

CHAPTER II.

THE ORIGIN OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE CONFEDERATE STATES.

JUPITER swallowed Metis lest she should bear, in their coming child, one wiser than himself. But that child sprang, the fully panoplied Minerva, wise and strong and impregnably chaste, from the head of her monster father. If any one had asked, "What are the grounds on which Minerva claims the right of existence among the gods and goddesses?" it might well have been said: "On the ground of the virtuous strength and happiness which she can achieve in and for her worshipers, as well as on the ground of the repentance and reformation which she may be able to work among the gods and goddesses themselves, including her father."

The occasion of the Presbyterian Church in the United States coming into existence was the successful effort, on the part of the majority of the Old School Assembly of 1861, to usurp the crown rights of the Redeemer in making new terms of church-membership; and, in the same act, to prostitute the church to the state so far as to hold the Southern Presbyterians to the support of the Federal Government, as over against the governments of their several sovereign States, on pain of ejection from the church in case of failure to comply with the terms of church-membership thus made.

On the 12th of April, 1861, the Confederacy had been forced to begin the bombardment of Fort Sumter; for the Federal Government had been about to provision anew

and reinforce and render unconquerable this doorway which it held into the heart of the South. The bombardment turned out to be so successful that in spite of a heroic resistance the fort fell into the hands of the South within thirty-six hours. The fall of Fort Sumter was used with consummate skill by the Northern demagogues. Holy Writ tells us of a certain Levite, whose concubine was done to death by the men of Gibeah in Benjamin, that "when he was come into his house, he took a knife, and laid hold on his concubine, and divided her, together with her bones, into twelve pieces, and sent her into all the coasts of Israel, so that it came to pass that all that saw it said, There was no such deed done nor seen from the day that the children of Israel came up out of Egypt until this day." Not less striking were the representations made by the leaders of the North over the "insult to the national flag in attacking Fort Sumter." The passions of the masses were aroused. The whole country was aflame with war. On the 15th of April President Lincoln issued a call for seventy-five thousand volunteers to quell the "insurrection," as he called it. Though his proclamation drove four more States into the Confederacy, the rest of the country responded with four times as many men as he asked for.

The Assembly of 1861, which convened in Philadelphia on May 16th, met in an atmosphere surcharged with the war-spirit. Many ministers and elders from all sections of the country had fondly hoped that the church might maintain her unity in spite of political disunion. They had hoped that her spirituality, her divine origin, and Christ-like character might be all the more brightly illustrated by her course in the midst of what even then gave awful promise of being one of the fiercest civil wars of all history. But their hopes were doomed to an early

blighting. Such union could only be maintained by the church's keeping within her own sphere, and steering clear of the political issues on which the ship of state had become dismembered. And there was a party—at first small, but destined to rapid growth under extraneous pressure and ignoble motives¹—in the church which had determined to make the General Assembly indorse the Federal Government at Washington and pledge its support thereto. This was, of course, to prostitute the church to the state—nay, to a party in the state. But what is it men will not prostitute, and to what will they not make that prostitution when driven on by prejudice, passion, and revenge?

The venerable Dr. Spring, of the Brick Presbyterian Church, New York, probably at the urgent insistence of others, with a clearer vision of the nature and consequence of the action but with less of conscience than himself thereat, so early as the third day of the Assembly introduced the following resolution:

That a special committee be appointed to inquire into the expediency of the Assembly's making some expression of their devotion to the Union of these States, and their loyalty to the government; and if in their judgment it is expedient so to do, they report what that expression shall be.²

¹ Dr. J. H. Vandyke says: "There was at first a large majority who were opposed to any political deliverance whatever. They were in favor of simply asserting the great Scriptural doctrine of obedience to civil rulers, accompanied by kind injunctions to study the things that made for peace. But as the Assembly proceeded with its business, the pressure from without, and a little leaven working within, changed the spirit and purposes of the body. That kind of martyrdom so eloquently portrayed by Dr. Thomas a few days ago, as consisting of applause in the galleries, and other indications of popular will, began to make its influence felt. There were, moreover, indications of another kind of martyrdom in the streets, whose instruments would not be waving of pocket-handkerchiefs and clapping of fair hands, but tar and feathers, ropes and lamp-posts. . . . Whether from these causes or not, it is well known that the Assembly underwent a speedy and marvelous change in its spirit and in its purpose; until in an evil hour her rash hand reaching forth, she passed the famous, or rather infamous, Spring Resolution."—"Concise Record of the Assembly," 1866, p. 55.

² "Minutes of the General Assembly," O. S., 1861, p. 303.

This resolution was laid on the table by a vote of 123 to 102. But the Progressives were not to be balked. Only three days later Dr. Spring offered a paper with resolutions respecting the appointment of religious solemnities for the 4th of July next, and the duty of ministers and churches in relation to the "condition of our country."¹ The house made the consideration of these resolutions the first order of the day for the Friday next, May 24th. Friday brought a protracted and heated debate over the resolutions, and a substitute moved by Dr. Charles Hodge. The debate continued Saturday and Monday. Monday evening there was an effort made, under the lead of Dr. Hodge, to lay the whole business on the table; but it was defeated, the vote being 87 yeas and 153 nays. Tuesday morning the matter was referred to a special committee, with instructions to report in the afternoon. Nine were appointed on this committee. They presented a majority report with eight names affixed, and a minority report with one name subscribed, that of Dr. William C. Anderson, of San Francisco. After further discussion the majority report failed of adoption, the vote standing 84 yeas and 128 nays. Dr. Anderson's report was then taken up. It consisted of Dr. Spring's resolutions, with a slight alteration. It received an amendment, making the report as follows:

Gratefully acknowledging the distinguished bounty and care of Almighty God toward this favored land, and recognizing our obligation to submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, this General Assembly adopts the following resolutions:

Resolved, 1. That in view of the present agitated and unhappy condition of our country, the first day of July next be set apart as a day of prayer throughout our bounds; and that on this day ministers and people be called on humbly to confess and bewail our national sins; to offer our thanks to the Father of lights for his abundant and undeserved goodness toward us as a Nation; to seek his guidance and blessing upon our rulers and their coun-

¹ "Minutes of the General Assembly," 1861, p. 308.

sels, as well as on the Congress of the United States about to assemble; and to implore him, in the name of Jesus Christ, the great High-Priest of the Christian profession, to turn away his anger from us, and speedily restore to us the blessings of an honorable peace.

Resolved, 2. That this General Assembly, in the spirit of Christian patriotism which the Scriptures enjoin, and which has always characterized this church, do hereby acknowledge and declare our obligations to promote and perpetuate, so far as in us lies, the integrity of these United States, and to strengthen, uphold, and encourage the Federal Government in the exercise of all its functions under our noble Constitution; and to this Constitution, in all its provisions, requirements, and principles, we profess our unabated loyalty. And to avoid all misconceptions, the Assembly declare that by the terms the "Federal Government," as here used, is not meant any particular administration, or the peculiar opinions of any particular party, but that central administration which, being at any time appointed and inaugurated according to the forms prescribed in the Constitution of the United States, is the visible representative of our national existence.¹

This paper was adopted by a vote of 156 yeas to 66 nays. It was revolutionary, filled with the very genius of usurpation and prostitution of the things of the Lord Jesus Christ. Dr. Hodge and others gave notice that they protested against this action of the Assembly for reasons to be given. The protest when it came was substantially as follows:

We, the undersigned, respectfully protest against the action of the General Assembly in adopting the minority report of the committee on the state of the country.

