

THE
PRINCETON REVIEW.

JULY, 1843.

No. III.

ART. I.—*Report of the General Committee of Public Instruction of the Presidency of Fort William in Bengal.* Calcutta: G. H. Huttman, Bengal Military Orphan Press. 1841. pp. 266.

WE regard this as a very interesting document on a very important subject. We are grieved, and almost out of patience, at the apathy with which the social and moral destiny of India is regarded, by the great mass of our intelligent and public-spirited people. Why should we feel so little interest in a country which contains a population equal to that of England, France, Spain, Portugal, Prussia, Italy, Switzerland and Germany together; a population of remarkably interesting character, and just in the act of undergoing the most important changes, political, social, moral and religious? We await with anxiety the arrival of our steamers, to tell us the price of cotton in Liverpool, and the rate of interest and exchange in London; and the variation of a cent a pound in the former, and a half per cent. per annum in the latter, creates a sensation from one end of the country to the other; but who knows what progress Christian civilization is making in Asia, and who cares to hear of the difficulties and successes of education, and of social and moral improvement, among the hundred and twenty millions of British India? If we thought we could

ART. IV.—*An Inquiry into the Organization and Government of the Apostolic Church: particularly with reference to the Claims of Episcopacy.* By Albert Barnes. Philadelphia: Perkins and Purves. 1843. pp. 251.

IN a recent charge to the clergy of his diocese, Bishop Onderdonk of Philadelphia went into a laboured and minute defence of liturgical worship, not, as he said, for the purpose of disturbing the convictions or changing the practice of those who use another method, but to satisfy the minds of such Episcopalians as are shaken or annoyed by the objections continually urged against the use of written forms. The reason thus assigned by Bishop Onderdonk, for undertaking the defence of liturgies, appears to us entirely legitimate. There can be no doubt that in all communions there are some, who, though entirely persuaded of the doctrines which they hear, and even warmly attached to the form of worship which they use, are nevertheless, from want of professional acquaintance with the controverted topics, unable to repel the objections, with which they are continually plied by those of different persuasions. And this state of things is becoming more and more common, as the different divisions of the Christian world are more intermingled in society, and the points of difference between them more familiar subjects of discussion, not only in the pulpit or the public prints, but in the offices and parlours of the laity. From such intercourse there must necessarily arise in many minds a feeling of uneasiness at not being able to defend what is really believed to be true; and this feeling is not only disagreeable, but in its tendency unfriendly to a warm and active zeal for the cause which is assailed. There are but two ways in which strong unwavering attachment to a church can be secured. The one is, by keeping its members in ignorance of all that has been said, or can be said, against it; the other, by placing the bane and antidote at once before them. There was a time, when the first of these two methods was not only the one commonly adopted, but the one really entitled to the preference; when wise and good men had abundant reason to believe that the interests of truth would be promoted, by confining controversy to the clergy, or to theologians by profession, and leaving private Christians to the quiet enjoyment of those religious privileges which were afforded by their own com-

munion. The continuance of this course, if it were desirable, is now impossible. The general diffusion of religious and ecclesiastical intelligence, and the growing frequency of such topics in the ordinary intercourse of life, have made it necessary, that the discussion of these subjects should have reference not only to the clergy but the laity, and that books should be written not only to silence or convert gain-sayers, but to quiet the minds of such as have been harassed, though not won, by the efforts of opponents. On this ground we regard the course pursued by Bishop Onderdonk, in the case referred to, as both politic and right ; and on the same ground, we approve of all judicious efforts to relieve the minds of Presbyterian laymen from the uneasiness produced, not only by learned and ingenious, but even by weak and frivolous objections, when repeated with sufficient perseverance. There is indeed a peculiar necessity in our case, above most others, arising from the bold and even arrogant assumption of superiority, not only on the part of priests and prelates, but of Episcopal ladies and gentlemen, among whom the consciousness of apostolical extraction seems to be becoming more decided, not without a very sensible effect upon the manners and the tone of social intercourse. The same cause which, among the rude and low-bred, would produce a gross and undisguised contempt of those whose only hope is in uncovenanted mercy, may be seen, in higher circles, to generate a tone and air of courteous compassion, which is not a whit more pleasant to its objects, because known by them to be without the slightest colour of right or reason, though they may not be able to detect the sophistry, on which it professes to be founded. Now in justice to this large class of our most intelligent and pious laymen, it is right that the pretensions, which are thus continually meeting them in private life, should be considered and disposed of, in a public way, with due regard to their accommodation. We view with satisfaction, therefore, every skilful effort to detect imposture and demonstrate truth, in reference to this most hackneyed subject. We are aware, that such efforts are discountenanced by some, who regard all controversies as frivolous, except a few, which they have taken under special protection. But whatever may be the intrinsic importance of the questions in dispute—and some of them are of the greatest moment—we cannot venture to consider any controversy frivolous, which occupies and agitates the minds of an en-

