergy, he may have a voice in enacting the laws, and administering the government of that vast connection, and thus may make his influence felt to the extremities of the land. Truly, though he is himself "under authority," yet he can

say, *with equal authority*, “to one, Go, and he goeth; to another, Come, and he cometh; and to his servant, Do this, and he doeth it.” And, to place him, firmly, in the possession of his dominions, the use of the church edifice is secured to him, and protected by the strong arm of the law. When, therefore, the preacher is sent by the bishop, under the authority of the General Conference, “he runs not as uncertainly;”—he has his castle, in which he may entrench himself, where, surrounded by a body guard of his own selection, and backed up by the entire system, no opposition, however combined, can ever reach him.

Similar to this is the “authority” of the class leaders and stewards. The class leaders hold their office, indeed, at the mere will of their superior, the preacher in charge; but they are aid-de-camps in this standing army, and are as independent of the people, as are the preachers themselves. As it respects the stewards, their accounts must be kept open to the inspection of the preacher, but they, in like manner, are not responsible to the people.

The question will very naturally arise, How does “the principle of compensation” apply to the people?

It applies, *not positively*, but *negatively*;—not in the *conferring of privileges*; but in the *removal of responsibilities*. While the people are *stripped utterly*, of their *rights*, they are relieved from all burdens that come in the shape of responsibilities. They have no responsibility in the admission and discipline of church members; none in the choice and

settlement and admission of pastors ; none in discussing and deciding questions of faith and practice. If they are forbidden, on pain of excommunication, to utter a word which might produce in their societies dissatisfaction with Methodist doctrines and discipline, the clergy have kindly relieved them from all responsibility in respect to those subjects, by taking all such questions into their own hands. The rule by which every thing is to be thought, said, or done, is recorded in the book ; and even then the people are not left with the trouble of taking care of themselves, but are kindly placed in leading-strings, with a " leader " to guide them. There is but one solitary thought to excite apprehension, viz., However men may yield themselves to the guidance and control of others, the pen of Inspiration has recorded, "*that every man must give account of himself unto God.*" The only thing wanting is, that the clergy carry their principle *through, to the final judgment*, of "*assuming the responsibility.*"

But there is another application of " the principle of compensation." Great efforts have been made, in certain quarters, to excite popular odium against the ministers of other denominations, by denouncing them as "*salaried hirelings,*" &c. &c.—while the Methodist itinerants have been lauded in the contrast, as "*pilgrims,*" "*self-denying men, with one hundred dollars a year.*"

Now it must be admitted, that one hundred dollars a year for the public services of a man who is *competent* for such service, ought to satisfy even the man who rendered public thanks " that he had been

a Methodist so many years, and it never had cost him but a shilling ;” although such public trumpeting of one’s own self-denial savors a little of the character of those, whom our Saviour has designated by no very enviable appellation. But let us examine into the fairness of the representations which are made in language and in manner, that are adapted, and apparently *designed* to produce the impression, that the support which a Methodist preacher receives, is but one hundred dollars a year.

1. The allowance of the travelling preachers shall be one hundred dollars a year, and their travelling expenses. 2. If they are married, they shall be allowed an *additional* hundred dollars. 3. For every child under seven years of age they shall be allowed sixteen dollars a year, and for every child between the ages of seven and fourteen years they shall be allowed twenty-four dollars. 4. It shall be the duty of the stewards of each station to provide a house for the preacher, rent free, “and furnish it with at least heavy furniture ;” and a committee, appointed by the Quarterly Conference, or otherwise, shall make an estimate of the necessary expenses of the table, and for fuel, and provide accordingly. (Book of Discipline, pp. 173, 179, 180.)

Really, there is nothing so very forbidding in this aspect of the matter ;—house rent, with main articles of furniture ; table expenses, fuel, travelling expenses ; and for the preacher, wife and three children under seven years of age, two hundred and forty-eight dollars a year. It is not, indeed, remarkably inviting, in a pecuniary point of view ;

still, there are few ministers, of other denominations, who would discourage a proposal to exchange their "salaries" for *such* "self-denial." But there is an item or two yet to be noticed.

1. "The allowance of superannuated preachers shall be one hundred dollars, and their travelling expenses;" a pension for life. 2. "The wives and widows of superannuated, and worn-out preachers shall be one hundred dollars,"—another pension for life. 3. The orphan children of the preachers, shall receive the same sum annually, as if their fathers were living, and in active service; and if they are left destitute of the means of support, the Annual Conference shall provide the necessary means, until they are fourteen years of age, and those preachers whose wives are dead, shall be allowed a sum sufficient to pay the board of their children, till fourteen years of age. (pp. 173, 174.)

Is there another system that aims to provide for its ministry like this? "Pilgrims," indeed, and walking by faith; but there is a "double sense" to the term, in this connection. It is a faith which cheers but few ministers of other denominations in the dying hour; that even such provision is made, by their system, for those whom they are about to leave widows and orphans. Certainly, there is, in this feature of the system, something *substantial* in "the principle of compensation;" especially, when we take into the account the fact, that there has been, in most cases, no long and expensive course of training, consuming, perhaps, the student's patrimony, if he has any, and some ten years of the flower of his

life ; while on the contrary, through all this preparatory course, such as it is, he may have been pursuing some profitable employment.

There are two respects, however, in which it is *claimed* that the "principle of compensation" preponderates in favor of the people. As so many changes are rung upon these two strings, it is necessary to notice them with some degree of particularity. They are thus introduced, by a set defender of the system.

"What check have the people on this machinery?"

1. "The power of pecuniary supplies. 2. The people themselves make all their preachers."*

We will notice the latter point first. Our author sums up his argument on this point thus: "A candidate for license must, then, first, be *recommended* by a body of laymen; second, this recommendation must be *accepted* by another body of laymen; third, his license must be *annually renewed* by laymen; fourth, if he wishes for *ordination*, it must be voted by laymen; fifth, if he wishes admission to the *Conference*, he must be recommended by laymen."

