

STATEMENT

OF THE

DIFFICULTIES IN THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

OF THE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

IN THEIR BEARING ON THE

SOUTHERN CHURCHES:

WITH AN

APPENDIX,

RELATING TO THE

CHARLESTON UNION PRESBYTERY.

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STATEMENT, &c.

THE Presbyterian Church in this country, from its origin about the commencement of the last century, until within a few recent years, has generally preserved, in an eminent degree, "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Originally composed of elements not perfectly homogeneous; gradually spreading itself over a vast extent of country; receiving also large accessions from other denominations holding the same doctrines; it early recognized *mutual forbearance* with reference to minor points, as essential to harmonious action. At the same time, the most ample provision has always existed for the separation from the Church, by a prescribed constitutional course of discipline, of any who might prove faithless to her standards of doctrine and order. *Agreement in essentials, toleration as to non-essentials*, have been her acknowledged long-established *terms of communion*.

The original simplicity of Presbyterianism in this country, was admirably fitted to secure this christian union. The government of the Church was administered solely by *Pastors*, and *Ruling Elders*. Each Presbytery managed its own affairs without *foreign interference*. No General Assembly existed at all until 1789: and when that judicatory was rendered necessary by the increased territory of the church, its authority was restricted within narrow limits. It was empowered to "receive and issue appeals and references regularly brought before it from the inferior judicatories," and also to exercise a general superintendence as to the concerns of the church. And to guard against the possibility of disturbance to the churches, from any "usurped claim of making laws," the following provision was incorporated into the constitution, viz.: "Before any overtures or regulations proposed by the Assembly to be established as standing rules,* shall be *obligatory on the churches*,

* This phrase was afterward altered to "constitutional rules," to render the meaning more definite. See Digest, page 288.

it shall be necessary to transmit them to all the PRESBYTERIES, and to receive the returns of at least a majority of them, in writing, approving thereof."

Thus the constitution, in the plainest terms, expressly *frees* the churches from all *obligation* to obey any "standing rules" which might be promulgated by the *General Assembly* without having been according to a prescribed form, "established" by the PRESBYTERIES.

Of late years, however, this most important article, in common with many other provisions of the constitution, has been gradually lost sight of; a most disastrous change has taken place in the relation sustained by the General Assembly to the presbyteries; until, at length, the effective power of the *entire Church* has come to be concentrated in the *Assembly*; and, what is worse, it is wielded there by comparatively *a few individuals*, most of whom either do not sustain the *pastoral relation* at all, or are engaged in occupations aside from the appropriate duties of the gospel ministry; and are, therefore, least fitted, and least authorized, to rule the church. Where there is *power*, there will be *party*; and hence it has followed, as a natural consequence, from the absorption by the *Assembly* of the powers constitutionally belonging to the presbyteries, that the floor of that body has been, for a series of years, a mere arena for fierce contention; while the party feuds which have originated there, have been carried down to the most distant presbyteries, and have materially disturbed the peace of ministers and churches once united and harmonious. The beautiful and well-proportioned presbyterian system of our standards has thus been, not merely distorted and defaced, but absolutely *inverted* and *undermined*; and the General Assembly, ceasing to be what the constitution prescribes, "the bond of union, peace, correspondence, and mutual confidence among all our churches," has become the grand agitator, and efficient promoter, throughout the church, of dissension, discord, and strife.

So long ago as 1831, the pressure of these evils was felt to be so great, and their ruinous tendencies so apparent, that an attempt was made to call the attention of the churches to the necessity of some *change* in our *ecclesiastical organization*, as being the only effectual remedy in the case. In an article which appeared in the *Biblical Repository* for January, 1832, the Rev. Dr. Alexander,

one of the professors in the Princeton Seminary, proposed a plan for the pacification of the church, of which the following is a synopsis: *Instead of the present number of Synods, "let the whole Church be divided into six Synods; let each of these Synods be constituted by an equal representation from the Presbyteries within its bounds, and let it possess all the judicial and superintending powers which now belong to the General Assembly; and let the General Assembly remain simply a Board of Union, and an advisory council to the whole Church."* In the division of the Church thus into Synods, let respect be had, "first, to geographical contiguity; and, secondly, to similarity in views and habits; and let three of the Synods be NORTH, and three SOUTH of the Potomac; SO THAT ALL THE CHURCHES IN THE SLAVE-HOLDING STATES WILL BE SEPARATED FROM THOSE OF THE NON-SLAVE-HOLDING STATES, AND NO OPPORTUNITY EXIST FOR THEIR COMING INTO COLLISION IN THE ECCLESIASTICAL JUDICATORIES." *Thus the ecclesiastical power of the Assembly would be taken away, and with it all capacity to disturb the Church.*

The two most important reasons urged by the author of the plan, to show the necessity of such a change, are, *the increasing spirit of party in the General Assembly, and the position of that body in reference to SLAVERY.* We give the writer's own words:—

"The existing and increasing spirit of party in our Church, requires some change in its organization, to prevent the supreme judicatory from becoming a mere arena for fierce contention. Every thing indicates, that the persons who take the lead in these parties, are becoming more and more ardent, and sometimes even acrimonious, in conducting the controversies which have arisen out of the proceedings of the last Assembly. Nothing can be more probable than that the next General Assembly, like the last, will be a scene of contention; and contention in such a body, and in so conspicuous a situation, will not only be accompanied with disorder and disgraceful warmth, but will do a lasting injury to the Presbyterian Church, and, as we believe, to the cause of truth and piety."

"The professed, and principal object of the proposed organization is, to bring together respectively, those members of our church, who are pretty nearly agreed in their doctrinal and ecclesiastical views; and to separate those, whose differences are such as to keep them in perpetual agitation. We are aware that there are among us some polemical spirits, who are of opinion that the best way is to *fight it out*, as they are confident that the truth will prevail. In regard to *fundamental errors*, we are of the same opinion; but in relation to *differences among brethren*, we think the case is very different. The object of such a new-modelling is to

promote peace among brethren, between whom there are some shades of difference; and its effect will be, to prevent interminable controversies about non-essential matters. When captious and acrimonious controversy is ended, a more calm and deliberate opinion will be adopted respecting the points in dispute."

In reference to the position of the Assembly, and of the Church, as to SLAVERY, the writer thus proceeds; "In a large extent of country, over which our Church is spread, domestic slavery exists, and is practised by church members, under the impression that, in existing circumstances, it is lawful and authorized by the precepts and practice of the Apostles. But those parts of the church where slavery is not tolerated, view the whole thing with abhorrence, and cannot exercise, in many cases at least, charity towards the holders of slaves. This subject has been threatening to disturb and divide the Presbyterian Church almost ever since it had an existence; and the evil has been only prevented by great prudence in the General Assembly. They have commonly continued to *evade* this agitating subject; but this course has not satisfied all, and, before long, it *must come up*, in such a form as greatly to disturb, if not, *to rend the church asunder.*"*

Such, in brief, are the two most important arguments urged by Dr. Alexander in 1832, for the adoption of such a plan as would take away from the General Assembly all power to agitate the question of slavery, or any other dividing question in the church. Whether, or not, the reasons which then rendered desirable and necessary such a SOUTHERN ORGANIZATION as is involved in the plan, exist now in vastly greater strength, is a question of deep interest to the southern churches. The solution of this question is best furnished by a simple narrative of what has occurred in the Presbyterian Church since the time when Dr. Alexander proposed his plan.