lightened laity. This circumstance alone would make the subject an important one, even in comparison with some which are eagerly discussed, and which afford employment to a few minds, but are destitute of practical and public interest. Still less are we affected by the clamour from without, which every new attempt to set this matter in its true light, draws forth. Those who engage in this controversy must expect to hear, that their appearance is an implied confession of defeat, a desperate attempt to change the ground of conflict, and a practical abandonment of all that has been hitherto achieved or claimed. They may expect to hear this proclaimed most loudly by the very men who have abandoned their own ground, and nullified the reasoning of all their predecessors. This *ruse de guerre* is now too old to affect any but the inexperienced. It is not even practised by the veterans of the adverse host, who wisely leave it to the raw recruits. The sound in question commonly proceeds from weak and empty vessels. Bishop Onderdonk is evidently well aware that new defences of the truth may be required, without any abandonment of those already made. Upon this ground he proceeds, both in his theory and practice. It is somewhat remarkable, indeed, that the only Protestant Episcopal writer in this country, who has done any thing towards building up the fabric of prelatical church-government by reasoning, should be so much more courteous and moderate, than some pugnacious neophytes, whose claims to the attention of the public are yet to be discovered. It is natural enough that the latter should allege, and for aught we know believe, that every new argument against Episcopal pretensions is a virtual admission of defeat. It is no less natural that, when this stale device proves unavailing, they should raise the cry of persecution, and complain of the uncharitable attacks which are continually made upon their injured innocence. The absurdity of such complaints is evident. Attacks upon high-church pretension do not involve the unchurching of high-churchmen. We deny that they are the only true church. They deny that we are a true church at all. If attempting to disprove this false and foolish dogma is an attack upon Episcopacy, we shall be glad to see it made and made again, as often as the changes of the times require a modification of the form, in which the truth has been exhibited already. We are glad to see that Mr. Barnes has not allowed himself to be deterred,

by any of these clamours, from contributing anew his quota to the service. We cannot sufficiently admire and applaud his indefatigable diligence, and watchful observation of the public wants and exigencies. He does not study or write merely for his own gratification or improvement. He has still an eye to the state of the book-market, and the varying demand for works of certain kinds. This habit tends to enhance the value of his publications so far as to make them popular and readable. We are so well satisfied of his discretion *quoad hoc*, that his selecting any topic for discussion, through the press, is, of itself, sufficient evidence to us, that it has taken hold already of the public mind. The little work before us is indeed not wholly new. It contains the substance of two articles, published in the Christian Spectator of 1834 and 1835. They have now, however, been mostly re-written, and with great improvement, both in form and substance. The author has evidently gained more insight into the true state of the questions at issue, and the history of the controversy. The improvements made consist both in additions and omissions. The form of a review has been exchanged for that of a consecutive argument. In effecting this, the author has endeavoured to divest the treatise of its controversial form. He seems indeed particularly anxious to disclaim the controversial character. If by this he means an undue asperity of tone and temper, it would be much better to let the volume speak for itself. "Good wine needs no bush." If, however, his words are to be strictly understood, we can see no use, and very little meaning, in attempts to show, that a book of controversy is not controversial. Such disclaimers, though the spirit which they manifest is good, and well calculated to disarm an adversary, may do harm, by exciting the suspicion of insincerity in some, and that of cowardice in others. The same objection lies with less force, against the somewhat turgid compliments to Protestant Episcopacy, which have been retained, but with which we are not disposed to quarrel, especially as Mr. Barnes has been pleased to omit some allusions of a very different kind, and designed to take effect in a very different quarter. The facts of this case are somewhat curious and instructive, and may not improperly be stated here. The first review of Bishop Onderdonk's tract in the Christian Spectator, opened with an expression of surprise that it had been so little noticed, and a sneering reference to