This certainly looks well *on paper*,—*as well as a western town plot*. The main objection is, IT IS UTTERLY DECEPTIVE. Who compose this "first" "body of laymen?" Either the "class" to which the "candidate" belongs, or *the class leaders*, every one of whom is appointed, and holds his appointment, by the sole will of the preacher. Is this the trick of a juggler,—putting in the word *people*,

* Government of M. E. Church, pp. 29, 30.

and then substituting another, to deceive the credulous multitude? And what is the "second body of laymen?" The quarterly meeting Conference, *not an individual of whom* is a member by the free action of the people; while the great majority are members by the sole action of the preacher in charge, and the remainder are members by the joint action of the preacher and of those whom he clothes with power. Every individual belonging to that body, may be appointed to it, as was shown in chapter tenth, without the least agency of the people *in any shape whatever*. And who are the "laymen" by whom the said "license" must be renewed? This same Quarterly Conference. Who are the "laymen" upon whose vote the candidate is dependent for ordination? The Quarterly Conference. Who are the "laymen" whose recommendation is indispensable to his admission to the (Annual) Conference? This same Quarterly Conference!*

Was there ever such an imposition upon the confidence of the community? *But all this is far from "making a preacher."* It only prepares the way for a candidate to be "received on trial;" and this "is entirely different from admitting a preacher into full connection," (p. 41;) so that after all the

* One is reminded of a certain comedian, who, wishing to take passage in a public conveyance, and becoming weary of waiting for the full complement of passengers, slipped out of the coach, unobserved by the driver, and soon re-appeared, with so different a voice and countenance, that the driver supposed he had another passenger. This was repeated till the driver, supposing he had his full number, drove on, with an almost empty coach.

“making of preachers,” in the proper sense of that term, is exclusively the business of the clergy.

The whole of the claim which we are considering is this. Certain individuals who have been selected by the clergy, without any agency of the people, to fill particular offices, may have a voice, in connection with the clergy, in recommending individuals *for trial, as candidates* for admission into the ministry; while the question of their reception is to be decided by the ministry alone. What are such formal, pompous, ostentatious displays of “lay offices,” and of “lay officers,” but an exposure of their own nakedness? Let it be *for ever remembered*, that *not one* of these “laymen” is clothed with a *particle* of power, *by the free action of the people*. They are the mere tools of the clergy,—appointed, either directly or indirectly, by the clergy; controlled by the clergy, and accountable to the clergy.

The attempt is made to exhibit Congregationalism in the same odious light. It is true that in licensing and ordaining ministers “*without charge*,” Congregationalists leave those matters, by consent, with the ministry. But men thus licensed and ordained, are clothed with *no authority* over the churches. They are simply accredited as preachers of the word, and administrators of Christian ordinances, and they form no connection with any people, without the *free action* of that people.

The only remaining ground on which it is claimed that the people, under the Methodist system, have a “check” on its “machinery,” is “the power of pecuniary supplies.”

It comes, then, to this:—the clergy, when once seated in their clerical chairs, can be reached, by the people, only through their pockets, or their stomachs! Says Dr. Bond, “Whenever their flocks shall withdraw their support, the preachers will be under the necessity of abandoning their pastoral relation, and of betaking themselves to some secular occupation.” Says Bishop Emory, “Our system places us, in fact, not only from year to year, and from quarter to quarter, but from week to week, within the reach of a controlling check, on the part of the people, and which is considered both by them and by us, * * as fully equivalent to the relinquishment on their part of a direct representation in our general conferences.*

Here we have “the principle of compensation,”—the relinquishment, on the part of the people, of the manly, *natural right of self-government*, and even of a *representation* in the government, for the “lynch law” right of “starving out” their “pastors;” and on the part of the clergy, there is *the right to rule*, while they rule at all, without control, but at the hazard of starvation. There is no recognition of the right of an honorable adjustment of difficulties, or of an honorable separation of the parties; all that the people can do, if dissatisfied with their preacher, is, to sit down, in dogged obstinacy, with their hands over their pockets, and “starve him out.” Starving, themselves, for lack of *spiritual* food, they bear it as they may, while watching the operation of *natural* hunger upon the person and the family of their spiritual shepherd; like the two men on a

* Government of M. E. Church, pp. 11, 30.

wager, who sat with their limbs in a kettle of heating water, to see which could endure it the longest. It would add to the interest of the picture, if the *families* of the preachers were exhibited, the wives, and mothers, and children,—as we watch the progress of famine during this very interesting process. And this, let it be remembered, *is the sum total* of the rights of freemen in Christ Jesus, the honorable, dignified, Christian right of “starving out” their pastors! “Tell it not in Gath! publish it not in the streets of Askelon, lest the” infidel “triumph!”

But let us look at the *morality* of this argument. According to the system which the people have solemnly subscribed, the preacher who is sent by the bishop, is honestly entitled to a support for himself and family; and the people to whom he ministers, have pledged themselves, unequivocally, by becoming connected with the system, to bear their just proportion of the burden,—if it be a burden. A laborer has entered a particular field, under the direction of his superior, whom he has sworn to obey, and whom the people have, as solemnly, covenanted to receive. They all alike claim the itinerancy as the cornerstone of the system; and in order to this, the “stationing power” is indispensable. But here comes an argument by which a man becomes judge and executioner in his own case; just the argument for the prejudiced, the unreasonable, and the avaricious. It says to every such man, in just so many words, “*You may now violate with impunity your specific pledges, your religious system, and your conscience.*”

Instructive and profitable must be the labors of the

preacher to those who are acting towards him the part of knaves ! Very favorable to growth in grace must that system be, whose advocates proclaim to every dishonest man, beforehand, that this is his *privilege* ! And it is one of the most weighty and grievous charges against Congregationalism, that it expects its members to pay their honest debts, if they are able ; while the *chief privilege* that Methodism claims for the people, as an inducement to join that system, is, *that they can defraud their minister* ! Mormonism boasts the right to "milk the Gentiles ;" Methodism, alone, boasts the *peculiar* privilege of "starving out" its own ministers !

But this is not all. According to the Book of Discipline, and according to the very nature of a Christian profession, every individual, on his admission to the Methodist Church, pledges himself, before God, "to observe the rules of the church." (p. 77.) Professing, then, as they do, that this is a system approved of God ; and uniting with a church, which is organized on peculiar and specific principles, they are bound by the most solemn vows to abide by and to sustain the system while they remain connected with it. Those who resort to this starvation argument are, before God and man, *covenant breakers*. They violate what they professedly regard as the law of Christ. It is a willful, open, professed violation of a most solemn religious covenant with God and with man.*

* We cannot withhold another quotation from the "Review of Bishop Onderdonk's Address, by Observer."