About that time a small number of leading partizans, were beginning to agitate, rather secretly, than openly, the question of *dividing* the Church. This is the origin of the (so called) *Reform Party*. As many have been led to identify this party with the *Old School*, and to sanctify the ambition of its leaders by associating their revolutionary schemes with a peculiar love for orthodoxy, we shall cite the language of Dr. Alexander and other genuine Old Schoolmen, to show the true position of this matter. In the article from which we have already quoted, Dr. A. thus expresses his own sentiments, and those of the conductors of the *Princeton Repertory*, the well known organ of the Old School.

*Biblical Repertory, January, 1832, pp. 38—45.

“The Church of Christ is ONE, and all who agree in essential matters should hold communion together, notwithstanding minor differences. And if division, on account of some diversity in sentiment, commences, there is no telling where it will end; for we presume, there are no two men, who, in all their opinions, on every subject, entirely agree. And as not only our presbyteries, but our congregations, are, in multitudes of cases, composed of persons who agree partly with one and partly with the other side, a division of the church by a line of difference on theological points, would split many churches into two parts, neither of which would be able, without the other, to support the gospel among them. Endless controversies, also, respecting the church property would necessarily arise, and society would be agitated and convulsed to its very foundations. And as brethren, differing as we do now, have hitherto continued to live in peace, and in most places, in great harmony; and have loved each other as brethren, and have cordially co-operated in promoting the Redeemer’s kingdom,—why may not this still be the case, after the present exacerbation of feeling has subsided? Upon mature deliberation, therefore, we declare our sentiments to be opposed to all schemes which tend to the division of the Presbyterian Church. We do not know, indeed, that there are any persons, who seriously wish or meditate any such thing. But sometimes, hints and rumors come to our ears, which seem to have this bearing. We deem it, therefore, a duty, to take this opportunity of disclaiming every thought of this kind for ourselves, and of avowing our intention to oppose firmly all measures, wherever they may originate, which have a tendency to produce division in the Presbyterian Body.”

Such was the position of the Old School in January, 1832. The reform leaders were in a very small minority in the Assembly of that year, but were still able to set in motion the elements of disunion. In each succeeding assembly, they laboriously and successfully fanned the flames of discord, until after the rising of that body in 1834, they deemed themselves sufficiently strong to put forth a document, called the “Act and Testimony.” This paper, emanating from the pen of R. J. Breckenridge, denounced, in strong terms, divers “noxious errors” and “practical evils,” which it affirmed to exist in the Church; avowed a “fixed purpose,” on the part of its author and those who concurred with him, “to endeavour to exclude from her communion” those whom they considered culpable in this matter; recommended that all who approved the “Act and Testimony,” should “give their public adherence thereto,” condemned the course which had been adopted for a series of years by the General Assembly, the supreme judicatory of the church;

and proceeded to "earnestly recommend that a CONVENTION be held," immediately before the sessions of the Assembly in May, 1835, which convention should represent the party that concurred in the sentiments of the "Act and Testimony." This was the first *public* REFORM measure. The Old School Princeton Repository of October, 1834, contained a review of the Act and Testimony, written, it is said, by one of the professors in the Theological Seminary, and sanctioned by his colleagues. This review condemns the Act and Testimony, and reprobates the "extra-constitutional, and avowedly revolutionary measures which it recommends." But the leaders had gained their object so far as this; they had succeeded in *organizing a party*, and in identifying their cause in the minds of many, with that of *orthodoxy*.

Party conventions became now the order of the day, and greatly strengthened the cause of "Reform." The next important measure was a *secret* "Circular," addressed, in 1836, by a committee of the party, to such ministers and others throughout the church as were supposed to favor their cause. This measure served the purpose of ascertaining their strength, which end being attained, the same committee put forth, some time after, a public "Address to the Ministers, Elders, and Members of the Presbyterian Church,"* which, near the close, thus distinctly avows the object at which the party was aiming: "Fathers, brethren, fellow christians, whatever else may be dark, this is clear, *we cannot continue in the same body*. In some way or other, these men must be separated from us."

The position which the Old School still maintained, notwithstanding the gathering strength of "Reform," will be seen by the annexed extracts from the concluding part of an article in the Repository of July, 1836, understood to be from the pen of one of the professors in the Princeton Seminary.

"We cannot see how any set of men can, with a good conscience, desire to effect the division of the church, until they are called upon to profess what they do not believe, or required to do what they cannot approve. This, as far as we can see, is the only prin-

* These documents were signed as follows; W. W. Phillips, J. M'Elroy, G. Potts, J. Breckenridge; F. M'Farland, W. A. M'Dowell, J. M. Krebs, H. Rankin, H. Auclimcloss, J. Lenox. Of the ministers, three, it will be perceived, are Agents of the Assembly's Board.

ciple which can bear the test; which will acquit us, in the sight of God and man, for tearing asunder that portion of the Church of Christ committed to our care. We know not how good can result. Instead of promoting peace, it will probably increase discord."

The secret Circular, and the public Address, were both well fitted to accomplish the object had in view. How the Princeton professors viewed these ominous movements of a party rapidly gaining ground, is very clearly evinced by the following passages in an article in the Repertory of Jan. 1837,—half a year later than the article last referred to.

"Our opinions are now what they ever have been on the subject of division. We expressed our dissent from the Act and Testimony, and its associated measures, mainly on the ground that we thought them designed and adapted to divide the church. Our brethren were hurt that such a view should be entertained or expressed. They came out in the public papers and denied that such was their design, and endeavoured to disprove that such was the tendency of their measures. In all this we greatly rejoiced. If they have changed, we have not. We adhere to our principles, and disclaim all co-operation in any extra-constitutional measures, till the crisis shall arrive, when we shall have to decide between a good conscience and disunion. We are well aware that many of our brethren, with whom we agree on most points, differ from us on this. Nor can we shut our eyes to the indications, which are increasing in number and significance every week, which render the disruption of our beloved church a very probable event. Its probability, however, does not render it, in our apprehension, less to be deprecated. We believe the principle to be erroneous, and fear the consequences will be disastrous. Our position we feel to be difficult and delicate. We are knowingly operating under the stress of conscience, against all our own interests, so far as they are not involved in the interests of the Church of God. There are occasions when it is proper and wise for the members of any society to resort to the right of *revolution*. The only question, as it regards our church, is, has such an occasion yet arrived? If it has, then let us have *combination*, *conventions*, and whatever else is necessary to do the work effectually and well. But if it has not, then all extra-constitutional measures are not only unwise, but *wrong*, not in policy merely, but in *morals*. Here, then, is a point on which every man is bound to be fully persuaded in his own mind. It is a question of *conscience* and *personal duty*. We do not believe that an occasion for revolution has occurred. That such a church should be rent asunder and split, no one can tell into how many fragments, is enough to make dispassionate men wonder and weep. Believing such separation to be wrong in principle, and fraught with calamities which no one can foresee or estimate, we should be recreant to every principle of *duty*, if we did not *say*

30. Those who think differently, must act differently. To their own master they stand or fall.”*

Such were the sentiments of Princeton in January, 1837, in respect to a division of the church, and to the extra-constitutional measures, by which an organized party was desiring to effect it. They are sentiments which then, beyond all doubt, accorded with the views of a large majority of the Old School orthodox men in the Presbyterian Church, and to which, now, every unbiassed mind will most cordially respond.