We make this protest, not because we do not acknowledge loyalty to our country to be a moral and religious duty, according to the Word of God, which requires us to be subject to the powers that be, nor because we deny the right of the Assembly to enjoin that, and all other like duties, on the ministers and churches under its care, but because we deny the right of the General Assembly to decide the political question to what government the allegiance of Presbyterians as citizens is due, and its right to make that decision a condition of membership in our church.

That the paper adopted by the Assembly does decide the political question just stated is in our judgment undeniable. It asserts, not only the loyalty of this body to the Constitution of the Union, but it promises, in the name of all the churches and ministers whom it represents, to do all that in them

¹ "Minutes of the General Assembly," O. S., 1861, pp. 329, 330.

lies to strengthen, uphold, and encourage the Federal Government. It is, however, a notorious fact that many of our ministers and members conscientiously believe that the allegiance of the citizens of this country is primarily due to the States to which they respectively belong; and, therefore, that when any State renounces its connection with the United States and its allegiance to the Constitution, the citizens of that State are bound by the laws of God to continue loyal to their State, and obedient to its laws. The paper adopted by the Assembly virtually declares, on the other hand, that the allegiance of the citizen is due to the United States, anything in the Constitution or ordinances or laws of the several States to the contrary notwithstanding.

It is not the loyalty of the members constituting this Assembly, nor of our churches or ministers in any one portion of our country, that is thus asserted, but the loyalty of the whole Presbyterian Church, North and South, East and West.

Allegiance to the Federal Government is recognized or declared to be the duty of all churches and ministers represented in this body. In adopting this paper, therefore, the Assembly does decide the great political question which agitates and divides the country. The question is, Whether the allegiance of our citizens is primarily to the State or to the Union. However clear our own convictions of the correctness of this decision may be, or however deeply we may be impressed with its importance, yet it is not a question which this Assembly has a right to decide.

That the action of the Assembly in the premises does not only decide the political question referred to, but makes that decision a term of membership in our church, is no less clear. It puts into the mouths of all represented in this body a declaration of loyalty and allegiance to the Union and to the Federal Government. But such a declaration made by our members residing in what are called the seceding States is treasonable. Presbyterians under the jurisdiction of those States cannot, therefore, make that declaration. They are consequently forced to choose between allegiance to their State and allegiance to the church.

The General Assembly, in thus deciding a political question, and making that decision practically a condition of membership to the church, has in our judgment violated the constitution of the church, and usurped the prerogative of the Divine Master. . . .

In the third place, we protest because we regard the action of the Assembly as altogether unnecessary and uncalled for. . . . We are fully persuaded that we best promote the interests of the country by preserving the integrity and unity of the church.

We regard this action of the Assembly, therefore, as a great national calamity, as well as the most disastrous to the interests of our church which has marked its history.

We protest, fourthly, because we regard the action of the Assembly as unjust and cruel in its bearings on our Southern brethren.

And finally, we protest because we believe the act of the Assembly will not

only diminish the resources of the church, but greatly weaken its power for good, and expose it to the danger of being carried away more and more from its true principles by a worldly and fanatical spirit.¹

Fifty-seven other men, along with Dr. Hodge, honored themselves by affixing their names to this paper, which for its political and ecclesiastical sagacity, its gentlemanly and Christian spirit, is deserving of everlasting admiration. Fourteen of the only sixteen Southern commissioners were among the signers. The other forty-four names included, in addition to that of the revered Princeton theologian, that of the moderator, the Rev. Dr. John T. Backus, and of the moderator of the preceding Assembly, the Rev. Dr. John W. Yeomans, who had preached the opening sermon on the text John xviii. 36, "My kingdom is not of this world"; and many more names of the wisest and godliest men of the whole North.

The best possible foil for Dr. Hodge's protest, one that makes it shine like a jewel in an ash-bank, was the answer to it by the Assembly's committee. They "readily admitted" that the Assembly's action had political as well as moral bearings; and then went on to produce an almost matchless specimen of pettifogging and sophistical demagoguery in the vain attempt to support the Assembly as just and Scriptural in its conduct. The haters of democracy might find in this instance a very convenient proof of the folly of the rule by the mere numerical majority in collusion against principle and intelligence.² In itself it would be both interesting and instructive to illustrate the Machiavellianism of this reply at length, but it would carry us too far aside from the particular course of events with which we are directly concerned. We recall our attention, therefore, to the Spring resolutions, and to the

¹ "Minutes of the General Assembly," 1861, pp. 339, 340.

² See "Minutes of the General Assembly," O. S., 1861, pp. 342-344.

view taken of them by Dr. Hodge and his party in the North. That party was not moved by sectionalism. Its judgment was not warped by self-interest. It was not a secession party. It was not largely a slave-owning party. The student of history will remember these facts when studying the reception which Southern Presbyterians gave the resolutions by the venerable pastor of the Brick Church. There is no proof of their having been moved by schism, heresy, or selfishness.

Almost the whole Southern wing of the church regarded the Assembly's action just as the conservative party in the North did. They saw: first, that the political question had been decided for the whole Presbyterian Church represented in the Assembly; second, that the action of the Assembly in the premises did not only decide the political question referred to, but made that decision a term of membership in the church; third, that it was cruel in its bearings on the Southern members of the church, making them renounce allegiance either to church or state; fourth, that in the political adjudication the church had been guilty of usurpation of the Redeemer's rights, and the prostitution of the Redeemer's bride; fifth, that, finally, the flood-gates of politico-religious syncretism, of fanaticism, had been thrown open. These things they saw; and these things, together with the actual setting up of the Confederate Government, were the objective causes, the occasions, of the rise of the Presbyterian Church, South.

Some of the strongest intellects as well as some of the most devoted Christian ministers in the whole church were in the South. They desired a church on whose banner should be inscribed, "The Spirituality of the Church," "The power of the Church Court as to kind and degree only what the Word of God as interpreted by the Stand-

ards of the Church makes it,” “A faithful adherence to the Constitution of the Church,” “The absolute Headship of Christ in the Church.” They wanted a church, and a better one than that from which they had been virtually ejected. They wanted a church that looked to her bridegroom as her very lord, that wore not the skirts of a prostitute; a church whose courts “would never ask what might be a man’s view of the Constitution of the United States, of the doctrine of State rights, or of any other political question”; but “What does he think of the headship of Christ, of the atonement, of regeneration? is he willing to adopt sincerely and in their true import our time-honored standard of doctrine and church order?”¹ Such a church as the Old School Presbyterian had been, but was no longer, a church of their own people, among whom homogeneity would prevent all retarding friction of her chariot-wheels as her armies should go forth against the world. They wanted a church for their own sakes, their fellows’ sakes, and for the sake of truth and God.