"But of all the inconsistencies in the document before us, and

But the question will still return, "Is it true, after all, that there is in the hands of the people, any efficient 'power of control' over the clergy?" For the system *aims* to provide relief during these "years of famine." How was it, that those preachers whom the bishop placed over those rebellious societies in Lowell, against the earnest protestations of those societies, were able to retain their stations? How was it that those comparatively wealthy societies, who offered to sustain their preachers, provided they could have those of their own choice, were at length wearied out, and induced or compelled to submit to the dictation of the bishop? How happened these and many other such like things, *if the people do actually possess* "a check on this machinery?" Facts,—and "facts are stubborn things,"—show us the actual value of this starvation argument; they show that it is *utterly fallacious*. The clergy have means of support of which the people do not seem to be aware. Every man who takes a Methodist newspaper, or who buys a Methodist hymn book, or who contributes in any way to the general funds of that church, forges a link in the chain by which the people are bound to the car of an irresponsible hierarchy.

these are not a few, the greatest is that of allowing resistance to such a government which, the Bishop gives us to understand, may at times be justifiable. What—*right* to resist men to whom all 'power and prerogative come directly from Heaven?'—*right* to 'protest' against the doings of such rulers! Shockingly impious! With perfect consistency have the Catholic priests above quoted, told us that such conduct 'must be *stigmatized as a rebellion* against the powers established by God himself.' "

But this starvation argument shows us to what extremities those who use it are driven:—*that there is nothing manly, or worthy of freemen left unto them, within the compass of their system,—nothing, absolutely,* but this mean, dishonest, lynch-law argument of starvation! And all this in the face of their covenant with God and with his church, to submit to a system which gives to the bishop *the right*, and imposes on him the *duty* of stationing the preachers according to his own judgment; which binds the preachers by their ordination vows to go, and to *abide*, where their chief ministers may direct, and which binds the people to receive and support him.

I have thus accomplished my purpose, first, of exhibiting the chief principles of the system which we have received as a legacy from our fathers. You have been invited to lift up your eyes upon this inheritance, and behold the operation of these principles. Above all, you have been pointed to the word of God, where these principles are recorded under the broad seal of heaven.

Next, we have examined a system which is proposed as a substitute; a system the sum total of whose claim is, *experience*. “*The foolishness of men*” a substitute for “*the wisdom of God!*”

The *one* system you behold blessing the world with civil and religious liberty; *guaranteeing to every man his rights as a man and a Christian*.

The *other* you see, in the contrast,—not indeed favored by circumstances for developing its full re-

sults in the field of politics, but exhibiting its *spirit* and its *practice* in “*vesting*” all ecclesiastical power in the clergy.

The *one* system is based upon the recognized rights of the people; its fundamental principle is, *all power, ecclesiastical as well as civil, is inherent, and must for ever remain inherent, in the people.*

The banner of the *other* is unfurled to the breeze, with this characteristic inscription: “PARDON US IF WE KNOW NO SUCH RIGHTS; IF WE COMPREHEND NO SUCH PRIVILEGES.”

This is the heaven-wide difference between the two systems. How astonishing the prejudice, *the perversity*, that can abjure, and spurn the principles of liberty, and then gather around the altar that is erected upon the ruins of their rights, and burn incense, and sing pæans to a system which “vests” all power in a self-constituted, irresponsible, absolute hierarchy. For years the table of the General Conference had groaned with petitions—*yes, PETITIONS, on such a subject*, and in a land of *freemen*—PETITIONS, *that the PEOPLE might be ALLOWED the PRIVILEGE and the RIGHT of REPRESENTATION IN THE MANAGEMENT OF ECCLESIASTICAL AFFAIRS!* Let it be repeated, till it is burnt and branded upon the memory, that the final, and only, and united reply of their self-constituted masters was, “PARDON US IF WE KNOW NO SUCH RIGHTS; IF WE COMPREHEND NO SUCH PRIVILEGES.” Men who will sit tamely and submissively down, beneath such arrogant, insolent assumptions of arbitrary power, are fitting, if not already fitted, to be—

WHAT? And it is for such a system as this, that we are urged to exchange the free principles, and the noble institutions which we have inherited from our fathers.

But the appeal comes to us not merely as *men* : it comes to us as *accountable* men. We *may* not renounce a system which is derived, *professedly*, and *only*, from *the Scriptures*, for a system which *professes* to be derived from "*experience*," (Book of Dis., p. 5,) and which is *directly subversive*, on these *points*, of the principles and *authority of the Bible*.

But we are asked, "How is it, then, that God has so greatly blessed that system."

He has NOT blessed the SYSTEM. He has, indeed, blessed the labors of many good men, who in their *ignorance* or *inconsistency*, have labored in his cause, in connection with that system; just as he blesses, and will bless, the imperfect services of imperfect men *every where*, when performed in his name; for he can cause even the "*wrath* of man" to praise him. There is an adaptation, in that system, to render it efficient, *powerfully efficient*, for a season; just as the arbitrary power of one man rendered France, for a season, almost superior to all the rest of Europe. It was *combined, concentrated* POWER which enabled Napoleon to grasp a continent in his fist, and shake it to its centre, till almost every throne tottered to its fall. But, from the very nature of the case, there is a *limit* to such power. From the very nature of the case, such a system contains within itself the elements of dissolution. On similar principles has the system of Episcopal Methodism flourished; and as

truly as there are laws in the physical and the moral world, so surely must that system be changed, or it must crumble and fall, both by decay, and by the action of truth: *for it violates fundamental laws both of nature and of Revelation.* There are indications that the system has arrived nearly at the top of the wheel. The last Annual Report of the Connection shows a diminution, during the last year, of about thirty-five thousand members.* In almost every part of that system, the minds of the people are heaving with dissatisfaction with its principles and its operation. When questions arise, in respect to which they wish to act, they find that they are circumscribed by walls, and held back by chains. They are like the fabled giants incarcerated beneath the deep foundations of Etna, who could never hope to reach and control the counsels of the gods that were enthroned upon its summit, except as their giant energies could upheave and overturn the mountain mass that crushed them, and thus overwhelm those tyrants in the ruins. Thus the people in the Methodist Episcopal Church find that there is a system and a hierarchy above them and beyond their reach, except by an absolute revolution. Such a revolution has commenced; and the motions of the ocean tide are not more certain or irresistible; for it is rolling onward with the omnipotent energies of Truth.