But party organization is something too potent to be effectually thwarted by mere reason and argument, however just and conclusive. Previous to the opening of the Assembly of 1837, a Convention was again held, which continued to meet, at intervals during the sessions of that body. In that convention, the measures to be carried through in the Assembly, were previously resolved on. In that convention, the party leaders (by what means, and under what pretexts, we cannot here detail) succeeded in gradually working up men, before comparatively moderate, to the point of sustaining that *new measure*, which has since made havoc of the church. And what was this new and unheard of device, which was to secure the power in the hands of the party leaders? Reader, it was **EXCISION**—summary *excision*,—without process, or trial, or hearing of any kind,—of 500 ministers and 60,000 church members! Yes, in a church from which, according to the constitution, not the humblest private individual can be cut off, without a fair hearing and full opportunity for self-defence, an effort was made to *excise* 60,000 church members, and then to justify that excision by setting “common fame” to proclaim with her hundred tongues, that they were “disorderly and heretical!” In a general assembly, which, according to the plainest letter and spirit of the constitution, cannot, by its own authority, establish a single “constitutional rule,” (even though it be but to alter the time of theological study,) a majority of 27 out of 237 men, undertook to cut off from the church,

* If such were the sentiments of the *Old School* Princeton Professors in 1837, in reference to the *duty* of protesting against extra-constitutional and revolutionary measures, ought the expression of the same sentiments in 1838 to expose ministers in regular standing to the penalty of *expulsion from the Church*, and to the added injury of being denounced as *heretics*?

at one stroke of the ecclesiastical scimitar, 500 ministers, 600 churches, and 60,000 church members!

The deed once done, every member of the assembly, however moderate before, who by any means had been procured to vote for it, was, of course, its pledged defender, and an *agent* most deeply interested to secure within his own range of influence, a majority to sustain his course. At the North, where dissensions had long raged, this was comparatively easy; but how should the Southern church,—peaceful and Catholic, as it generally was, and hitherto almost unanimous in opposing the introduction of the Philadelphia quarrel,—how should the Southern church be brought to sustain this excision? Reader, we feel ashamed and humbled when we state the fact, that there have been found a few individuals in the Southern Presbyterian Church who, with all the evidence to the contrary before their eyes, are yet capable of holding out the idea, either directly, or, (what is more effective) by insinuation, that the Excisers are generally *friendly*, and the Constitutionals who oppose them, generally *hostile*, to SLAVERY! Thus is the South made tributary to the reform leaders.

What are the facts in the case? Some of the most ultra fanatics in the cause of abolition, are prominent men in the reform, and all the prominent leaders of the reform, and a vast majority of the reform party, are utterly hostile to slavery. The truth is, the interests of the South are not safe in the hands of any Northern party. The Presbyterian Church is pledged by the Act of 1818, “to promote the complete abolition of slavery, as speedily as possible;” and the assembly which represented the reform party last May in Philadelphia, would not permit a respectful memorial from the Charleston Union Presbytery asking the repeal of that act, to be so much as read in their hearing. Thus that act continues of binding force on all the members of the Presbyterian Church who acknowledge the authority of the General Assembly; and we know, that the men who hold the principles of that act constitute an overwhelming majority in the church. R. J. Breckenridge, the great leader of the reform party, declared, in so many words, that he would *go to the stake* rather than suffer that act to be repealed.

Those Southern partizans who have dragged in the subject of abolition to obscure a simple question of right and wrong, viz.,

whether 60,000 members could justly be cut off from the church without trial, must not now complain that we tell the whole truth in this matter.

The reform leaders, in 1837, declared four synods, "out of the church." But in 1838, their commissioners claimed seats in the assembly, (as usual,) on the ground that this declaration was a mere nullity, and that, as the CONSTITUTION, and *not the will of a casual majority in the assembly*, is the supreme law of the church, they were necessarily in the church, till constitutionally separated from it. Hence arose two assemblies; one admitting, the other excluding, those synods; and each claiming to be *the* General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. The question, which is the true Assembly, is yet to be decided by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, the state which granted the charter. The matter comes before the civil court, in consequence of the fact that *civil* rights are at stake. The question is, whether the property of the Presbyterian Church belongs to the whole church, or only to a part of it. If the constitutional assembly proves to be the true one, then the whole church remains undivided, as that assembly excluded none of the commissioners.

But the reform leaders, still intent on a division of the church, adopted the following method to attain their end. They passed an "ordinance," requiring the presbyteries to adhere to *their assembly*, as the true and only general assembly; thus anticipating the decision of the court. This ordinance was designed to go down to every presbytery, proposing this *test*: "Will you adhere to the Assembly which held its sessions in the 7th Church, Philadelphia? If you answer in the *affirmative*, well; if in the *negative*, then you, too, are *out of the Church*; we do not excind you; you excind yourselves."

To such a point have we come. The General Assembly, according to the constitution, cannot, of its own authority, ordain a single "constitutional rule;" but an assembly, in which less than half the church was represented, has sent down to every presbytery this apple of discord. Nor is this all. If *the majority* of any presbytery shall come in collision with this *new test*, then this assembly *ordains* that *the minority* shall be *the* presbytery; and so in every church, and in every church session! And now this "ordinance" has gone throughout the Presbyterian Church, to produce an irre-

conciliable feud among churches before peaceful, by means of a *test* question, "Which assembly will you adhere to?" And under this "ordinance," a *minority* of *three* ministers out of *thirty*, may claim to be the presbytery; the same minority in a church of one hundred or five hundred members, may claim to be *the* church: and if by any chance, the court should decide the reformed assembly to be the true one, this little minority may retain the entire property! Such is the operation of the "reform ordinance."

Was there ever a greater outrage upon the first principles of civil and religious liberty? Did ever an organized party so triumph before over the quiescent, yielding majority? Was ever the sanctity of constitutions and pledged faith, so utterly set at nought? Did ever party zeal, and the exasperated feeling of controversy, so mislead men, who, in the ordinary relations of life, would scruple to violate any of the laws of moral rectitude? Surely the Presbyterian Church has learned a tremendous lesson, since 1832, with respect to the evil of party spirit and party organization, and the unrelenting nature of ecclesiastical despotism.

We have thus given a very brief sketch of what party organization has accomplished in the Presbyterian Church since the time when Dr. Alexander proposed his plan. The reader can now judge whether the argument for a new organization, taking away all ecclesiastical power from the assembly, on the ground of the "increasing spirit of party" in that body, has, or has not, derived any additional weight from the progress of events.

Let us now take up the other principal argument, by which the adoption of that plan was recommended. The proposed new organization was to separate "the churches in the *slave-holding*, from those in the *non-slave-holding* states, and thus to prevent their "coming in collision in the ecclesiastical judicatories."

"Those parts of the church where *slavery* is not tolerated, *view the whole thing with abhorrence*, and cannot exercise, in many cases at least, charity towards the holders of slaves." Such was Dr. Alexander's statement in 1832. And now we would ask, has the abolition spirit at the North, been increasing, or diminishing, since that time? Has the grand fundamental principle of abolitionism, viz., that slavery is in itself *sinful*, gained, or lost ground in the church? Is the tide of hostility to southern institutions rising or falling?