some who thought themselves particularly called and qualified to do such work, but who were now found wanting. The allusion implied, of course, that those who had thus failed to meet the enemy were unable to do it, and that the reviewer was under the disagreeable necessity of doing it himself. Now this would have been all very well, if the reviewer's will could have been taken for the deed. But what was the fate of the argument thus brought before the public, as a succedaneum for the delinquent services of those who considered themselves champions of the Presbyterian cause, but had deserted it in the day of battle? It has now been circulated eight years, in the same volume with the tract which it refuted, by the Protestant Episcopal Tract Society, and is constantly referred to, by the zealots of that sect, as a monumental proof that the bishop's argument is utterly irrefutable. The author is lauded, to be sure, but with that most humiliating kind of praise, which is often lavished on the conquered by the conqueror, in order to exalt himself. After this, we are not surprised, that Mr. Barnes has here thought proper to omit the premature reflections, into which he had been betrayed, upon the cowardice or sloth of his weaker brethren.

But without dwelling upon these comparatively trivial matters, we proceed to state that there are other changes more essential, which the author has forborne to make, in reconstructing his argument. This naturally leads us to the merits of the work, and to a statement of our general judgment with respect to it. That judgment is, that in this little volume are contained the materials for a perfect refutation of the bishop's tract. We are deliberately of opinion, that not one of his arguments is without its answer, either direct or indirect. And while we thus judge of the argument, as a whole, it gives us pleasure to add, that its details are, for the most part, highly satisfactory. This is especially the case, with respect to the usage of official titles, and the proofs of episcopacy drawn from forced interpretations of detached expressions. Much of this matter, we believe, is new, and it affords convincing evidence of the author's careful study of the inspired text. With some of his exegetical remarks we are not entirely satisfied: but this is not the place to state objections, nor, if stated, would they materially detract from the truth of the general judgment just expressed. The plan of Mr. Barnes's work is this. The volume is divided into four

unequal chapters. The first is introductory, designed to show the propriety and necessity of making the argument entirely scriptural. The reasons given are, because the whole subject is one of mere revelation; because the Fathers are without divine authority to decide the question; because the word of God requires the appeal to be made to itself; because the Fathers were not in a situation to afford the necessary knowledge; because the decision of the question, by their aid, is practically impossible; and because the propriety of appealing exclusively to scripture is conceded by eminent episcopal authorities, and especially by Bishop Onderdonk. The second chapter is a brief but comprehensive statement of episcopal pretensions; and the third, which constitutes the body of the work, a refutation of them. The three claims here examined are the claims to the exclusive right of ordination, confirmation, and disciplinary supervision. With respect to the first, the argument is two-fold, first, that the apostles had no exclusive right of ordination, and secondly, that they have no successors. The distinctive function of the apostolic office is made to consist in attesting the resurrection of Christ, in proof of which the author appeals to the account of the election of Matthias, to other incidental statements in the Acts of the Apostles, and to the case of Paul. That the Apostles, as such, had no successors, is maintained upon the two-fold ground, that no succession is required, predicted or asserted in scripture, and that no provision is there made to secure it. Under the former head, the burden of proof is shown to rest on the affirmative side of the question. Under the latter, there is a detailed examination of the proofs derived by our opponents from the cases of Matthias, Barnabas, James, Andronicus and Junia, Timothy, Titus, the elders of Ephesus, and the angels of the seven churches. To this negative argument, the author adds another, drawn from the practical concessions of episcopalians, and the express testimony of Hooker and Whately. With respect to the right or rite of confirmation (which two words the author seems occasionally to confound,) he states the adverse doctrine, shows that the rite has no divine authority, urges some common-place objections to it, and, which we think much more important, exposes the absurdity of the arguments founded on the word *confirm*, and the laying on of hands by the apostles. With respect to the right of super-

vision and discipline, he goes into a detailed examination of the cases in Ephesus and Corinth, which are alleged in proof of the opposite doctrine. Having thus disposed of the episcopal pretensions, the author states, in a positive form, what he believes to have been the organization of the apostolic church. This forms the subject of the fourth and last chapter, where he treats, first, of the officers of the apostolic church, whether temporary, as apostles, prophets, deaconesses, and "the seventy;" or permanent, as bishops, otherwise called preachers, pastors, teachers, evangelists, ruling elders, and deacons. He then considers the powers of these officers and of the church, and undertakes to show, that Presbyters ordained, and that the churches were empowered to administer discipline. To these sections another is added, intended to show that the primitive churches were organized without a prelate, and without three orders of clergy.