* The Annual Reports of Eastern *Congregational* churches showed a diminution, in many places; but it was probably not greater than the Western emigration. But *emigration* will not account for the *Methodist* decrease, because *their* reports include the entire country.

Shall we, then, leave "the old paths," to enter those which must inevitably be retraced? Shall we hasten the dawning of "the day of the Lord," by adopting principles which are inconsistent with its clear and "perfect" light?

In these matters, every soul of us is intrusted with individual responsibilities to God and to man. These are not questions of expediency, or of party, or of sect. *Principles are involved which lie at the very foundation of our rights as men, and of our duty as Christians.*

XIV.

“BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS.”—Matt. 5 : 9.

“Peace” Principles—Methodist Warfare—Their Weapons—“A Dialogue”—
Confession of Faith—Calvin—Wesley—Who are Peacemakers?—How to make
Peace.

AND yet, says our Saviour, “I came not to send peace on the earth, but a sword.” These two passages, however, are perfectly consistent with each other. In the latter passage, it is simply declared what would be the result of the Saviour’s coming and of his doctrines,—that the perversity of man would be aroused against his cause, and against those who espoused it. None, therefore, will forfeit the *blessedness* of the *peacemaker*, who are only the occasion of *unjust opposition*. None should be deterred from exhibiting and maintaining the truth, even though it excite the prejudice of “unreasonable men.” However fiercely the storm may rage, *the defenders of the truth* are *not* to be *denounced as disturbers of the peace*.

What is peace? There is *quiet* in the Catholic Church; but that is not *peace*; it is *death, spiritual death*. The first action of medicine upon a person who is laboring under the effects of disease, may be to excite great commotion in the system. So, in the case of *moral* diseases; the application of moral

remedies may, at first, produce great excitement. But the physician is no more to be denounced in the one case than in the other ; while in the case of moral remedies, if there is excitement and disturbance, it is all owing to the perversity of the patient. The only questions, in such cases, are,—has the truth been exhibited ; and has it been exhibited *appropriately*, in respect to time, and manner, and circumstances ? In respect to the *time*, when should the great principles, which have been our theme, be discussed, if not *now* ? If they are to be discussed *at all*, they have been already too long neglected. We may safely assert that nothing is to be gained by delay. When important principles of God's word are at stake, we are not permitted to be silent.

In the course of this work, allusion has been made to the notorious fact, that our doctrinal principles are frequently and *egregiously misrepresented*. This is the only remaining topic which it is proposed at present to notice. And *pre-eminently* will he be a *peacemaker*, who shall aid in plucking up these roots of bitterness. I allude to the manner in which our views of the doctrines of *Election*,—of the *Divine Purposes*,—of the *Atonement*,—of the *Free Agency of Man*, &c., are represented by Methodists, and in Methodist publications. They represent us,—or rather *misrepresent* us,—as “believing in the damnation of innocent infants ;” that “God is the author of sin,” and “the destroyer of the greater part of mankind without mercy ;” that “God compels men to sin,” and then “punishes them for acts which they are compelled to perform ;” “that

wicked men, liars, murderers," and even the devil himself, act like machines, merely as God acts upon them, &c. *All know* that this is the way in which our doctrines are *misrepresented*, from the pulpit and the press, and in private intercourse, and that this is done in every variety of mode and occasion. The authors of this injustice know that we reject all such views of these subjects; and yet these misrepresentations are among the common burdens of the pulpit, and they are scattered broad-cast by steam over the length and breadth of the land. It is one of the main objects of the Methodist Tract Society, and of its agents, and supporters, to do this very thing. And how is it done? Not by a fair and connected exhibition of our opinions, as we hold them; but by means of scraps, and detached sentences, and mangled expressions, and by leaving out parts of sentences; and thus making us *assert* the very things which we are at the time *denying*. We are reminded, often, of the man who asserted that the Bible taught that it was a duty to commit suicide. He proved his assertion thus. We read of one who "*put his household in order and hanged himself*;" and we read in another place, "*Go and do thou likewise*." This is precisely the course which is pursued by many, who wish to excite popular odium against certain doctrines, and against those who hold them.

Here is a tract "published for the Tract Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, at the Conference Office, 200 Mulberry-street;" and entitled, "A Dialogue between a Predestinarian and his Friend." It is the object of the writer, to exhibit the doctrine

of "predestination," as a system of mere *fatality*;— that it was God's purpose to produce sin, by compelling men, through his almighty power, to commit it, and then to punish them for it, without any possibility of escape. To accomplish his object, the author introduces the "Assembly's Catechism," the writings of Calvin, Twiss, and others.

I have not access, at present, to the works of all the authors referred to, but I know that this tract makes a most unfair exhibition of their views. There is an entire overlooking of all their qualifying and explanatory remarks, and of their definitions of terms and phrases. There is an entire overlooking of their *philosophy*, which had been the philosophy of the church for a thousand years, and of the civilized world for a much longer period. In short, *there is the most utter injustice towards these men.*

I will introduce, by way of illustration, a portion of the tract; together with the pretended corresponding quotations from the "Confession of Faith," and from Calvin, as far as our limits will permit. The tract commences thus.

"*Friend.* Sir, I have heard that you make God the author of all sin, and the destroyer of the greater part of mankind without mercy."

"*Predestinarian.* I deny it; I only say 'God did from all eternity unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass.' (Assembly's Catechism,* chap. 3.)"

"I ONLY say," writes our author; but what is

* A mistake of the author of the tract. He should have said Confession of Faith.

the *fact*? What is the language *actually used*, from which the author quotes, and which he asserts to be *all* that is said? "God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass; YET SO AS 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." (Confession of Faith, chap. III. Sec. I.)

This is the first sentence of the tract. The author gives us a *part* of a paragraph, and *asserts* that he has given us the *whole*; while he omits the explanatory clause, which is the key to the whole; and in this way makes the book to assert the very thing which it explicitly denies. And as if this were not enough, he writes, "I ONLY SAY!"

The tract then proceeds:

"F. Do you make no exception?"

"P. No, surely; for 'nothing is more absurd than to think any thing at all is done but by the ordination of God.' (Calvin's Institutes, Book I. chap. 16, sect. 8.)"

The subject of the chapter here referred to, is, "*God's preservation and support of the world BY HIS POWER, and his government of every part of it BY HIS PROVIDENCE.*" In section 8, the one referred to, Calvin treats of the "doctrine" of "*providence*," and thus writes.