Who does not know, that where, in 1832, there existed one argument for breaking off from northern legislation on slavery, there exist now a thousand? Who does not know that the abolitionist memorials which throng in upon congress, are signed by vast numbers of different religious sects, who denounce *slavery* as a sin? Nothing is more intractable than an unenlightened, misdirected *conscience*. We see this in the movements of abolition, of reform, and every other species of ultraism. It is this characteristic of abolitionism which renders it most dangerous. It is becoming more and more a *conscientious sentiment* among Christians at the North, that they **MUST** do something to abolish slavery. Ignorant of the true state of things at the South; blindly led by a few unprincipled, cold-blooded agitators, they think it a duty to scatter fire-brands, arrows, and death abroad in the community, and, as the act of 1818 says "to use their honest, earnest, and unwearied endeavours, as speedily as possible, to obtain the complete abolition of slavery."

And now does any man, in his sober senses, believe, that a general assembly made up of an overwhelming majority of those who conscientiously hold the principles of that act, will long leave the southern church at peace? Is it honorable, is it consistent, is it right, that we should remain connected with an assembly which, this year, has refused to repeal it?

Some have called the act a "*dead letter*." It is so much a *dead letter*, that it constitutes the basis of all the abolitionist memorials to the assembly. It is so much a *dead letter*, that it pledges the whole Presbyterian Church to abolition. It is so much a *dead letter*, that the abolitionists supplied each member of the assembly of 1836 with a copy of it, in order that no one might plead ignorance as to the position of the Presbyterian Church in reference to slavery.

The abolitionists having thus brought it up, and having correctly argued that, in accordance with it, the church was bound to move in the work of abolition, the last assembly was memorialized by some who do *not* think slavery "utterly inconsistent with the law of God," to *repeal* it at once, and thus settle the matter. The reformed assembly which has been declared (at the South) to be friendly to slavery, refused even to *hear* the memorial. In the same assembly, the question came up for judicial decision, whether a *slaveholder* ought to be permitted to preach the gospel. The as-

sembly would not decide this question in the affirmative, but “legislated a plain and regular *judicial* case out of the house,” and *silenced* a southern member who attempted to show reasons why that body ought to meet the question, and set it at rest for ever.

And how do the southern reform leaders get along with their northern associates, in this matter? Why, in their meetings on southern soil, they boldly introduce *resolutions* declaring slavery a civil institution, and the act of 1818 not binding; but, at *Philadelphia* THEY ARE SILENT. But even this poor privilege of calling the act null and void at the South, and then at Philadelphia consenting that it shall not be repealed, is about to be taken away. Look at the following preamble and resolutions, adopted *since the meeting of the last Assembly*, by the *Reformed Synod of Cincinnati* :

“Whereas, the General Assembly of 1818 expressed its strong opposition to slavery, and declared it to be, manifestly the duty of all christians who enjoy the light of the present day, when the inconsistency of slavery, both with the dictates of humanity and religion, has been demonstrated, and is generally seen and acknowledged, to use their honest, earnest, and unwearied endeavours to correct the errors of former times, and as speedily as possible to efface this blot on our holy religion, and to obtain the complete abolition of slavery throughout christendom, and, if possible, throughout the world—therefore, Resolved, that the next General Assembly be respectfully entreated to institute an inquiry into this matter in all our presbyteries, in order to ascertain whether this duty has been neglected, and if so, to take such order on the subject as will tend to hasten the emancipation of the oppressed.”

And now we would respectfully inquire of our brethren at the South who “concur with the reform,”—how is this question to be disposed of? Here is an act of the assembly of “permanent authority,” pledging every member of the church to abolition.

It has been brought up by the abolitionists within three years, and has been used by them with tremendous effect; and now the question is, can the southern church procure its repeal? That question has been decided in the negative, by an assembly said to be peculiarly favourable to the South,—and at a time when it was their policy, at almost all hazards, to *propitiate* Southern Presbyterians, and bind them to their party. No opportunity so favourable to the South will ever recur in the assembly. And that act *does* sanction and sustain the schemes of abolitionists. If slavery be a sin against God, the church is *bound* to take it up, and the gen-

eral assembly is *expressly required* by the constitution to “bear testimony” against it, and to “attempt reformation” in “every church, presbytery, or synod.” The position that slavery is *not* a *sin against God*, is the only safe and true position for the South.

Further, when certain abolitionists of the reform party returned from *last year's* assembly, they were called to a severe account by their constituents for not doing more for abolition. What was their defence? In substance this, “we did more for abolition than any of the New School did, and we found that the best way to befriend abolition, was to excind the four synods first, and then press the slavery question.”

“When I urged the consideration of the memorials,” says Mr. Steele, one of the commissioners alluded to, “the almost uniform reply was, ‘we will admit no debate on slavery until the New School Question be settled.’ Most of them would acknowledge, *that after that should take place, the slavery question would undoubtedly be brought forward as the great leading subject in the church.* Indeed, I am confident, that the best way to advance the anti-slavery cause in the church, was to bring to a termination the questions which have agitated the church for years, and had so engrossed the attention of members (the New School Assembly of 1836, equally with the Old School Assembly of 1837,) that no time would be afforded to discuss or consider the memorials on slavery.”

“Here,” says the Rev. C. W. Howard, of Georgia, in his remarks addressed to his presbytery, “here you behold an influential Old School-man, coolly calculating his time, recruiting his own strength and that of his faction, by a season of temporary inaction, in order that the onset may be more vigorously made upon your rights, my brethren, when these very New School-men, who are called the only abolitionists, have either left or have been expelled the church.”

“Mr. Steele is told, that when the controversy with the New School is settled, then the slavery question will undoubtedly be brought forward as the great leading subject in the church. The South are told, that it is the New School party who trouble you; they are the only abolitionists; cut off these synods and you will have no more difficulty about slavery. Is not this blowing hot and cold from the same mouth? Let a plain man take these contradictory statements, and he will infer—but I leave him to make his own inference.”

“Dr. Blythe, an aged, and influential, and candid minister, and a most determined partisan of the Old School party, in commenting upon the published statements of Dr. Baxter of Virginia, uses the following language: ‘Does this recently made Old School-man mean to say, that all New School men are abolitionists? *Does he mean to insinuate that Old School-men are like himself, advocates of slavery? I know that neither is true?*’ Here, the charge of

abolitionism being confined to the New School party, is denied by an aged Old School minister, who has spent his life with Old Schoolmen in the North and West. He seems to be unwilling to allow the glory of being abolitionists, to be monopolized by his ecclesiastical adversaries. To whose opinion are we to give most weight, that of one who speaks from impressions merely, or of one who speaks from actual and prolonged personal knowledge?

“Hear this Old School minister a little further. He asks, ‘Was there a single man, infidel or christian, in the whole British dominions, who thought of legalising slavery from the Bible? No: this discovery was left for the southern politician, of the only land of liberty upon earth; and for the Rev. Dr. this one, and the Rev. Mr. that one, Presbyterian divines of the Old Dominion, and the far South. Tell it not in Gath!’”

It was in view of facts like these, corroborated by personal knowledge (on the part of many of its members,) as to the position of the northern church in respect to slavery, that the Charleston Union Presbytery, at its late sessions, adopted the following resolutions, viz.:

“*Resolved*, That the time is now fully come for the southern church to decide, whether it can consistently retain connection with, and be bound by the acts of any General Assembly that *claims and exercises the right to legislate on slavery.*

“*Resolved*, That this presbytery recommends to the churches a deliberate examination of this subject, with reference to decisive action.”