In these glorious aspirations and honorable desires we find the true causes of the existence of the Presbyterian Church, South. As these causes are to receive fuller illustration incidentally as we proceed, we shall for the present dispense with their further elucidation, and pass on to trace the organization of the church in process, and then to set forth the completeness of the form of organization, and its adjustment to its ecclesiastical environment.

The Organization of the Body and its Adjustment to its Environment.—Most of the Southern Presbyteries—all, perhaps—had held, as the custom is, their spring meetings prior to the time of the Philadelphia Assembly. But such of them as had adjourned meetings, or *pro re nata*

¹ See speech of Dr. J. H. Vandyke, in “Concise Records of the Assembly of St. Louis,” 1866, p. 54.

meetings, on the heel of that Assembly, protested with various degrees of vigor against the high-handed usurpation and abhorred degradation of that body. The Presbytery of Memphis, in an adjourned meeting on the 13th of June, renounced connection with the Assembly for its unchristian and revolutionary action, and requested all concurring Presbyteries to meet with them by their commissioners, in Memphis, on the third Thursday in May, 1863, for the purpose of organizing a General Assembly. It also suggested to the Presbyteries the advisability of their calling meetings and appointing delegates to a convention to meet in Atlanta on the 15th of August, "to consult upon various important matters, especially our benevolent operations." This action was immediately followed by that of the East Alabama Presbytery, which was called together to consider the matter. It did not secede from the Assembly, but earnestly protested, and declared that it would not acquiesce in the Assembly's action. It then called for a convention of the Presbyteries to meet in Columbia, S. C., on the Thursday before the second Sunday in September, 1861, aiming thus to secure coöperative action.

On the 9th of July the Presbytery of New Orleans formally renounced the jurisdiction of the Old Assembly, ordered that a copy of their action be sent to the Southern Presbyteries, and requested them, if they should concur in this action, to send commissioners authorized to organize an Assembly, to commence its meetings on the 4th of December, 1861, in Augusta, Ga.

About the same time many of the Presbyteries met and chose delegates to a convention in Atlanta, Ga., during July. Individuals throughout the church had been calling for such a convention, as an advisory body. Prominent ministers in the Synod of Virginia had, on the close of the

Philadelphia Assembly, at once published a circular, inviting ministers and elders in Southern Synods to meet in convention in Richmond, Va., on the 24th of July. Prominent ministers in the South Carolina Synod early agitated the calling of such a convention; and Dr. Thornwell, at least, expressed a preference for the Piedmont region of North Carolina, and named, specially, Greensboro as a suitable place. Such a convention was needed to give harmony of action touching their relation to the Old Assembly, to the several Presbyteries and Synods, and to prevent the evils which might arise from a temporary disorganization, especially to make some temporary arrangement concerning the benevolent operations of the church. The upshot of all these calls for a convention was the final fixing upon Atlanta as the place, and the 15th of August, 1861, as the time, for a convention of representatives from the Presbyteries.

The Atlanta Convention met at the time and place appointed. It was composed of twenty delegates from eleven Presbyteries, with fourteen corresponding members from six Presbyteries, and was in session three days. In reference to the benevolent operations, it suggested and recommended that the work of education, publication, domestic missions, etc., should be left to the Presbyteries, Synods, and the Southwestern Advisory Committee of New Orleans; "but as to foreign missions, the convention indorsed the temporary plan for conducting this work which had been devised by certain brethren in Columbia, S. C., and pledged the support of the Presbyteries represented in the convention to it."¹ In reference to the action touching their relations to the Old Assembly, the

¹ Alexander's "Digest," p. 68. We acknowledge here our indebtedness to Mr. Alexander for his account of the Atlanta Convention, which we have freely used in constructing ours.

convention urged all such Presbyteries as had not renounced the jurisdiction of the Old Assembly to do so, and urged all the Presbyteries to declare their adherence and submission to the standards as formerly held, with the single change of the phrase "Presbyterian Church in the United States of America" to this form, viz., "Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America." It further urged that these Presbyteries send commissioners to a General Assembly to be held in Augusta, Ga., on the fourth day of the next December; that Rev. Dr. Waddel, Rev. Dr. Gray, and Dr. Joseph H. Jones, of Atlanta, Ga., be a committee on commissions to examine the credentials of all who should be present; and that the respective Synods review the records of the Presbyteries and confirm the actions herein proposed. Though a convention, this body "disclaimed the right to determine the political relations of individuals, or to solve for them political questions."

The convention did just what it was intended to do. It secured substantial unanimity of action touching relations to the Old Assembly, and touching relations to the standards, on the part of all the Presbyteries and Synods. And it gave a certain support to the temporary agencies of the church until the Assembly should meet and place them on a stable footing. During the remainder of the summer and fall forty-seven Presbyteries, each for itself, dissolved connection with the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. "This separation," says Dr. Palmer, "was based in every case upon the unconstitutional character of the Assembly's legislation. We give the language employed by a single Presbytery, as showing the common ground upon which they all stood: *Resolved*, That in view of the unconstitutional, Erastian, tyrannical, and *virtually excind-*

ing act of the late General Assembly, sitting at Philadelphia in May last, we do hereby, with a solemn protest against this act, declare, in the fear of God, our connection with the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States to be dissolved.”¹ These words are from the minutes of Dr. Palmer’s own Presbytery. That he is correct in setting them forth as containing the common ground on which all the Presbyteries stood admits of no doubt. Their sober truth is no more than an adequate expression of the Assembly’s action as seen by clear-headed and stout-hearted Presbyterians throughout the South. Before the time for the meeting of the General Assembly at Augusta, the forty-seven Presbyteries, with their ten Synods, had been completely organized under a common constitution, and the Presbyteries had duly authorized and appointed commissioners to form said Assembly.

The First General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, South, convened, according to appointment, on the 4th of December, 1861. One of the most venerable ministers present, the Rev. Dr. Francis McFarland, presided until a regular organization could be effected. On his motion the Rev. Dr. B.M. Palmer was unanimously chosen to preach the opening sermon. Dr. Palmer took for his text Ephesians i. 22, 23—“And gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.” The preacher felt the responsibility of the moment. What was of greater importance, he was prepared for it. Endowed with a force, splendor, and enthusiasm like Homer’s, a fiery logic like Paul’s, the speaker had acquired an eloquence comparable to Burke’s. He was habitually an honest student, and hence a well-furnished preacher on all occa-

¹ Palmer’s “Life of Thornwell,” pp. 502, 503.

sions. On great occasions he had the mettle in him which responded readily to the unusual pressure. The present was a very great occasion. After an exordium which makes the reader think that Palmer has a right to preach on the sublime passages of him who, while describing himself as rude in speech, yet wrote as the lord thereof, the preacher announced his subject as: "*The supreme dominion to which Christ is exalted as the Head of the church, and the glory of the church in that relation, as being at once his body and his fullness.*"