"Those who wish to bring odium on this doctrine, calumniate it as the same with the opinion of

the Stoics concerning fate, with which Augustine also was formerly reproached. * * * But that dogma is falsely and maliciously charged upon us. For we do not, with the Stoics, imagine a necessity arising from a perpetual concatenation and intricate series of causes, contained in nature; but we make God the Arbiter and Governor of all things, who, in his wisdom, has, from the remotest eternity, decreed what he would do, and now, by his power, executes what he has decreed." He then reproves the use of the heathen words "*fortune* and chance;" and quotes from Augustine, who says, "I repent of having mentioned *fortune* in this manner, (in my treatises against the Academics,)" "since I see that men are habituated to a very sinful custom: when they ought to say, 'This was the will of God,' they say, 'This was the will of Fortune.'" "Finally," (Calvin proceeds) "he (Augustine) every where maintains, that if any thing be left to fortune, the world revolves at random. And though he elsewhere decides, that all things are conducted, PARTLY BY THE FREE WILL OF MAN, AND PARTLY BY THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD, yet he just after shows that men are subject to it and governed by it; assuming as a principle *that nothing could be more absurd, than for any thing to happen independently of the ordination of God*; BECAUSE IT WOULD HAPPEN AT RANDOM. By this reasoning, he excludes also any contingency dependent on the human will. * * * But in what sense *permission* ought to be understood, whenever it is mentioned by him, will appear from one passage; where he proves that the will of God is the supreme and first cause

of all things, because nothing happens but by his command or permission. He certainly does not suppose God to remain an idle spectator," &c.

It thus appears that it is Calvin's specific object in this passage, to *deny* and *refute* this very doctrine of *fate* with which he is "falsely and maliciously" "reproached" in the tract before us. It is of no avail for the objector to say that Calvin supposed the same "necessity" to exist in the "*power*" of *God*, that the fatalists attributed to "*nature*;" for Calvin heads the chapter with the *distinction* between that "*power*" which *created*, and still "*supports*" the world; and the "*providence*" by which all things are *governed*. And not only so, he recognizes, in this very passage, the "FREE WILL OF MAN," (not, indeed, in the Arminian sense,) *which distinguishes accountable agents from machines*.

- Whatever truth or error Calvin may teach elsewhere, does not concern our present purpose, which is, to inquire into the *fairness* which is exhibited by the author and publishers of this tract.

Question third.

"F. Do you extend this to the actions of men?"

"P. Without doubt. Every action and motion of every creature is governed by the hidden counsel of God, that nothing can come to pass but what was ordained by him. (Calvin's Institutes, Book I, chap. 16, sect. 3.)"

The *subject* which is here treated, has been already given, above. In the section here referred to, we read, "He (God) is accounted omnipotent, not because he is able to act, yet sits down in idleness, or

continues by a general instinct the order of nature originally appointed by him ; but because he governs heaven and earth *by his providence*, and regulates all things in such a manner that nothing happens but according to his counsel. For when it is said in the Psalms, that he does whatsoever he pleases,* it denotes his certain and deliberate will. * * The faithful should * * encourage themselves in adversity with this consolation, that they suffer no affliction, but by the ordination and command of God, because they are under his hand. * * * And they not only defraud God of his glory, but themselves of a very useful doctrine, who confine the Divine providence within such narrow bounds," ("the influence and course of nature,") "as though he permitted all things to proceed in an uncontrolled course, according to a perpetual law of nature ; for nothing would exceed the misery of man, if he were exposed to all the motions of the heaven, air, earth, and waters. Besides, this notion would shamefully diminish the singular goodness of God towards every individual. * * * They may securely repose in his protection, to whose will are subject all those evils which can be feared from any quarter ; by whose power Satan is restrained, with all his furies, and all his machinations ; on whose will depends all that is inimical to our safety ; nor is there any thing else by which those immoderate and superstitious fears, which we frequently feel on the sight of dangers, can be corrected or appeased. We are superstitiously timid, I say, if, whenever creatures menace or terrify us, we

* Psalms 115 : 3.

are frightened, as though they had of themselves the power to hurt us, or could fortuitously injure us; or as if against their injuries God were unable to afford us sufficient aid. * * When infidels transfer the government of the world from God to the stars, pretending that their happiness or misery depends on the decrees and presages of the stars, and not on the will of God, the consequence is, that their fear is withdrawn from him whom they ought to regard, and is placed on stars and comets. Whoever, then, desires to avoid this infidelity, let him constantly remember, that in the creatures there is no erratic power, or action, or motion; but that they are so governed by the secret counsel of God, that nothing can happen but what is subject to his knowledge, and decreed by his will."

These are rather long quotations from Calvin; but we feel a strong desire to introduce the venerable gentleman to our Methodist brethren in his own proper person, and to permit him to say a few words, in his own proper language; and we can imagine that we hear the half-suppressed exclamation: "*Why, he is a man, after all!*" If we could bring him upon "the stand," at a "camp-meeting," without mentioning his name, and could persuade him to make a slight alteration in his phraseology—just to leave out those words "decrees" "and decreed"—the above paragraph would be greeted with an "Amen!" like "the sound of many waters." But suppose he should proceed thus, as he actually does write in another place: "Adam, therefore, could have stood if he would, since he fell merely by his own

will; * * * his choice of good and evil was free." "He was the voluntary procurer of his own destruction."* Calvin might be mistaken for Wesley himself! But we will proceed with the tract.

"F. What then becomes of the wills of men?"

"P. The wills of men are so governed by the irresistible will of God, that they are carried on straight to the mark which he has foreordained. (Calvin's Institutes, Book I. chap. 15, sect. 8.)"

Now, there happens to be nothing like this in the section to which we are referred. You will notice that it is *the very section from which the last extracts were taken*. Whether there is a mistake in the tract, or whether the answer is manufactured out of "whole cloth," all will admit, after what we have seen, that it is of very little consequence to decide.

The tract proceeds to teach us, next, "that all men *must* do just what they do;" and then comes the following question.

"F. But does not this imply the necessity of all events?"

"P. I will not scruple to own that the will of God lays a necessity on all things, and that every thing he wills necessarily comes to pass. (Calvin's Institutes, Book III. chap. 23, sect. 8.)"

The chapter here referred to is entitled thus: "*Election confirmed by the Divine call. The destined destruction of the reprobate PROCURED BY THEMSELVES.*"

• On the point in question Calvin thus argues :

* Institutes, Book I. chap. 15, sect. 8.