Our limits have confined us to the consideration of but *two* principal arguments in favor of such a southern organization as is involved in the plan presented by Dr. Alexander. In conclusion, we present the following brief summary of the facts in the case.

In 1832, it was thought that the “existing and increasing spirit of party” in the General Assembly, and the well known delicate position of the church as to “*slavery*,” rendered absolutely necessary such a change, as would take away all effective power from the assembly, and thus render impossible the agitation of questions dangerous to the peace of the church. In 1838, we behold the peace of the church every where disturbed, dissensions and strifes raging fearfully among brethren once united and harmonious, in consequence of the unrelenting determination of a party in the assembly, either to *rule* the church or *rend* it.

In 1832, it was universally admitted that the assembly possessed only “judicial and superintending” authority; and that it had not power to make a single “constitutional rule,” “obligatory

on the churches." In 1838, a majority in a fractional assembly at Philadelphia, *ordains* that, in a certain contingency, the *minority* in every synod, presbytery, church, and church session, shall be *the* presbytery, &c., and shall be invested with all the ecclesiastical and *civil* rights which belong to *the whole*; and that the *majority* shall be expelled from the church!

In 1832, the *constitution* was deemed sacred, and held to be the supreme ecclesiastical law of the church, which it was *morally wrong* to violate. Now, the constitution is trampled under foot, and the most vital of all constitutional rights, viz., membership in the church, is held entirely at the mercy of a bare majority in the assembly.

In 1832, it was declared by Dr. Alexander, (a native of the South, who, for a long course of years has occupied a position most favorable to a correct view of the facts in the case, and was, withal, a disinterested observer) that "those parts of the church where slavery is not tolerated, view the whole thing with abhorrence." In 1838, there are found *southern* partizans of a Philadelphia cabal, who are crying *peace, peace*, when the clearest evidence exists, that, as regards this vital question, there is *no peace*—nor ever can be, while the southern church continues its connection with an assembly, pledged to the doctrine that slavery is "utterly inconsistent with the law of God,"—an overwhelming majority of whom firmly believe that doctrine, and whose leader openly declared in a convention of the party at Philadelphia, that he would "go to the stake," rather than have that Act repealed!

In 1832, it was admitted on all hands, that "before long, this agitating subject (of slavery) *must* come up, in such a form as greatly to disturb, if not to rend the church asunder." At that time, the southern church was *united*, and most determinately opposed to the introduction of any northern quarrel to disturb her peace; all her members were disposed to think her peculiar interests worthy of chief devotion, and neglect of them, treachery. Now, a Philadelphia party,—by means of ecclesiastical power unconstitutionally absorbed by the assembly, aided by a vast moneyed influence, is able to control the religious press, and to denounce the penalty of *excision* against all who may dare, even on southern

soil, to reveal the true state of things; while our churches are thrown into commotion by the introduction of *new tests*, all turning upon the question which is the right side of a northern quarrel, and which of two assemblies at Philadelphia (both holding slavery "in abhorrence,") is probably the true General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church.

In 1832, it might, perhaps, be by some regarded as doubtful whether an act passed by the assembly fourteen years before, declaring slavery a sin and abolition a duty, had not become obsolete. But *now*, when it has been revived by the abolitionists, the assembly has refused to repeal it; and those who plead resolutions passed on southern soil, to show that this act of the assembly is of no authority, are the very men who are ready to *excind* ministers and churches in regular standing, on the bare *suspicion* that **THEY** will treat as of no authority another *act of the assembly*,—an act, moreover, which the **CONSTITUTION** of the church expressly declares to be of no authority.

Finally, in 1832, the assembly had scarcely any power, aside from the moral influence which it exercised. *Now*, according to the new theory, (and practice too,) the assembly holds concentrated in itself all the ecclesiastical power of the entire church, and possesses absolute supremacy over the constitution, and disposes at pleasure of the *civil*, as well as ecclesiastical rights, of all the churches in its connection! Are the rights of the southern churches safe in such keeping? Can they remain connected with such an assembly? Is not *excision* as sharp and speedy a process in the work of *abolition*, as in that of reform?

Independence of any and every General Assembly, in which a northern party has the power, by stirring up strife in reference to slavery, or any other topic of discord, to agitate and convulse society to its very foundations, is now most ardently longed for by great numbers at the South. Pastors and churches are alike desirous to be left unmolested in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free, and to be no longer entangled with any yoke of bondage to a foreign party. Return to the original simplicity and purity of Presbyterianism is now called for on all hands. Should any real heresy spring up among ourselves, the constitution has provided an easy and effectual way for its extirpation, and that can

be effected without foreign interference. Fidelity to the South; the christian obligation to "seek the peace" of the land in which we dwell, seem to require that we should unite in refusing to acknowledge the authority of an assembly which imposes upon us the obligation "as speedily as possible, to obtain the complete abolition of slavery." Our ecclesiastical, ought to be in consistency with our civil, relations. This cannot be, unless we either separate at once from every northern assembly, or, according to Dr. Alexander's plan, remain connected with such an assembly only as shall be simply a board of union and advisory council.

We commend this subject to the deliberate consideration of the churches, as one which calls for *full and free discussion*. A mere synopsis of the facts in the case, is all that our present limits permit. There are those among us who are interested to conceal and suppress the truth. But if ever it shall be possible to acquaint the churches with the true position of this matter, we doubt not that there will come up from them one universal responsive voice, in unison with the sentiment of the Charleston Union Presbytery,—that the "time *has* fully come" for separation from any assembly which claims to legislate on slavery; and that fidelity to the South, and regard for the purity and peace of the churches, alike demand of Presbyterians a SOUTHERN ORGANIZATION.

APPENDIX.

The Charleston Union Presbytery met, according to adjournment, on the evening of Tuesday, December 4th, in the Lecture Room of the Second Presbyterian Church, Charleston. The last Moderator present was called to the chair, who constituted Presbytery with prayer. The roll was called, and the minutes of the last meeting were read; and Presbytery was proceeding, as usual, to elect a moderator, when a member rose, and having first presented a paper, which was read and laid on the table, proceeded to read, and offer to Presbytery a series of resolutions, one of which was, "that the roll be now called, and each member, without discussion, do declare whether he can *approve of the reform measures of the General Assembly of 1837*, and whether he can adhere to the General Assembly of 1838, which sat in Philadelphia in May last, in the Seventh Presbyterian Church, &c., and that those who answer in the affirmative, &c., do constitute the Presbytery of Charleston Union, &c." (See Charleston Observer of Dec. 15.)

The Moderator decided the paper to be *out of order*. From this decision an appeal was taken by the member presenting it, (Mr. Smyth,) when, the question being put, the decision of the chair was sustained. Whereupon Mr. Smyth withdrew from Presbytery, accompanied by the Stated Clerk, who took with him the minutes and other papers belonging to the Presbytery, which were then lying on the table. These were followed by one Minister and three Elders connected with the Presbytery; and also by the Agent of the Assembly's Board of Domestic Missions, formerly a member of Presbytery, and still in *nominal* connection with it. The Presbytery proceeded with its usual business, and continued in session the two following days; but the individuals who withdrew on Tuesday

evening, did not attend its sessions. A new Stated Clerk having been elected, he was directed by the Presbytery to "apply to Mr. Gildersleeve, the late stated clerk, for the records, books and papers belonging to Presbytery, which are in his hands." This was done: but Mr. G. "declined" delivering them, and still retains them in his possession.