The flood-gates of discourse were raised, and the waters gushed forth. The sermon was a true unfolding of the great theme announced. There was but little direct allusion to the situation of the church and the country. The chief of such passages should be set forth to the reader. The preacher had been speaking of the glory which "surrounds the church," *in virtue of the headship of Christ over it*. "The immortal Church of Christ, which survives all change and never knows decay, . . . outliving all time, and henceforth counting her years upon the dial of Eternity." He at length breaks out: "Do we understand, fathers and brethren, the mission of the church given us here to execute? It is to lift throughout the world our testimony for this headship of Christ. The convocation of this Assembly is in part this testimony. But a little while since it was attempted in the most august court of our church to place the crown of our Lord upon the head of Caesar—to bind that body which is Christ's fullness to the chariot in which Caesar rides. The intervening months have sufficiently discovered the character of that state under whose yoke this church was summoned to bow the neck in meek obedience; but in advance of these disclosures, the voice went up throughout our land in indignant remonstrance against the usurpa-

tion, in solemn protest against the sacrilege. And now this parliament of the Lord's freemen solemnly declares, that, by the terms of her great charter, none but Jesus may be King in Zion. Once more, in this distant age and in these ends of the earth, the church must declare for the supremacy of her Head, and fling out the consecrated ensign with the old inscription, 'For Christ and his Crown.'"¹

The Assembly honored itself by directing the publication of the sermon in the appendix to the minutes. So far as we know, it is the only sermon which has been so published in the history of our church. Dr. Palmer was made moderator of the Assembly.

The organization of the church, including its agencies for carrying on all the great enterprises of Christian effort, and the orientation of the church before the world, and especially before the other churches of Jesus Christ throughout the earth, was to be the great work of the Assembly. As soon as the court had been organized Dr. Thornwell introduced two resolutions, which were unanimously adopted. They were as follows:

1. That the style and title of this church shall be The Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America.

2. That this Assembly declare, in conformity with the unanimous decision of our Presbyteries, that the Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, the Forms of Government, the Book of Discipline, and the Directory of Worship, which together make up the constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, are the constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America; only substituting the term "Confederate States" for "United States."²

In 1865, influenced by the issue of the war, the church came under the necessity of changing its name somewhat, and from that time has borne the legal style and title of

¹ "Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States," 1861, p. 71.

² "Minutes of the General Assembly," 1861, p. 7.

“The Presbyterian Church in the United States.” Of changes in the constitution we shall have something to say in a future chapter.

As one looks over the proceedings of this Assembly, he observes that though it is but an hour old, it is not wrapped in swaddling-clothes. In the ordinary routine work of such a body, it shows no signs of infancy. But we marvel not at this; for many of the members are among the most skillful presbyters who could have been found in the undivided church. But we do look on with admiration as this fully grown young giant begins to rig the ship in which it is to breast the waves and face the foes of an indefinite future.

One of the first as well as the most notable things which the Assembly did was to organize a permanent agency for conducting foreign missions. And as the principles of organization involved in the establishment of the executive committee of foreign missions were applied in all the executive committees established by the Assembly, we may with profit bring out somewhat fully this plan of the Assembly. Nor can this be better done than by transcribing here the vital parts of the resolutions which the body passed as a means to the organization of said committee; and the vital parts of those touching its attitude to the missions committed already by Providence to its care, and to the unchristian and papal peoples over the face of the globe.

For the organization of a permanent agency for conducting foreign missions, the following resolutions were adopted:

Resolved, i. That this General Assembly proceed to appoint an Executive Committee, with its proper officers, to carry on this work, and that the character and functions of this committee be comprised in the following articles as its constitution, viz. :

ARTICLE I. This committee shall be known as the Executive Committee of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America. It shall consist of a secretary, who shall be styled the Secretary of Foreign Missions, and who shall be the committee's organ of communication with the Assembly and with all portions of the work intrusted to this committee; a treasurer and nine other members, three of whom, at least, shall be ruling elders or deacons, or private members of the church, all appointed annually by the General Assembly, and shall be directly amenable to it for the faithful and efficient discharge of the duties intrusted to its care. Vacancies occurring ad interim it shall fill if necessary.

ART. II. It shall meet once a month, or oftener, if necessary, at the call of the chairman or secretary. It may enact by-laws for its government, the same being subject to the revision and approval of the General Assembly.

ART. III. It shall be the duty of the Executive Committee to take direction and control of the foreign missionary work, subject to such instructions as may be given by the General Assembly from time to time; to appoint missionaries and assistant missionaries; to designate their field of labor, and provide for their support; to receive the reports of the secretary and treasurer, and give such directions in relation to their respective duties as may seem necessary; to authorize appropriations and expenditures of money, including the salaries of officers; to communicate to the churches from time to time such information about the missionary work as may seem important to be known; and to lay before the General Assembly from year to year a full report of the work and of their receipts and expenditures, together with their books of minutes for examination.¹

The cumbrous and Scripturally unwarranted machinery of boards, as well as voluntary societies, is done away with. The fifth wheel of the chariot is cast aside; a simple committee, directly and immediately responsible to the General Assembly as the Assembly's executive agent, does the work which had in the Old Assembly been done at one time by voluntary societies, and later by largely irresponsible boards. The Assembly had quietly made a long stride toward a more Scriptural form.

The Southern Assembly of 1861 did much more than to frame a good agency for conducting foreign missions. It betrayed a glorious missionary zeal. The new church

¹ "Minutes of the General Assembly," 1861, p. 15.

had in its heart the Saviour's last command to the nascent church of the Apostles. Already, during the summer of 1861 and before the Atlanta Convention, Dr. J. Leighton Wilson and other brethren in Columbia, S. C., had called the attention of the church throughout the Confederacy to the demands of the Presbyterian missions among the tribes of the Indian Territory, and had raised and dispersed about four thousand dollars. After the convention Dr. Wilson, with its indorsement, continued his efforts to support these missions, and also made a personal visit to that interesting but perturbed field. When the Assembly at Augusta met about twenty thousand dollars had been expended in the support of the mission since May by the Southern Presbyterians. Dr. Wilson read a report of his work as provisional secretary. On occasion of that report the Assembly passed a series of resolutions, the following excerpt from which will at once interest the reader and enlighten him further as to the aims of the new-born church toward missions

Resolved, 2. That the Assembly accepts, with joyful gratitude to God, the care of these missions among our southwestern Indian tribes, the Choctaws, Chickasaws, Creeks, Seminoles, and Cherokees, thus thrown upon them by his providence: missions whose whole history has been signalized by a degree of success attending few other modern missions; to a people comprising near seventy thousand souls, to whom we are bound by obligations of special tenderness and strength, and whose spiritual interest must ever be dear to the Christians of this land. . . . And the Assembly assures those people, and the beloved missionaries who have so long and successfully labored among them, of our fixed purpose, under God, to sustain and carry forward the blessed work, whose foundations have been so nobly and deeply laid. We therefore decidedly approve of the recommendation of the report, that six new missionaries be sent to this field speedily, two of them to commence a new mission among the Cherokees, and that a few small boarding-schools be established with the special design of raising up a native agency.