“Here they (objectors) recur to the distinction between will and permission, and insist that God permits the destruction of the impious, but does not will it.” (We are to notice that it is the destruction of the *impious* whose destruction is “willed.” Does any Methodist deny that?) * * * “I shall not hesitate * * to confess plainly with Augustine, ‘that the will of God is the necessity of all things, and that what he has willed, *will necessarily come to pass*; AS THOSE THINGS ARE REALLY ABOUT TO HAPPEN *which he has foreseen?*’ Now, if either Pelagians, or Manicheans, or Anabaptists, or Epicureans,”—and it might now be added, or Methodists,—(“for we are concerned with these sects on this argument,) *in excuse for themselves and the impious, plead the necessity with which they are bound by God’s predestination,—they allege nothing applicable to the case.* For if *predestination is no other than a dispensation of Divine justice*,—mysterious indeed, but liable to no blame,—since it is certain they were *not unworthy* of being predestinated to that fate, it is equally certain that the destruction *they incur* by predestination *is consistent with the strictest justice.* Besides, their perdition depends on the Divine predestination IN SUCH A MANNER, *that the CAUSE and MATTER of it are found IN THEMSELVES.* * * * Man falls, therefore, according to the appointment of Divine Providence; *but he falls by his own fault* * * * *By his own wickedness* he corrupted the nature he had received pure from the Lord. * * * Wherefore, let us rather contemplate the EVIDENT *cause* of condemnation, which is nearer to us *in the corrupt na-*

ture of mankind, than search after a *hidden* and *altogether incomprehensible* one in the predestination of God."

It appears, then, that the *necessity* here spoken of, is *merely the CERTAINTY* of events *which are REALLY about to take place*. Calvin expressly *denies*, and *argues against* any "necessity" which implies an "excuse" for "the impious;" and the "predestination" of which he speaks "is *no other* than a *dispensation of Divine justice*." The quotations in the tract *are total perversions* of the opinions of Calvin; and so different are they all from his language,—not to say *false* in their very form,—that ordinary readers would not recognize them, as they are here accurately given from their author. We venture to say that many will be puzzled to make the discovery; and yet they purport to be veritable quotations.*

The next question is the following :

"F. Does sin then follow necessarily?"

"P. Undoubtedly. For the almighty power of God extends itself to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men. (Confession of Faith, ch. 5.)"

This answer is taken from the chapter *on "Providence."* The paragraph which the answer purports to give, reads thus :

* These misrepresentations of Calvin have been thus particularly noticed "*not*" because we "*wish to be regarded as adopting all his sentiments and expressions;*"* but simply to illustrate the nature of the warfare which is waged upon us, and to exhibit specimens of the weapons with which we are assailed.

Other quotations from Calvin, in this tract, were noted for examination, but these must suffice.

* Preface to the Edition of the Pres. Board of Publication.

“IV. The Almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God, so far manifest themselves *in his providence*, that it extendeth itself even to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men, and that not by a bare permission, but such as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding* and otherwise ordering and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to his own holy ends; † YET SO, *as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth ONLY FROM THE CREATURE, and NOT FROM GOD; who being most holy and righteous, NEITHER IS, NOR CAN be the author or approver of sin.*”

Now, what shall be said of a quotation, so false and garbled as that now under consideration from this tract? *It is false in every point of view.* It represents the authors of this Confession of Faith as saying, that it is “the almighty power of God,” operating upon “the will of man,” as steam works an

* “Ps. 76: 10, Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; and the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain. 2 Kings 19: 28, Because thy rage against me and thy tumult is come up into my ears, therefore I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way which thou camest.”

† Gen. 50: 20, But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Isa. 10: 6, 7, 12, I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.—Howbeit, he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few.—Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon Mount Zion, and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks.”

engine. But they are speaking expressly of those manifestations of the power of God which are exhibited "*in his providence*;" and they add, that they are "so" to be understood as that "the sinfulness" of the act proceedeth *only* from the creature," and this is illustrated and enforced by quotations from Scripture. And besides all this, they had already asserted that "*no violence* is offered to the *will of the creature*," by any exercise of that "Almighty power."

It is worthy of special notice how the authors of that "Confession" aimed to guard their language against all perversion. The first chapter relates simply to the Scriptures, upon which all evangelical Christians are perfectly agreed. The second relates to the doctrine of the Trinity, upon which they are equally agreed. In the very first paragraph of doctrinal statement, on the points in question, they teach *explicitly* that *they hold to the free agency of man*, and *that God governs him as a free agent*. They thus *explicitly deny in the outset*, all these charges of fatality, &c., which are made against them. Now, even if it could be shown that they use language that is self-contradictory, or that their doctrines lead to error, yet all can see, none can *avoid* seeing, that it is false and unjust to charge them with holding the monstrosities with which they are charged in that tract. This "Confession of Faith" is barred against such perversion, at the very threshold. The author of the tract knew all this, for the recorded denial was before his eyes; and the Tract Society, and the "Book Concern" of the Methodist Episcopal

Church echo the slander from one end of the land to the other, poisoning the minds of the young and the ignorant and the prejudiced, and closing them against the approach of those who are represented as adopting these principles. A parallel to this is not furnished even by the Tammany Hall infidels, in their discussion with Dr. Sleigh, about ten years since.

The object of those infidels was, to prove that the Bible represented God as justifying, and even causing lying, murder, adultery, &c.,—(just the charge which this Tract labors to fasten upon “the doctrine of predestination.”)

In order to prove this, they quoted, among other passages, from 1 Kings, chap. 13. A prophet is there represented as coming to Bethel, and pronouncing the displeasure of the Lord against Jeroboam, and then returning another way, as God had directed him. Another “prophet” is then represented as pursuing after him, and endeavoring to bring him back to eat bread with him. “He said unto him, ‘I am a prophet also as thou art; and an angel spake unto me by the word of the Lord, saying, Bring him back with thee into thy house, that he may eat bread and drink water,’” (v. 18.) The champion of infidelity quoted thus far, and stopped; his object being to exhibit a man who pretended to be commissioned by Jehovah, *as uttering a lie by his command.* The infidel quoted *just so far as* would *answer his purpose*; the sacred history, however, has the following important additional clause: “*But he lied unto him.*” The infidel appears to have quoted *correctly*, as far as he quoted *at all*; but this

Tract does not quote correctly, even what it pretends to give us; for it leaves out important passages, which totally alter the sense; and then it tells us that this "*only*" is asserted, when the fact is, that those whose language is professedly given, *explicitly deny in the same paragraph*, the sentiment which is charged upon them. Such facts admit of no palliation, and require no comment. No cause can be permanently aided by the use of such weapons. They must recoil with crushing weight upon those who employ them. At least, they are fitted only for deeds of darkness; in the light of truth they are harmless.