It now appears that most of those who retired, had been led to suppose that the majority was about to declare the Presbytery "independent of the General Assembly which held, and continued to hold its late sessions in the 7th Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia." (See Resolutions of the 2d Presbyterian Church, Charleston Observer, Dec. 8, and 15.) Acting under this impression; and having been induced to think that the decision that the paper presented was out of order, was *proof* of such a purpose, on the part of those who voted to sustain the Moderator, they held a meeting by themselves; considered themselves to be the Presbytery, and the majority of Presbytery to be "out of the Church;" and having, among other things, appointed a committee to address a "pastoral letter" from themselves, as the Charleston Union Presbytery, to the churches under the care of Presbytery, they adjourned.

In all this, they proceeded on the assumption, that the majority of Presbytery had *renounced the Assembly in the 7th Church*, and that they (the minority) were acting in accordance with the "reform ordinance" of that Assembly, which provides that, in such a case, the "minority shall be *the Presbytery*." It was not till after the adjournment of the meeting, that their mistake was rectified, and the truth came out, that the majority of Presbytery, so far from renouncing the Assembly in the 7th Church, *had not had the smallest intention of so doing*. Not only was no project of the kind discussed or even suggested in presbytery, but, on the contrary, those in the majority who had been most decided in regarding the excision "*wrong*, not in policy merely, but in morals," had come to the meeting prepared to leave the connection of the presbytery with the assembly in which it was represented, wholly undisturbed. To *approve* those unconstitutional measures which will probably issue in the violent disruption of our beloved church is one thing; to remain connected with this or that portion of the church (if it is divided) is quite another. The fixed desire, of the

presbytery, expressed in its resolutions adopted more than a year ago,* to unite (in case the church *must* be dismembered,) in forming a *Southern* Presbyterian Synod or Assembly, does not interfere at all with its remaining where it is, till the Southern Churches shall examine the subject, and appreciate the necessity of such an organization.

It being evident that most of those who withdrew, were acting under a mistaken impression, the Presbytery simply recorded their procedure in as few words as possible, without censure or comment of any kind; thus leaving the way perfectly open for their return to presbytery. Nor is there the least unkind feeling indulged towards those brethren, who from misapprehension, adopted a course which they themselves, if acquainted with the views and feelings of the majority, would be the first to regret.

It appears, however, that *two* of those who retired, had other views. Their purpose was, to *excind* the presbytery, and keep possession of its records.

Accordingly, a paper had been prepared, setting forth their statements and opinions as to the "Reform," and containing, among other resolutions, one, requiring each member to say whether he can "*approve the reform measures of the general assembly of 1837, &c.*"—and having the effect to declare out of the church, all who should answer in the *negative*.

This is something new even in the history of *reform*. *Approval* of the "reform measures of 1837," has never before, as far as our knowledge extends, been required of any one. So odious a *test* as this, was more than the reform leaders at Philadelphia dared to impose. The idea of expelling men from the church for not *approving* all the acts of a majority of 27 out of 237 men in the assembly of 1837, even the reform leaders disavow. What is still still more remarkable, one of the two, who now maintain that the majority of the presbytery are "out of the church," because they voted to sustain the moderator's decision that such a proposition was out of order, has, within a few months, taken great pains to show, that approval of the reform measures, is *by no means required* by the assembly. We give his own words.

"ERRONEOUS IMPRESSIONS.—An impression has been made upon

* See Charleston Observer, Nov. 11, 1837.

the minds of some of the members of the church, that the acts of the general assembly require of them an entire assent to the constitutionality of the proceedings of the assembly of 1837, in order to their continuance in our connexion. This is *quite a mistake*. It is not to be found either in the letter or spirit of the acts. The sixty members who seceded from the last assembly, and who regarded the acts referred to as unconstitutional, might all have remained in connexion with the assembly, had they not, of their own free will and accord, united with others in forming another ecclesiastical body. They were not cut off—but they cut themselves off. And so will every synod and presbytery that approves of the schism, and unite with those who effected it. It would be unreasonable to expect the church to acknowledge as members those who have renounced her authority and formed another ecclesiastical connexion.

“It has been asserted, but without sufficient ground, that the acts of the last Assembly were designed to split up presbyteries and churches, because in them provision is made for minorities. The provision is manifestly a very proper one. For if the majority of a presbytery unite themselves with another ecclesiastical body, it would be unreasonable and unjust in them to make the minority go with them against their will and conscience. If, for instance, the majority of any presbytery should avowedly become Baptists or Methodists, would it be right in them to compel the minority also to renounce the church of which they were members?—Now this provision was made in anticipation of events which have happened. It was known that some presbyteries, in which there were respectable minorities, would join the body that had gone out from the Assembly. And in that case, common foresight as well as justice required that an arrangement should be made, by which minorities might remain, if they should choose it, in our connexion. * * * * * These and a number of other stories have been industriously circulated for the purpose of producing an impression unfavourable to the character and objects of the last Assembly.”—(*Charleston Observer*, July 28, 1838.)

And lest any should still entertain doubts, whether *approval* of the reform measures might not be in some sense implied in the requisitions of the reform ordinance, the following quotation is introduced into the *Observer* of August 4th, from the “*Watchman of the South*,” which, coming from the moderator of the assembly and one of the great leaders of the reform, must be considered as decisive and final evidence in the case. We cite the passage, italicizing the more important parts.

“It” (the action of the assembly) “provides that if any member, minister, or church, *shall unite with any other denomination now existing, or in forming any new denomination*, they shall, by that act, be out of our church. *This is all that we have ever understood in*

the case, and all that the words can fairly be made to mean. To join another denomination has always severed a man's connection with our church. It will do so now. This is the whole matter."

Strange that the individual who has so plainly declared that the reform ordinance *by no means* proposes any such test as, "Do you *approve* the reform measures of 1837?" should now refuse to deliver to the Stated Clerk of the Charleston Union Presbytery, its Records, on the ground that the majority are "out of the church" because they would not allow *THAT test* to be enforced! Strange that he should now plead the "action of the Assembly," and maintain that it was "a painful duty," imposed by the Assembly on the minority, to "split up" a presbytery because the majority did not "*approve* the reform measures of 1837!"

On this point we add another extract, (the italics here are not our's,) from the Observer of July 7, 1838.

"When it was fully ascertained that the general assembly this year would consist of an overwhelming majority of Old School men, I observed to one of the members of the presbytery that I suspected our commissioners would go for independency, and that the majority of the presbytery would declare themselves independent of the general assembly—and in that event I had not determined whether I should deliver them the records, or retain them. For they seemed to me to belong only to a presbytery in connexion with the assembly. All this was said more in sport than in earnest. And this is the *understanding*, that Mr. Gildersleeve is about to run away with the records! The records, indeed! Were I *rogue* enough to run away, it would not be with so pitiable a booty."

Thus, the detention of the records, according to this statement, could only be justified by the majority's having declared independence of the assembly—and scarcely then! But now, when the majority have done nothing of the kind, they are "out of the church," because they cannot "*approve* the reform measures of 1837!"