We have already expressed a favourable opinion of this plan, in the general. It is not, however, free from all objection. The chapter on confirmation seems to us misplaced, and rather to impair than increase the strength of the whole argument. The *right* of confirmation is a very trifling part of what is claimed by bishops; and as to the *rite* of confirmation, its lawfulness, expediency, and scriptural authority, this is not a question between us and Episcopalians, as such, since other reformed churches have retained the usage. Its decision, therefore, does not necessarily affect that of the general controversy. And we are more and more disposed to regard the labour spent upon collateral questions, as not only fruitless, with respect to the main point at issue, but as positively doing harm, by distracting the attention, and obscuring the true *status quaestionis*. Such discussions may be highly useful in a separate form. We question nothing but their relevancy in an argument against the exclusive claims of episcopal church government. It does not follow, because confirmation is unscriptural, that episcopacy is so likewise; nor, on the other hand, because that rite is of apostolic origin, that none but prelates can administer it. This makes the case of confirmation wholly different from that of ordination, the power to perform which is essential to orderly succession in the ministry. Other objections to the plan of the treatise have occurred to us, but of minor importance, and relating chiefly to minute points of arrangement, with

which it is not necessary to detain the reader. We shall, therefore, proceed to state some points of a more general nature, in which we differ from the author, and regard his argument as less effective than it might have been. The first of these is one of great importance, and lies very near the foundation of the system. We mean the precise relation borne by the apostles to the church, and the distinction which existed between them and other ministers. Bishop Onderdonk maintains, that the apostles, as ministers, or office-bearers in the church, were superior to Presbyters, and that their distinctive right was that of ordination. Mr. Barnes, not content with disproving, as he clearly does, the latter of these propositions, denies the former also, and maintains, if we correctly understand him, that the apostles had no ministerial superiority to Presbyters, but were distinguished from them, merely as witnesses of Christ's resurrection, and as being clothed with miraculous powers. We are not sure that the latter was meant by the author to be included, as one of the distinctive signs of an apostle. This seems to be implied in some of his arguments, but is not, we think, explicitly asserted. In either case, there can be no doubt, that the author denies the ministerial superiority of the apostles. There is, indeed, some confusion and obscurity of language upon this point. In some parts of his argument he seems to deny merely the exclusive right of ordination, as belonging to the apostolic office. If this were all, we should have nothing to urge in the way of objection. It is demonstrable, that Presbyters, as such, ordained, during the lifetime of the primitive apostles. But this view of the author's intention is at variance with the general scope and tenor of his argument. He evidently builds his opposition to the alleged superiority of the bishops as successors of the apostles, upon the two facts, that they have no successors, and that they were not superior to Presbyters, as ministers, or rulers of the church. Now this last is one of the positions, taken in the original review of Onderdonk's tract, which we could have wished to see better defended or abandoned altogether. We are persuaded that it will strike most readers as a paradox, and thereby injure the effect of the whole argument, even of those parts which have no dependence on it, as is happily the case with such as we consider most essential. It is no small advantage to the side, which we, with Mr. Barnes, espouse in this dispute, that it is free from paradoxical hy-

potheses, gratuitous assumptions, and constrained interpretations. As a general thing, it takes the language of the scripture in its obvious meaning, and supplies comparatively nothing by conjecture or tradition. Now this is an advantage which we cannot well afford to lose; one which we cannot throw away, without the sacrifice of that strong hold which our views have always had upon the great mass of intelligent and independent minds, as doctrines which appeal to common sense, and make no use of ingenious subtleties and specious paradoxes. We are much afraid, however, that this last description is the highest praise that can be justly given to Mr. Barnes's doctrine, that the apostles, as ministers or rulers of the church, had no superiority to Presbyters. We believe that such superiority appears, not only to ourselves, but to the vast majority of those who read the scriptures, as scarcely less clear than the existence of a ministry at all. It does seem to us that a continuous perusal of the New Testament, with an eye to the question of church government, would leave no fact more distinctly and prominently impressed upon the memory, than the fact, that the apostles, as apostles, possessed and exercised a controlling power over the organization and government of the primitive church, restricted by no local bounds, and wholly independent of that local government by Presbyters, which they introduced and left behind them, as the only ordinary permanent *régime*, to which the church, after their departure, was to be subjected. We believe, that elders exercised the highest powers of ordinary government, within local bounds, but that in order to invest them with those powers, and to bring that system into operation, the apostles were invested with a general ambulatory power of government and discipline, as distinct from the parochial rule of elders, as it is unlike the diocesan rule of modern bishops. With this hypothesis the whole tone and tenor of the New Testament perfectly agree. It solves all cases of apostolical interference in the government of particular churches. It is one of the few points, on which Episcopalians and their opponents have been commonly agreed, owing, as we suppose, to the clearness with which the truth appeared, to both sides, to be taught in scripture. We cannot, therefore, see it given up or denied, without demanding evidence far more conclusive than any which the author now before us has adduced.