It is not necessary to examine that Tract farther. If a witness in a court of justice should be convicted in the outset of his testimony, of thus "perverting the right," what would be the value of his testimony? And what would be the effect upon himself? The penal code has a *name* and a *penalty* for such a crime. And that Tract, in the space of *five pages* quotes *seven different authors*, and *eleven different works*, in *thirty-five different places*. It is *impossible* for any man to make a fair exhibition of truth, on such subjects, when treating them in such a manner.*

* It should not be supposed that this Tract is out of date, because it is early in the Series. I have just now (1846) been told by a friend, residing in a neighboring town, that it has received a very special and extensive circulation there, within a year or two.

The effect of the principles under the influence of which such Tracts are prepared and disseminated, upon the minds of Methodists themselves, is strikingly illustrated by the following fact.

After a public exposure of the character of the above Tract, allu-

Another specimen of Methodist warfare is exhibited in a pamphlet entitled "*the Trial of Cain*," in which a "Predestinarian" is associated with a "Universalian" as "counsel for the prisoner" (Cain). The author of this pamphlet is said to be a local preacher; and his *design*, and *the means by which he attempts to accomplish it*, are equally evident from the title, and the plan. The author takes the subject of the above Tract, and makes an effort to give it popularity by clothing it in fiction, in the garb of doggrel verse.

These two examples have not been selected, because there is any thing *peculiar* in them. They were the first that came to hand, and "from one" we may "learn" the character of "all." Neither have I been influenced in my examination of the above Tract, by the fact that *the Presbyterian Confession of Faith* was the subject of misrepresentation, or because I think it always expressed in the best possible terms, or that its authors were infallible, or even correct in all their *theories*. Those pamphlets have been specified simply because they furnish a *fair example* of the manner in which our views are *commonly* misrepresented. And these misrepresentations are made, while all know perfectly, who know any thing about the matter, that Congregationalists, almost unanimously, and Presbyterians almost as harmoniously, hold, and believe, and preach, and

sion was made to it by one of the auditors to another, who is a leading Methodist. His cool and simple reply, as if nothing farther had ever entered his mind, and as if nothing farther could be necessary, was, "*Mr. Wesley wrote that Tract.*"

write, that the death of Christ has opened a way of salvation for all mankind,* and that *God has no purpose, and performs no act*, which casts the *shadow* of a barrier in the way of the salvation of *any man*. That God *has* purposes, and that He acts according to them, *we fully believe*, because the Bible so teaches. (Eph. 1: 3--14.) The Bible *abounds* in passages similar to the one here referred to. These passages *mean* something; *what* do they mean? Hear Mr. Wesley himself.

“Having found for some time a strong desire to unite with Mr. Whitefield as far as possible, to cut off needless dispute, I wrote down my sentiments as plain as I could in the following terms. There are three points in debate. 1. Unconditional election; 2. Irresistible grace; 3. Final perseverance. With regard to the first, unconditional election, I believe,

“That God, before the foundation of the world, did unconditionally elect certain persons * * * to many peculiar advantages, both with regard to temporal and spiritual things: and *I do not deny*, though I cannot prove it so, that *he has unconditionally elected some persons to eternal glory*. * * *

“With regard to the second, irresistible grace; I believe that the grace which brings faith, and thereby salvation into the soul, *is irresistible* AT THAT MOMENT: * * * and I do not deny, that in *SOME* souls,

* “*The Atonement of Christ was sufficient in its extent, for all human sinners.* * * When this discourse was first written, disputes concerning the Extent of the Atonement had not openly appeared in this country; and I did not suppose it to be necessary to canvass the question with any particularity.” Dwight’s Theology, Vol. II. p. 217

the grace of God is so far irresistible, that they *cannot but believe and be finally saved.* * * *

“With regard to the third, final perseverance, I am inclined to believe, that there is a state attainable in this life, *from which a man cannot finally fall.*”*

Now, with what face are such misrepresentations made, as those which we have been exposing? Wesley himself not only admits the great truths in question, but he goes *beyond* the truth:

This portion of our subject shall detain us no longer. I hasten to an application.

1. *Those are not* “peacemakers,” who talk, and preach, and write and print after the manner of these Tracts.

Even if we continue to endure these things, as we have endured them, ever since Methodism appeared among us, still *the authors of those acts are disturbers of the peace.* These things are *direct assaults* upon us; for there is nothing in them of the nature of *self-defence.* They are direct assaults upon all who are called Calvinists. It is no part of the object of the writers and publishers of such Tracts to assail, or oppose *Calvin.* They have nothing to do with Calvin, or his memory,—no more than with his ashes;—the sole object is, to excite odium against those whom they represent as holding such doctrines.

* Whitehead's Life of Wesley, Vol. II. pp. 103, 104.

The *italicising* is mine. Special attention is requested to the passages thus marked. The words in small capitals were written by Mr. Wesley in *ITALICS.*

2. Is it a *disturbance of the peace* to defend ourselves when we are assailed? Having been silent, under all these misrepresentations, until it is cast in our teeth, "that we dare not defend the peculiarities of" our system, it seems to be supposed that we have forfeited the *right* to speak in self-defence. Especially, are we to be denounced as "those who have turned the world upside down," because, though tardily, yet, at length, "earnestly," we are found contending "for the faith which was once delivered to the saints?"

3. The defence of the truth is *not to be construed into personal hostility*. "Am I your enemy because I tell you the truth?" And yet we are told, with a mixture of querulousness and menace, "*that we shall destroy all good neighborhood feeling.*"* It

* An "example" from the author's experience, may illustrate the *nature* of this good neighborhood feeling, and the *terms* on which it is to be secured.