3. That in the striking fact that the same upheaving and overturning that have called us into existence as a distinct organization, and shut us out from present access to distant nations, have also laid thus upon our hearts and hands these interesting missions, with their fifteen stations and twelve ordained missionaries and sixteen hundred communicants, so that, at the very moment

of commencing our separate existence, we find them forming in fact an organic part of our body; and also in the gratifying promptitude with which our church has advanced to their support—the Assembly recognizes most gratefully the clear foreshadowing of the divine purpose to make our beloved church an eminently missionary church, and a heart-stirring call upon all her people to engage in this blessed work with new zeal and self-denial.

4. The Assembly further rejoices to know that there are a few of the sons of our Southern Zion who are laboring in distant lands, and approves heartily of the action of the committee in forwarding funds for the support of the missions in which they are engaged, trusting that the committee to be appointed will, as soon as possible, ascertain the facts on the subject necessary to their future guidance; and takes this occasion, hence, to direct the longing eyes of the whole church to those broad fields where Satan reigns almost undisturbed—to India, Siam, China, Japan, and especially to Africa and South America, which have peculiar claims upon us, as fields where we are soon to be called to win glorious victories for our King, if we prove faithful; and solemnly charges them that now while in the convulsions that are shaking the earth we hear the tread of his coming footsteps, to take the kingdom bought with his blood, they should be preparing to meet him with their whole hearts and their largest offerings.

5. Finally, the General Assembly desires distinctly and deliberately to inscribe on our church's banner, as she now first unfurls it to the world, in immediate connection with the headship of our Lord, his last command: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature;" regarding this as the great end of her organization, and obedience to it as the indispensable condition of her Lord's promised presence, and as one great comprehensive object, a proper conception of whose vast magnitude and grandeur is the only thing which, in connection with the love of Christ, can ever sufficiently arouse her energies and develop her resources so as to cause her to carry on, with the vigor and efficiency which true fealty to her Lord demands, those other agencies necessary to her internal growth and home prosperity. The claims of this cause ought therefore to be kept constantly before the minds of the people and pressed upon their consciences. The ministers and ruling elders and deacons and Sabbath-school teachers, and especially the parents, ought, and are enjoined by the Assembly, to give particular attention to all those for whose religious teaching they are responsible, in training them to feel a deep interest in this work, to form habits of systematic benevolence, and to feel and respond to the claims of Jesus upon them for personal service in the field.¹

Such are the resolutions adopted by the Augusta Assembly, as expressing its attitude toward foreign missions. There is an exalted heroism in them, a sublimity of faith

¹ "Minutes of the General Assembly of 1861," pp. 16, 17.

to which history furnishes few parallels. Surrounded by "a cordon of armies," in a country itself on the point of being one of the world's theaters of most terrific war, the church quietly looks forth on the world as its field, and quietly, fearlessly, and earnestly prepares for its present and its future labors. Sacred Writ tells us that in the time of Zedekiah, when the Babylonian army was besieging Jerusalem and on the point of taking it, Jeremiah, having been shut up in prison for having predicted the city's overthrow, said: "The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Buy the field that is in Anathoth, for the right of redemption is thine to buy it;" Jeremiah bought the field and weighed out the money, seventeen shekels of silver. His heroism was mightier than that of kings. His faith assured him that there was light beyond the clouds. This church in vision pierces the confines and the gloom of war; and, true to the principles which God had given her grace to see, prepares for their exemplification as God shall give her opportunity.

The Assembly's work relating to home missions is of a piece with that concerning foreign missions. The constitution of the "Executive Committee of Domestic Missions," as it was called, is *mutatis mutandis* altogether "similar in its provisions to that adopted for the Executive Committee of Foreign Missions"¹ save in one important particular, to which we will subsequently return.

The work of this committee had been carried on during the interregnum by the Southwestern Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee had been created by an order of the General Assembly of 1859, and had gone into active operation in November of that year. It had presented two annual reports to the Old Assembly, through the parent board. On March 1, 1861, it had a

¹ Alexander's "Digest," p. 127.

balance in its treasury of \$7729.55; it had received between March and November \$4490.37, having thus, during those eight months, \$12,219.92. About forty missionaries were, on November 1st, in commission, which was about the number in commission at the meeting of the Philadelphia Assembly. Through the good providence of the blessed Master and Head, amidst the terrible convulsions of the times the work of missions had moved on without a jar. One cannot "fail to notice the wonderful manner in which God prepared and equipped the Southern Presbyterian Church for the storm," "in the creation of this agency, without which domestic missions upon her extended frontier must have been brought abruptly to a close, and many faithful laborers, without a warning, cast loose upon the world, without visible prospect of support for themselves and their families."¹ This committee surrendered its trusts to the Assembly's Executive Committee of Domestic Missions, according to its own proffer and the Assembly's action.

For the time being the Assembly enlarged the number of duties to be rendered by the Committee of Domestic Missions. In framing the constitution of this committee, the Assembly had passed one more resolution than in that of Foreign Missions—a resolution commending to its particular attention a special class of the greater class of people for whom the committee must labor. The Assembly had resolved:

That the great field of missionary operation among our colored population falls more immediately under the care of the Committee of Domestic Missions; and that the committee be urged to give it serious and constant attention, and the Presbyteries to cooperate with the committee in securing pastors and missionaries for this field.²

¹ "Minutes of the Assembly of 1861," pp. 49, 50.

² *Ibid.*, p. 20.

Two days later the Assembly resolved:

That in view of the service rendered by the action of the Church Extension Committee, as organized under the Old Assembly, and the importance of continuing to extend aid to the feeble churches in the erection of church edifices, the duties of that committee be put in charge of the Committee of Domestic Missions, until otherwise ordered by the General Assembly.¹

The reader of history has remarked over and over that a time of war is a time unfavorable to religious living and achievement. The reader of the church records in the South, 1861-65, is driven to the conclusion that though stout defenders of their political principles, they were stouter still in defensive and offensive Christian warfare.

The Executive Committee of Education was also constituted by our Assembly. It solemnly reaffirmed "the deliverances made in its former connection concerning the responsibility that rests on the church to secure and maintain for itself a pious, gifted, and learned ministry." It appointed an executive committee to aid candidates for the gospel ministry who needed assistance, and formed a constitution for said committee. Its constitution was as nearly like those which have already been illustrated as its nature and ends allowed.

An Executive Committee of Publication, also with a constitution, the exact analogue of those of the other agencies was constituted. Important as this branch of church work is, as the nature of the work is so well known it will not prove interesting or instructive to dwell longer upon it.

The following mode of electing these several committees was determined upon by the Assembly:

I. The Assembly's standing committees shall, on making their respective reports, present nominations for the members and officers of their respective executive committees for the ensuing year.

¹ "Minutes of the General Assembly," 1861, p. 35.

2. The presentations of these respective nominations shall not preclude any additional nominations which any member of the Assembly may choose to make.