The case, then, stands thus. Two individuals* undertake, *on their own authority*, without any act of any judicatory sustaining the procedure, to expel almost an entire presbytery from the church. They have an understanding with the leaders of a Phila-

* We say *two*, because the other members of presbytery who acted with them, evidently had been induced to think that the majority were determined to *renounce* the assembly, and had no idea of excinding men for not approving the reform.

delphia party, who, for the sake of crushing opposition, may, perhaps, sanction the procedure. In hope of this, they assume to be *the* presbytery, consider the majority "out of the church," and give to the christian community, in a paper under their exclusive control, *their* account of the matter; and some of the statements are made to assume the imposing form of a "Pastoral Letter of the Presbytery of Charleston Union."

To set the matter in its proper light, we here subjoin, first, the names of the pastors said to be "excinded," and, next, the names of the pastors by whom this "pastoral letter" was written, to inform the "churches under their care" of the "*excision*."

PASTORS SAID TO BE "EXCINDED."

WM. STATES LEE, *Pastor of the Church at Edisto.*

R. POST, D. D., *Pastor of the Circular Church, Charleston.*

E. WHITE, *Pastor of John's Island and Wadmalaw Church.*

Z. ROGERS, *Pastor of the Church at Willtown.*

E. PALMER, *Pastor of the Church near Pocotaligo.*

I S. K. LEGARE, *Pastor of the Church at Orangeburgh.*

W. C. DANA, *Pastor of the 3d Presbyterian Church, Charleston.*

T. H. LEGARE, *Pastor of the Church on James' Island.*

To these add

B. M. PALMER, D. D., *now without pastoral charge.*

W. B. YATES, *Seaman's Preacher, Charleston.*

T. MAGRUDER, *Domestic Missionary, Charleston.*

PASTORS writing the "Pastoral Letter" announcing to the "Churches under their care," the "*excision*" of the above;

T. SMYTH, *Pastor 2d Presbyterian Church, Charleston.**

* This "Letter" is also signed by two others, neither of whom has any pastoral charge, or any title to a seat in the Charleston Union Presbytery. One has not resided within our bounds for more than *five years*; the other has voluntarily turned aside from the duties of the ministry to secular occupations. (Compare Constitution, chap. 10, 2, and Digest pp. 69, 70, 274.) With respect to the *latter*, it is made the duty of the Presbytery "regularly to exclude or depose him from his office." As regards the *former*, when it was proposed in Presbytery a year ago, that he should be officially notified that his nominal connection with Presbytery was in violation of the constitution, the resolution to that effect was withdrawn at the instance of the Pastor of the 3d Presbyterian Church, from motives of personal regard and christian courtesy. How that courtesy has been requited, the "Letter" shows.

On such authority rests the (so called) "Pastoral Letter of the Presbytery of Charleston Union to the Churches under their care!!!"

As to the contents of the "Letter," its *mistakes* (we use the mildest term possible,) are, on an average, (aside from the quotations,) rather more than *one to every sentence*. We give three specimens, in illustration of this fact.

'And whereas said Assembly has declared that "in case any majority of any Presbytery shall refuse or neglect to take proper order" on these subjects,—“the minority shall be—the Presbytery, &c.”' (C. Observer, Dec. 15, col. 5, near the bottom.) How does the original stand in the Reform Ordinance? Thus. "In case the majority of any Presbytery shall refuse or neglect to take proper order *in regard to its seceding commissioners*, or shall approve their conduct, or adhere to the new sect they have created." (See New-York Observer of June 9th, 1838.) Now mark the new turn given to the requisition of the Ordinance. The phrase "*on these subjects*" is substituted for the phrase, "*in regard to its seceding commissioners*." "*These subjects*" is made to refer to the "reform and the division in the church." Thus the ordinance is *made to say* that the minority shall be the presbytery, in case the majority shall refuse or neglect to take proper order "on these subjects," i. e. *the reform and the division in the church*. But the true language of the ordinance is, "In case the majority shall refuse or neglect to take proper order *in regard to ITS SECEDING COMMISSIONERS*." But the commissioners of the Charleston Union Presbytery did *not* "secede," as the ordinance terms it, but *remained in the 7th Church*; and therefore the Presbytery could not possibly come in collision with this requisition of the ordinance, inasmuch as it had no "seceding commissioners" to take order about? The words and the sense must both be changed before it can be made to appear that the Presbytery *had* come in collision with the ordinance.* And on

*The Presbytery, in fact, has neither refused nor neglected to take proper order "*on these subjects*." On the contrary, as appears from the minutes of their recent meeting, they have complied with the direction of Synod "at the earliest practicable period to attend to this matter." See the resolution of Synod in the Observer of Nov. 24, and the corresponding resolution of the Charleston Union Presbytery in the Observer of Dec. 15.

this single point turns the whole effort to prove that the *minority* are the Presbytery!

Again. "When a paper was submitted to the Synod, expressive of the views entertained by Synod, on some of the cardinal doctrines of the Bible, . . . the names of these members of our Presbytery were again recorded in the negative. Thus these brethren, by their public acts, had declared, . . . that we differed essentially, both as to doctrine and order," &c.

What will plain men think, when informed, that, (with one* exception,) all those who expressed themselves opposed to the adoption of this paper, did so expressly on the ground, *not* of its *doctrines*, (for some of them had no opportunity allowed them, so much as to read the paper,) but, on the ground of its being avowedly a *test of orthodoxy*, which, they contended, Synod had no right to impose. This is thus plainly set forth in the Protest, signed by W. C. Dana and others, and placed on the records of Synod. (See Observer, of November 24.) "We wish it to be *distinctly understood*, that in *voting* against the adoption of said paper, we refer *not at all to the exhibition of doctrine* which it contains, but *solely* to the fact that, in the present position of this Synod, said paper seems, as already stated, to be designed by the mover as a *test of orthodoxy*, if not of *adhesion to the Presbyterian Church*." But now this very vote and protest are made use of, to induce the churches to think that six members of the Charleston Union Presbytery, "by their public acts," have declared that they "differ *essentially*," in point of *doctrine*, from the majority of synod!!

Again. "These measures" (the reform) "after very full examination and discussion were confirmed and approved by a very large majority of the presbyteries and synods, and declared to be not only constitutional and expedient, but of essential importance to the peace and purity of the church."

According to the Philadelphia "Presbyterian," the *organ of the reform party*, 59 out of 135 presbyteries in connection with the General Assembly of 1837, have sustained its measures. *Fifty nine* is "a very large majority" of *one hundred and thirty five*! †

* The opposition of this gentleman was understood to be, not to the *doctrines*, but to the harsh, and unguarded manner in which they were stated.

† In 59 presbyteries, there is claimed to be a majority to *sustain* the "reform;" but how many *approve* it, does not appear. Nor are we told what are the *minorities* in the 59 presbyteries.

“Very full discussion and examination.” The party leaders have made great and astonishingly successful efforts to stifle discussion, and almost none of those who approve their proceedings, see any papers except those which are pledged to sustain the party, at all hazards. “Confirmed and *approved*.” Even our own Synod, within whose bounds the reform press has had almost undivided sway, voted to *sustain* the reform measures of 1837, with the understanding expressly declared, as every one present will recollect, that to *sustain* did not imply *approval*! “*Constitutional and expedient*.” Reader, this very *minority* who now claim to be the Charleston Union Presbytery, because the majority do not “*approve* the reform measures of 1837,” a year ago, did not approve them themselves! They placed on the records of presbytery, when these measures were under consideration, their Protest, closing thus; (See Observer of Nov. 11, 1837.)