The school-house in a western village, was occupied for religious services, alternately by the Methodist preacher and myself. A day or two previous to the recurrence of our regular quarterly celebration of the Lord's Supper, a new Methodist preacher arrived, to commence his labors on that station. Being anxious to preach on the next Sabbath, and to occupy the school-house, he requested me to waive my claims, for that purpose. To this I objected; as from our circumstances, and in view of western habits, it would be nearly equivalent to dispensing with our exercises altogether. The point was urged, however, with great pertinacity; and, as an irresistible appeal, one of the Methodists remarked, "*I think you had better yield, for the sake of peace!*"

My deacon was a "peace man," and this was attacking him at his vulnerable point; he advised therefore that I should yield to the unreasonable request. Perhaps he understood better than myself, at that time, *the import* of the intimation

has come, then, to this : in order to secure, from certain quarters, "good neighborhood feeling," we must render ourselves contemptible in the eyes of all honorable men, and odious in the sight of God ; for we must sacrifice our principles, or permit them to be sacrificed by others, even though we regard them as the truths of God's word ; and then we must welcome to our special confidence and affection, those who can make such demands upon us. The most important truths, and our own cherished, and most hallowed associations may be assailed with utter wantonness, and we are to be repaid with smiles and gracious words, which we must reciprocate, without one word of protestation, or there will be an end of "all good neighborhood feeling." We say, distinctly, that we attach no value to *such* friendship. We desire not to be suspected of having any sympathy with it. We desire peace, but not at the sacrifice of principle. And if truth is defended at all, it should be defended with a zeal and fidelity proportionate to its importance. To defend it feebly, hesitatingly,—to *half do* the work,—would be to "handle the word of God deceitfully." It would, of *necessity*, make a *false* impression. If we speak at all on these subjects, we must speak out plainly, decidedly, unequivocally. The severity of truth is not denunciation.

But with whom are we under special obligations to "make" and preserve "peace"? With whom, if not with those with whom we are united in a profession of a common faith? Especially, when we have solemnly covenanted to walk together *in the truth* as well as the *order* of the Gospel, and to de-

fend and sustain each other in every good work, and to promote each other's usefulness in our mutual labors in the Lord. There is such a thing as trying to be on both sides, or neither side—*non-committal men*—having no opinions, or assenting to *all* opinions. Is this the way to “make peace”? Is this the way to promote confidence among brethren? Is this the way even to secure the respect of those who would “seduce” us from “the old paths”? While we continue to profess religious truths, on the side of those truths *must* we be found, unflinching, firm as the everlasting hills.

The exposure of these assaults, and of the character of the weapons employed, is regarded by many as a violation of Christian charity! and a disturbance of Christian peace! The very men who are *detected* with these missiles, as it were, in their pockets, or even in the very act of employing them against their Christian brethren, even *they* attempt to enlist the sympathies of the community in their behalf, as the innocent victims of religious persecution, suffering for righteousness' sake! And there are those who are set for the defence of the truth, (and what Christian is not so set?) who yet can throw their protecting shield over these transactions; whose feelings of disapprobation are *especially* excited, not that these faults have been *committed*, but that they have been *rebuked*; and who attempt to excite public odium, *not against these evils*, but *against those who would correct them*, like certain modern reformers, whose sublimated philanthropy is *especially* excited in behalf of the “unfortunate” *criminal*, rather than of his victims.

4. *Truth is the only true basis of peace.*

Any other peace is *false peace*. It is but the superficial healing of a deep-seated ulcer. I do not mean that there can be no kindly feeling until all entertain the same views of truth. But truth must be our *aim*, and the only foundation upon which we desire to rest. While we follow our convictions of truth with inflexible firmness, we *can*, and *must* grant to others the same rights which we claim for ourselves. We should honor their obedience to their convictions, even though we regard those convictions as based in error. But it is still true, that the tendency of error is to derange the machinery of *society*, as well as of the moral government of the universe.

That is, then, a short-sighted, and mistaken policy, by which it is attempted to promote peace at the sacrifice of important truth; especially when we look at those great principles, which, under God, have made New England what she is. In this matter, the Gospel order must be observed: "FIRST *pure*, THEN *peaceable*." He who inverts this order, violates a law of nature; he labors to "plant" that which must be "plucked up." He, and he only, whose labors are in accordance with *Truth*, is the real promoter of peace.

5. *If our Methodist brethren would show themselves the promoters of peace, they must lay aside all such weapons as have now been exhibited from their armory.* Not only must they cease all such gross outrages upon candor and truth and decency; they must cease, *altogether*, to charge upon us doctrines which they know, or *ought* to know, we never

held. How can we have confidence in a man, even though he comes to us with smiles, and honeyed words, and with proffered hand inquires, "*Art thou in health, my brother?*" while his pockets are filled with these poisoned missiles, with which he attempts to weaken, if not to destroy our influence in the community? While we would hope *ever* to "*rejoice*" that "*Christ is preached,*" even of "*contention,*" yet it is not possible for us to experience feelings of unmingled pleasure in the extending influence of those, much of whose labor we *know* to be expended in the erection of barriers against our own usefulness. Often do we meet with prejudices thus unjustly produced, which form a coat of mail that is perfectly impenetrable, even to the sword of the Spirit, as wielded by our hands. If some souls are saved, not by the "*foolishness,*" but the *wickedness* of such "*preaching,*" who can doubt, for one moment, *that others are lost*, through the influence of prejudices thus excited; or that these prejudices, *alone, turned the scale of their destiny.* It is not as sectarians, then, that we urge a consideration of these subjects; or that we suggest the inquiry, how far the success which is secured by such measures, or by influences with which such measures are intermingled, furnish cause of congratulation? Why cannot our Methodist brethren be content to run the race of usefulness, and leave the course free, instead of strewing it with rocks to impede *even the chariot of salvation*, when driven by other hands. We do not ask them to renounce their convictions; we do not require them to adopt our views of truth; much less do we

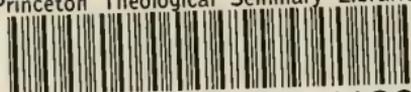
require them to pronounce "*Shibboleth*" after our fashion. Let them pursue their own measures, with a sense of their accountability to our common Master; but let them cease this Ishmaelitic warfare, *and from our inmost soul we will bid them "GOD-SPEED;" we will proffer them the "Right hand of Fellowship;" we will "FORGIVE AND FORGET."*

Notwithstanding the earnestness with which we would contend for "the old paths," we would wield no weapons to which we would not bare our own bosoms. But this contest is not congenial with our feelings. We long for the day when "Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim;" when the "Sacramental host" shall, with undivided ranks, gather around their common standard—THE CROSS OF CHRIST.





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