3. The election of said committee shall not take place until at least one day after the nominations are made.

4. In all cases a majority of the votes of the Assembly shall be necessary to an election.¹

Thus the Assembly kept its own hand on the helm of all its great enterprises. It had no irresponsible societies to do its work, no barely responsible boards.

One of the most interesting scenes in this Assembly was witnessed on the discussion of the report of the committee on "The Propriety of Securing a Charter for the Assembly." This report contained the draft of a bill to incorporate the trustees of the General Assembly. The peculiar feature of this instrument is contained in its fourth section, which reads as follows:

Be it further enacted, That whenever the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America shall establish any committees, agencies, or boards, for the purposes of education, publication, foreign and domestic missions, church extension, or any other committees, agencies, or boards connected with the benevolent purposes and operations of the said Assembly, any of the said committees, agencies, or boards shall be held and deemed to be branches of this corporation; subject always to the review, control, and power of the said General Assembly; and when any gift, conveyance, or transfer of estate in any wise, any devise, or bequest shall be made to "the trustees of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America," for either of the committees, agencies, or boards of the General Assembly, it shall be good and effectual to transfer the estate, property, or thing in as full and as perfect a manner as if the said committee, agency, or board had been especially incorporated with powers to take and to hold the same, and no misnomer or misconception of the said corporation shall defeat any gift, grant, devise, or bequest to the corporation, wherever the interest shall appear sufficiently upon the face of the gift, grant, devise, or bequest.²

The aim in this was "to keep our boards or committees dependent upon and responsible to the General Assembly;

¹ "Minutes of the General Assembly," 1861, p. 22.

² *Ibid.*, 1861, pp. 31-33.

to have an organization broad enough to embrace all our undertakings; to keep them so bound together that the Creator may be above the creature; to have the church present the view of the vine and the branches.”¹

This paper, though scrutinized with the keenest insight and amended before its final adoption, was received with the greatest satisfaction. It was felt that the biblical idea of polity was being further approximated. This bill was never enacted, but in substance was wrought into the charter of 1866, granted by the State of North Carolina. But the high-water mark of interest was reached as early as the first Saturday, in the hearing of the “Address to the Churches of Jesus Christ throughout the Earth,” prepared by the committee of which Dr. J. H. Thornwell was the chairman. In this letter the church was trying to let the world look on its *orientation*. It aimed to show the other churches its own *raison de etre*, and its aims toward God and man. It is a paper of which any church might be proud. As we reread it, again and again remarking its luminous precision of thought and language, its broad and deep charity for all the Lord’s own, and the profoundly sanctified spirit that runs through it all, the impression comes with increasing strength that in that single paper is enough to justify the separate existence of the Southern Presbyterian Church. The church is the pillar and ground of the truth or nothing. It is to be doubted whether any other church in existence was more capable of setting forth the truth on the questions in debate than this church showed itself in that letter. Such a document should be read by every student who would know the origin of the Presbyterian Church, South. Our limits admit only of some excerpts, which, however, have been so selected as to give a fair notion of the address as

¹ “Minutes of the General Assembly,” 1861, pp. 31-35.

a whole, so far as such a thing can be done. They are as follows:

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America to all the churches of Jesus Christ throughout the earth, greeting: grace, mercy, and peace be multiplied unto you.

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN: It is probably known to you that the Presbyteries and Synods in the Confederate States, which were formerly in connection with the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, have renounced the jurisdiction of that body, and dissolved the ties which bound them ecclesiastically with their brethren of the North. This act of separation left them without any formal union among themselves. But as they are one in faith and order, and still adhere to their old standards, measures were promptly adopted for giving expression to their unity, by the organization of a supreme court, upon the model of the one whose authority they had just relinquished. Commissioners, duly appointed, from all the Presbyteries of these Confederate States, met accordingly, in the city of Augusta, on the fourth day of December, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-one, and then and there proceeded to constitute the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America. . . .

In thus taking its place among sister churches of this and other countries, it seems proper that it should set forth the causes which have impelled it to separate from the church of the North, and to indicate a general view of the course which it feels it incumbent upon it to pursue in the new circumstances in which it is placed.

We should be sorry to be regarded by our brethren in any part of the world as guilty of schism. We are not conscious of any purpose to rend the body of Christ. . . .

We have separated from our brethren of the North as Abraham separated from Lot—because we are persuaded that the interests of true religion will be more effectually subserved by two independent churches, under the circumstances in which the two countries are placed, than by one united body.

I. In the first place, the course of the last Assembly, at Philadelphia, conclusively shows that if we should remain together the political questions which divide us as citizens will be obtruded on our church courts, and discussed by Christian ministers and elders with all the acrimony, bitterness, and rancor with which such questions are usually discussed by men of the world. Our Assembly would present a mournful spectacle of strife and debate. . . .

Two nations, under any circumstances except those of perfect homogeneousness, cannot be united in one church without the rigid exclusion of all civil and secular questions from its halls. Where the countries differ in their customs and institutions, and view each other with an eye of jealousy and

rivalry, if national feelings are permitted to enter the church courts there must be an end of harmony and peace. . . . An Assembly composed of representatives from two such countries could have no security for peace except in a steady, uncompromising adherence to the Scriptural principle, that it would know no man after the flesh; that it would abolish the distinctions of barbarian, Scythian, bond or free, and recognize nothing but the new creature in Christ Jesus. . . .

The only conceivable condition, therefore, upon which the church of the North and of the South could remain together as one body, with any prospect of success, is the rigorous exclusion of the questions and passions of the forum from its halls of debate. This is what always ought to be done. The provinces of church and state are perfectly distinct, and one has no right to usurp the jurisdiction of the other. The state is a natural institute, founded in the constitution of man as moral and social, and designed to realize the idea of justice. It is the society of rights. The church is a supernatural institute, founded in the facts of redemption, and is designed to realize the idea of grace. It is the society of the redeemed. The state aims at social order; the church, at spiritual holiness. The state looks to the visible and outward; the church is concerned for the invisible and inward. The badge of the state's authority is the sword, by which it becomes a terror to evil-doers, and a praise to them that do well; the badge of the church is the keys by which it opens and shuts the kingdom of heaven, according as men are believing or impenitent. The power of the church is exclusively spiritual; that of the state includes the exercise of force. The constitution of the church is a divine revelation; the constitution of the state must be determined by human reason and the course of providential events. The church has no right to construct or modify a government for the state, and the state has no right to frame a creed or polity for the church. They are as planets moving in different orbits, and unless each is confined to its own track, the consequences may be as disastrous in the moral world as collision of different spheres in the world of matter. It is true that there is a point at which their respective jurisdictions seem to meet—in the idea of duty. But even duty is viewed by each in very different lights. The church enjoins it as obedience to God, and the state enforces it as safeguard of order. But there can be no collision unless one or the other blunders as to the things that are materially right. When the state makes wicked laws contradicting the eternal principles of rectitude, the church is at liberty to testify against them, and humbly petition that they may be repealed. In like manner, if the church becomes seditious and a disturber of the peace the state has a right to abate the nuisance. In ordinary cases, however, there is not likely to be a collision. Among a Christian people there is little difference of opinion as to the radical distinctions of right and wrong. The only serious danger is where moral duty is conditioned upon a political question. Under the pretext of inculcating duty, the church may usurp the power to determine the question which conditions it, and that is precisely what she is debarred from doing. The condition

must be given. She must accept it from the state, and then her own course is clear. If Caesar is your master, then pay tribute to him; but whether the *if* holds—whether Caesar is your master or not, whether he ever had any just authority, whether he now retains it or has forfeited it—these are points which the church has no commission to adjudicate.