“N. B. We who thus protest against these resolutions, would, in conclusion, say, that they do not wish to pledge themselves to the entire expediency of the whole acts of the Assembly, but merely to their constitutionality.

Signed,

B. GILDERSLEEVE,
T. SMYTH,”

and two others.

What is more, the *first* signer of the “letter,” did not attempt, a year ago, to defend their *constitutionality*, but pleaded “*necessity* ;” and the second signer, at synod, argued at length in favor of a *substitute** for the *resolution to sustain*, which substitute, as it then stood, fully met the views of those who *disapprove* ; and, if not greatly misunderstood, he has again and again declared, and that within a few months, that he *could not fully approve the reform measures*.

These three specimens must suffice to show the nature of the *mistakes* of which the “pastoral letter,”—extending through *five columns* of a newspaper, is literally *full*. Similar *mistakes* meet

* Minutes of Synod, 1837, p. 10. The only other pastor who is thought to “concur with the reform,” voted to *sustain* some, and *not to sustain* others of “the reform measures of 1837,” Minutes, pp. 20 & 22. The elder from Beech Island Church *sustained*, but *qualified* his vote so as not to *approve*, p. 20. Thus not even one of the *minority* has voted to *approve*, unless a vote to expel their brethren for *not approving* be such!

the eye in almost every recent No. of that paper. In *four* columns of the No. dated Dec. 29, may be found about *ten times* that number of *mistakes*; and most of them are of a deeply injurious nature. A single specimen must suffice. "In Synod, they" (i. e. those who disapprove the reform measures) "could not muster but 9 votes out of 70. In the Synod of Virginia, on the test vote of adhering, but 14 out of more than 100." A writer in the Southern Religious Telegraph of Jan. 9, thus notices the latter part of this statement. "The statement appears to be intended to persuade the reader that there are *few*, a mere handful in Virginia, who oppose the revolution. The *test vote of adhering*, of which the editor speaks, will be news to the members of this Synod who attended its last sessions. *No such vote was taken*. Instead of 14, there are to my knowledge 40 or 50 members of this Synod, who are in principle decidedly opposed to the reforming measures of the party."

As to the former part of the assertion, it is sufficient to state the fact that instead of 9, there are 35 votes which can be "mustered" in the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, in favor of constitutional Presbyterianism and in opposition to the (so called) reform. *Thirty five* have taken a *decided stand*; how many more in their hearts *disapprove*, we cannot tell. We only know that when one was asked, at the late meeting of Synod, how he *could* vote to "concur" in what he must know was wrong, his frank reply was, in substance, "here in the country, we must either go for the reform, or go *out of the world*." So great is the power of party organization!

What has *changed the position* of the majority of Synod? That the majority *have* changed, it is impossible to deny. Let any one who doubts, examine the files of the Charleston Observer from its commencement to the present time, noting specially its statements between the years 1831 and 1837. As a specimen of the views then entertained by its editor, who again and again claims an "overwhelming majority" (sometimes, "*nine tenths*") of the Synod, as fully concurring with him, take the following.

"Most of the papers employed in the controversy, we are in the habit of perusing; and the more we read, the more fully are we convinced that *no difference exists which might not be amicably*

adjusted." (April 28, 1832.) "The *real causes of dissension* have been *ambition, jealousy, love of pre-eminence, and mortified vanity.*—The controversy does not really relate to *doctrines*—but is simply a repetition of the old contest—*who shall be greatest.*" (August 16, 1834.)

In 1834, the Observer thus notices the Editor of the "*Reform*" paper at Columbia, which had been at length got up in opposition to the Observer by a minority in Synod who were then generally regarded and spoken of as most ultra in their views.

"He comes in a REFORMER. He sounds an alarm. He proclaims to the churches that some terrible disaster awaits them—Arminianism, and Pelagianism, and New Schoolism, and a host of other isms are countenanced and supported, or at least winked at.

Our Southern Churches and the Institutions which they cherish, were never in a more happy and prosperous state than they were when this *Reformer* arose. There was then unity of action in conformity with the standards of the church. The Ministry regarded each other as brethren entitled to their confidence and love—and the churches felt a reciprocal interest in each other's prosperity. But we very much fear that a terrible disaster is at hand. We hope not, and we pray that God, in his mercy, may avert it."

Again, noticing the insinuation that those who did not think proper to sign the "Act and Testimony," were of course themselves not sound in the faith, and not true Presbyterians, the Observer says:

"Presbyterians are not accustomed, and will not submit, to the domination of a Pope. They have *their standards of doctrine and discipline* to which they subscribe; and any attempt to *enforce upon them a FURTHER TEST*, will meet with a determined resistance.—But we are told that a *crisis* has arrived when *another and a stronger test* is required.—The standards of the church, interpreted according to their true meaning and intent, will still constitute the only rule, by which doctrines are to be tried. Is it kind—is it just—is it courteous—is it Presbyterianism—to write and publish article after article, with the evident design of injuring the reputation of Ministers of the Gospel, when there is nothing but *suspicion* or *prejudice* on which to ground a charge? Is this doing to others, as we would that others should do unto us?" (Nov. 1, 1834).*

We ask again, what has effected in so short time, so great a

*Strange that he who wrote thus in 1834, should, in 1838, be and do precisely what is, in these passages, so severely and justly censured! Strange that he should "come in a *Reformer!*" Strange that he should insinuate that men are heretics, because they cannot *approve* unconstitutional and unjust "measures!" Strange that he should cry "New Schoolism," because the enforcement of a "*further test*" is objected to!

change in the position of our Synod? What mighty *argument*, in the mouths of the leaders, has wrought such results? As we understand it, it is, in substance, as follows; "The 60,000 *excinded* are *congregationalists, abolitionists, and heretics*; we say so, and "common fame" says so; and if you object to the *excision*, (no matter on what grounds) *you* belong to a *congregational, abolitionist, and Pelagian party*; and if your opposition is such as to materially embarrass our "great designs," we will cut *you* off, and then denounce *you* as heretics, and leagued with congregationalists and abolitionists against the true church."

It will occur to many that the *logic* of the above *argument* is not the most profound; but they may rest assured, that where those who use it, have entire and exclusive control of the only organ of Presbyterianism, it has potency absolutely irresistible. Could stronger evidence be asked for, of the virtue supposed to reside in it, than is found in the fact that even the majority of the *Charleston Union Presbytery* have been assailed with the murderous weapons which it furnishes? And who are the assailants? What is *their* position on these points? They are those who stood alone last spring in refusing to ask the repeal of the act of 1818; who, in opposition to the majority, desire continued connection with an assembly in which abolitionism is dominant; who were both (unless we have been misinformed) *originally congregationalists*; and of whom, one has, at least a dozen times in the course of several successive years, pronounced the differences between the Old and New School, more "imaginary" than real, has defended *Duffield*, and specially endorsed the theology of *Beman* and *Barnes*!! (See *Observer*, August 9, 1834.)

The true and only question with regard to the *Charleston Union Presbytery*, is, whether its members shall be expelled from the church and denounced as heretics, because they do not, and cannot "*approve* the reform measures of 1837." It is all in vain to attempt to mix up with this, any question of *doctrine*. There is no *religious controversy* involved in the case. It is a naked question of right and wrong, of truth and falsehood, of liberty and despotism.