From the strength of these expressions, and of the

conviction which they indicate, it may be inferred that we regard this error as vitiating the whole argument in which it is included. The inference is natural. We are bound to explain, therefore, how it is that this result does not really follow. In order, to do so, we must refer to the main doctrine of episcopacy, which our author is opposing. It is this, that bishops are superior to Presbyters, as the successors of the primitive apostles. Here are two propositions in the form of one ; first, that the apostles were, as ministers, superior to Presbyters ; second, that modern bishops have succeeded them in all their rights. If either of these can be disproved, the other may be granted, without affecting the conclusion. We should have been disposed to grant the first, and controvert the second. Mr. Barnes has chosen to deny both ; but his denial of the first cannot, of course, weaken his argument against the second, which is in itself and independently conclusive. Since he has proved to our satisfaction, that the apostolic office was a temporary one, we care comparatively little for his error, as we cannot but regard it, with respect to the peculiar rights and functions of that office. The question, after all, on which the controversy hinges, is the permanent or temporary design of the apostleship. On this part of the subject, Mr. Barnes not only reasons learnedly and ably, but proceeds upon a sure and incontestable hypothesis. His argument, as to its essential features, therefore, is not vitiated by what we believe to be the error now in question. At the same time, we should have been pleased if subsequent research had led him at least to modify his former views, so far as to leave the question of apostolical superiority an open one among those who, on every other point of any moment, are prepared to abide by the doctrines here propounded. There is another fault, which may be charged upon this little work, in common with most other writings on the same side of the question. It does not state so distinctly, nor expose so fully, as the interests of truth appear to us to require, the *πρωτον ψευδος* of the adverse doctrine, the assumption that church government, external organization, is a matter of primary moment in the Christian system, and the chief security for truth and holiness. This being assumed, it is no wonder that men grope for the obscurest hints and most ambiguous indications of a certain polity, although the general tone and the express declarations of the scripture

do unquestionably teach us to regard church government as something, not indeed without importance, but of derivative and secondary moment. One of the most essential facts, in reference to this whole subject, is the silence and comparative indifference of scripture, as to those things which by some are now exalted to an equality with the weightier matters of the law and gospel. The advocate of Presbytery often errs by trying to dam up some particular stream from this fountain of error, while the fountain itself continues unobstructed. Some merely close one channel for the sake of opening another, and commit the same mistake, in their defence of the true system, which those whom they oppose commit, in vindication of a false one. When they ought to be destroying the foundations of error, they are merely trying to renew the superstructure. This is often the result of an impatient feeling, produced by false and arrogant pretension, on the part of others. Men are naturally disposed to say, we have stood long enough on the defensive; let us assert our own rights more boldly. But we regard it as a strong proof that Presbyterians are in the right, as to this matter, that their position is a defensive one, and that their aim is to pull down unscriptural pretensions, without erecting others in their room. They are indeed, under strong temptations to assume a higher ground, and to maintain, not only the divine right, but the binding and exclusive obligation of the Presbyterian system. By so doing, they would be enabled to retort the taunts of their opponents, and resist their vain assumptions upon equal terms. But this is a temptation to be manfully resisted, as it has been, in our own day, with astonishing success. Patient resistance to unscriptural pretensions, not by substituting others of the same kind, but by showing the absurdity of all, is an important part of our vocation. Those especially who undertake to controvert the claims of prelacy, should guard themselves against this insidious error, and make it an essential part of their performance to exhibit clearly both the letter and the spirit of the New Testament, as to the comparative importance of mere polity and organization. By doing this more fully and directly, we believe that Mr. Barnes would have rendered better service to the cause which he maintains, than by gratuitous assurances that this is not a controversy, or, at least, that his share of it is not controversial.