It was ardently desired that the sublime spectacle might be presented of one church upon earth combining in cordial fellowship and holy love—the disciples of Jesus in different and even hostile lands. But alas for the weakness of man! these golden visions were soon dispelled. The first thing which roused our Presbyteries to look the question of separation seriously in the face was the course of the Assembly in venturing to determine, as a court of Jesus Christ, which it did by necessary implication, the true interpretation of the Constitution of the United States as to the kind of government it intended to form. A political theory was, to all intents and purposes, propounded which made secession a crime, the seceding States rebellious, and the citizens who obeyed them traitors. We say nothing here as to the righteousness or unrighteousness of these decrees. What we maintain is, that, whether right or wrong, the church had no right to make them—she transcended her sphere, and usurped the duties of the state. . . .

We frankly admit that the mere unconstitutionality of the proceedings of the last Assembly is not, in itself considered, a sufficient ground of separation. It is the consequence of these proceedings which makes them so offensive. It is the door which they open for the worst passions of human nature in the deliberation of church courts. . . . For the sake of peace, therefore, for Christian charity, for the honor of the church, and for the glory of God, we have been constrained, as much as in us lies, to remove all occasion of offense. We have quietly separated, and we are grateful to God that, while leaving for the sake of peace, we leave it with the humble consciousness that we ourselves have never given occasion to break the peace. We have never confounded Caesar and Christ; we have never mixed the issues of this world with the weighty matters that properly belong to us as citizens of the kingdom of God.

2. Though the immediate occasion of separation was the course of the General Assembly at Philadelphia in relation to the Federal Government and the war, yet there is another ground on which the independent organization of the Southern Church can be amply and Scripturally maintained.

If it is desirable that each nation should contain a separate and independent church, the Presbyteries of the Confederate States need no apology for bowing to the decree of Providence, which in withdrawing their country from the government of the United States has at the same time determined that they should withdraw from the church of their fathers. It is not that they have ceased to love, not that they have abjured its ancient principles, or forgotten its glorious history. . . .

The antagonism of Northern and Southern sentiments on the subject of slavery lies at the root of all the difficulties which have resulted in the

dismemberment of the Federal Union and involved us in the horrors of an unnatural war. The Presbyterian Church in the United States has been enabled by the divine grace to pursue, for the most part, an eminently conservative, because a thoroughly Scriptural, policy in relation to this delicate question. It has planted itself upon the Word of God, and utterly refused to make slaveholding a sin, or non-slaveholding a term of communion. But though both sections are agreed as to this general principle, it is not to be disguised that the North exercises a deep and settled antipathy to slavery itself, while the South is equally zealous in its defense. Recent events can have no other effect than to confirm the antipathy on one hand, and to strengthen the attachment on the other. . . .

And here we may venture to lay before the Christian world our views as a church upon the subject of slavery. We beg a candid hearing. In the first place, we would have it distinctly understood that, in our ecclesiastical capacity, we are neither the friends nor the foes of slavery—that is to say, we have no commission either to propagate or abolish it. The policy of its existence or non-existence is a question which exclusively belongs to the state. We have no right, as a church, to enjoin it as a duty or condemn it as a sin. Our business is with the duties that spring from the relations—the duties of the master on the one hand, and of the slave on the other. These duties we are to proclaim and enforce with spiritual sanctions. The social, civil, political problems connected with this great subject transcend our sphere, as God has not intrusted to his church the organization of society, the construction of governments, nor the allotment of individuals to their various stations. The church has as much right to preach to the monarchies of Europe and the despotisms of Asia the doctrines of republican equality, as to preach to the government of the South the extirpation of slavery. This position is impregnable, unless it can be shown that slavery is a sin. Upon every other hypothesis, it is so clearly a question for the state that the proposition would never for a moment have been doubted had there not been a foregone conclusion in relation to its moral character. Is slavery, then, a sin?

In answering this question, as a church, let it be distinctly borne in mind that the only rule of judgment is the written Word of God. The church knows nothing of the intuitions of reason, or the deductions of philosophy, except those reproduced in the sacred canon. She has a positive constitution in the Holy Scriptures, and has no right to utter a single syllable upon any subject, except as the Lord puts it into her mouth. She is founded, in other words, on express *revelation*. The question, then, is brought within a narrow compass: Do the Scriptures, directly or indirectly, condemn slavery as a sin? If they do not, the dispute is ended, for the church, without forfeiting her character, dares not go beyond them. Now, we venture to assert that if men had drawn their conclusions upon the subject only from the Bible, it would no more have entered into any human head to denounce slavery as a sin, than to denounce monarchy, aristocracy, or poverty. The truth is, men have listened to what they falsely considered as primitive intuitions, or as necessary

deductions from primitive cognitions, and then have gone to the Bible to confirm the crotchets of their vain philosophy.

We have assumed no new attitude. We stand where the Church of God has always stood, from Abraham to Moses, from Moses to Christ, from Christ to the Reformers, and from the Reformers to ourselves. We stand upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone. Shall we be excluded from the fellowship of our brethren in other lands because we dare not depart from the Charter of our faith? Shall we be branded with the stigma of reproach because we cannot consent to corrupt the Word of God to suit the intuition of an infidel philosophy? Shall our names be pointed out as evil and the finger of scorn be pointed at us because we utterly refuse to break our communion with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with Moses, David, and Isaiah, with apostles, prophets, and martyrs, with all the noble army of confessors who have gone to glory from slaveholding countries and from a slaveholding church without ever dreaming that they had lived in mortal sin by conniving at slavery in the midst of them? Others, if they please, may spend their time in declaiming on the tyranny of earthly masters; it will be our aim to resist the real tyrants which oppress the soul—Sin and Satan. These are the foes against whom we shall find it employment enough to wage a successful war—and to this holy war it is the purpose of our church to devote itself with redoubled energy. We feel that the souls of our slaves are a solemn trust, and we shall strive to present them faultless before the presence of God.

Indeed, as we contemplate their condition in the Southern States and contrast it with that of their fathers before them, and that of their brethren in the present day in their native land, we cannot but accept it as a gracious Providence that they have been brought in such numbers to our shores, and redeemed from the bondage of barbarism and sin. Slavery to them has certainly been overruled for the greatest good. . . .

As to the endless declamations about human rights, we have only to say that human rights are not a fixed, but a fluctuating quantity. Their sum is not the same in any two nations on the globe. The rights of Englishmen are one thing, the rights of Frenchmen another. There is a minimum without which a man cannot be responsible; there is a maximum which expresses the highest degree of civilization and of Christian culture. The education of the species consists in its ascent along this line. Now when it is said that slavery is inconsistent with human rights, we crave to understand what point in this line is the slave conceived to occupy. There are, no doubt, many rights which belong to other men—to Englishmen, to Frenchmen, to his master, for example—which are denied to him. But is he fit to possess them? Has God qualified him to meet the responsibilities which their possession necessarily implies? His place in the scale is determined by his competency to fulfill its duties. There are other rights which he certainly possesses, without which he could be neither human nor accountable. Before slavery can be charged with doing him injustice it must be shown that the

minimum which falls to his lot at the bottom of the line is out of proportion to his capacity and culture—a thing which can never be done by abstract speculation.

To avoid the suspicion of conscious weakness of our cause when contemplated from the side of pure speculation, we advert for a moment to those pretended intuitions which stamp the reprobation of humanity upon this ancient and hoary institution. We admit that there are primitive principles of morals which lie at the root of human consciousness. But the question is, how are we to distinguish them? The subjective feeling of certainty is no adequate criterion, as it is equally felt in reference to crotchets and hereditary prejudices. The very point is to know when this certainty indicates a primitive cognition, and when it does not. There must, therefore, be some eternal test, and whatever cannot abide that test has no authority as a primary truth. That test is an inward necessity of thought, which in all minds at the proper stage of maturity is absolutely universal. Whatever is universal is natural. We are willing that slavery should be tried by this standard. We are willing to abide by the testimony of the race, and if man, as man, has everywhere condemned it—if all human laws have prohibited it as a crime—if it stands in the same category with malice, murder, and theft—then we are willing, in the name of humanity, to renounce it, and to renounce it forever. But what if the overwhelming majority of mankind have approved it? What if philosophers and statesmen have justified it, and the laws of all nations acknowledged it—what then becomes of these luminous intuitions? They are an *ignis fatuus*, mistaken for a star.

We have now, brethren, in a brief compass—for the nature of this address admits only an outline—opened to you our whole hearts upon this delicate and vexed subject. We have concealed nothing. We have sought to conciliate no sympathy by appeals to your charity. We have tried our cause by the Word of God; and though protesting against its authority to judge in a question concerning the duty of the church, we have not refused to appear at the tribunal of reason. Are we not right, in view of all the preceding considerations, in remitting the social, civil, and political problems connected with slavery in the state?

The ends which we propose to accomplish as a church are the same as those which are proposed by every other church. To proclaim God's truth as a witness to the nations; to gather his elect from the four corners of the earth; and, through the Word, ministries, and ordinances, to train them for eternal life—is the great business of his people. The only thing that will be at all peculiar to us is the manner in which we shall attempt to discharge our duty. In almost every department of labor, except the pastoral care of congregations, it has been usual for the church to resort to societies more or less closely connected with itself, and yet logically and really distinct. It is our purpose to rely upon the regular organs of our government, and executive agencies directly and immediately responsible to them. We wish to make the church not merely a superintendent, but an agent. We wish to develop

the idea that the congregation of believers, as visibly organized, is the very society or corporation which is divinely called to do the work of the Lord. We shall therefore endeavor to do what has never yet been adequately done—bring out the energies of our Presbyterian system of government. From the session to the Assembly we shall strive to enlist all of our courts, as courts, in the department of Christian effort. We are not ashamed to confess that we are intensely Presbyterian. We embrace all other denominations in the arms of Christian fellowship and love, but our own scheme of government we humbly believe to be according to the pattern shown in the mount, and, by God's grace, we propose to put its efficiency to the test.

Brethren, we have done. We have told you who we are, and what we are. We greet you in the ties of Christian brotherhood. We desire to cultivate peace and charity with all our fellow-Christians throughout the world. We invite to ecclesiastical communion all who maintain our principles of faith and order.

And now we commend you to God and the Word of his grace. We devoutly pray that the whole Catholic Church may be afresh baptized with the Holy Ghost, and that she may be speedily stirred up to give the Lord no rest until he establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.¹

The scene "which was enacted at the moment of the subscription of this letter will be forgotten," says an eloquent participant," by none who witnessed it. Read, and read again, amid the solemn stillness of an audience whose emotions are hushed with awe, it was finally adopted and laid on the moderator's table; when, one by one, the members came silently forward and signed the instrument with their names. We were carried back to those stirring times in Scottish story when the Solemn League and Covenant was spread upon the gravestones at the Gray Friars' Churchyard, and Christian heroes pricked their veins, that with the red blood they might sign their allegiance to the kingdom and crown of Jesus Christ, their Lord and Head."²

The Distinctive Principles of the Church at First.—

We have now passed in review the more important acts

¹ For this letter in full see "Minutes of 1861," pp. 51-60; Alexander's "Digest," pp. 369-380; "Distinctive Principles," pp. 6-25.

² Palmer's "Life of Thornwell," p.

of the Constituting Assembly. Observing the fabric set up as a completed whole, we may remark its distinctive principles, viz.: First, witnessing for the non-secular character of the church and the headship of Christ, or, in other words, for a strict adherence to the constitution. This explains the church's rise. This was the church's great and inspiring mission. Second, the complete organization of the church, obviating the necessity of boards and societies. The Southern Presbyterian Church is one of the most completely organized of all the churches of God. The church itself is its own home missionary society, its own foreign missionary society, its own education society, etc. It attends to the work itself which God gave it to do. Herein it has been a pattern not without effect to other churches. The mother-church from which the Southern Church came has wisely imitated to a certain degree the daughter, in turning her boards into virtual commissions.

The dignity of the constituting body of this first Assembly was very great. The writer of the "Address to the Churches of Jesus Christ throughout the Earth" was the luminary of the body—a mental and moral giant—but the Assembly was as a whole an able and godly body. A glance at the roll of commissioners shows that they were no mean men. Running down the roll of ministers, we find the names of Dr. John H. Boccock, Dr. Wm. H. Foote, Dr. Joseph R. Wilson, Dr. C. C. Jones, Dr. John N. Waddel, Dr. James A. Lyon, Dr. Drury Lacy, Dr. R. H. Morrison, Dr. J. Leighton Wilson, Dr. John B. Adger, Dr. D. McNeil Turner, Dr. Theodoric Pryor, Dr. Francis McFarland, Dr. James B. Ramsey. Among the elders we note the names of W. P. Webb, T. C. Perrin, W. L. Mitchell, Job Johnston, J. G. Sheppard, J. T. Swayne, J. D. Armstrong, Charles Phillips. Many other names of great

dignity and reputation might have been added to each of these lists. And these were no more than a fair sample of the Southern Church. The Synod of Virginia could have mustered an abler body than the one we have been considering.

Whether we look at the causes of the existence of the Presbyterian Church, South, at the perfection of her organization, at the orientation of herself in the theological cosmos, at her distinctive principles, or, in fine, at the dignity of her members, we are irresistibly led to a conviction of a surpassing excellence in her beginning, and prophesy thereof in her end.