With these exceptions, the importance of which we are

very far from wishing to exaggerate, the little work before us may be safely recommended, as a seasonable, able and successful contribution to the cause of truth, and an additional answer to the tract of Bishop Onderdonk. We say additional, because that argument has been already indirectly answered, in every exhibition of the truth upon this subject, since its first appearance. The cry that it has never been, and never can be answered, will no doubt continue; and so far as this cry may affect the minds of Presbyterians unacquainted with the merits of the case, it is an evil. For the benefit of such we may observe, before we close, that they are apt to misconceive the true state of the controversy, by imagining that all which is maintained on one side is denied upon the other. It is not to be forgotten that a large extent of ground is common to both parties, and that where they differ, they differ in the conclusions which they draw from the same premises. In the Bishop's tract, for instance, no small space is occupied in stating propositions which no Presbyterian disputes, and only the remainder filled with inferences which all Presbyterians utterly deny. It may be natural, but surely is not rational, to argue, that because no one attempts to call in question that which all believe, the residue is equally beyond a doubt. If a member of a legislative body should propose a long preamble, full of truth and common sense, but followed by a resolution, which the majority regarded as absurd, could it be said, that no one had been able to refute his argument, because no one attempted to disprove the truths, on which the falsehood was gratuitously grafted? Now the grand merit of the tract in question, as a specimen of controversial writing, lies in the peculiar tact, with which the author superadds what we regard as illogical and false conclusions to a string of undeniable premises. To refute it is to show the gratuitous and arbitrary nature of the inference, and this has repeatedly been done; but because the truths, and even truisms, which occupy a large part of the work, are not refuted also, we may expect to hear it called unanswerable *ad infinitum*. Another circumstance, which favours this deception, is the fact, that the conclusions drawn from undisputed premises are not only illogical, but in many cases so peculiarly fantastical, as to be quite intangible to argument, and *de facto* incapable of refutation. When, for instance, one man sees, in the commission to the twelve apostles after our Saviour's resurrec-

tion, their promotion to a new rank in the ministry, and insists on this as an argument in favour of episcopacy, we, who can see no such thing there, are reduced to the necessity of meeting the assertion with a simple negative. Now this is precisely the character of nearly all the Bishop's arguments. He has certainly exhibited surprising ingenuity in giving such a shape to his reasonings as render it, in this sense, impossible to touch them. By this means he has given to himself, and to the cause which he espouses, the advantage of appearing to be left without reply, because, in a majority of cases, a bare negation is the only answer possible. It matters not how often this negative is repeated, nor how fully it may tally with the unsophisticated judgment of most readers. So long as there is not a detailed and formal refutation of the premises, as well as the conclusion, it must go for nothing with that class of readers, from whom the cry in question commonly proceeds. A refutation, which would satisfy such minds, we acknowledge to be as impossible as a demonstration on astronomical principles that "the man in the moon" has no real existence. To the argument, that he is there because men think they see him there, the only answer is that we do not see him, and therefore he is not there. To us this is conclusive, but to others it is not so: and by such our negation will of course be regarded as a mere evasion meant to cover our retreat. Between such parties all debate is idle, and we feel no more disposed to quarrel with one man for believing that he finds high-church principles in the scripture, than with another for believing that he sees the man in the moon. And yet as there are other minds, to which a correct knowledge of what has been ascertained as to the surface of that planet would be a sure preventive of their ever taking up with the vulgar superstition of the man in the moon, so there are minds, from which the high-church doctrines may forever be excluded, by a clear exhibition of the principles of church organization as revealed in scripture. So far as Mr. Barnes has contributed to such an exhibition, he will, no doubt, have the satisfaction of allaying nascent doubt and quieting uneasy apprehensions, not arising from the force or plausibility of argument, but merely from the boldness and persistency with which the most unfounded claims may be habitually urged.

Having been led to make some observations on the present state of the episcopal controversy, we shall avail our-

selves of the occasion to suggest a few additional considerations on that subject, not with any view to a discussion of the merits of the question, but for a purpose scarcely less important, that of calling the attention of our readers, and especially of those who have not watched the progress of the controversy in its recent stages, to its actual posture, and the relative position of the parties, at the present moment. This is by no means a matter of mere curiosity. A due appreciation of the arguments, on both sides of this question, depends more than some may be disposed to think, upon accurate acquaintance with the grounds, the conditions, and the previous incidents, of the dispute. We have already hinted at a seeming disposition, on the part of some who advocate episcopal pretensions, to make much of alleged changes in the ground assumed by us, while, at the same time, they allow the public to imagine, that the position of the other side has undergone no alteration. We have also seen, with some surprise, that certain Presbyterian writers tacitly concede the truth of this assumption, by treating episcopacy, even in attacking it, as one indivisible invariable system. The injurious effect of this mistake is twofold. In the first place, it unjustly yields to our opponents the advantage which invariably attaches to consistent uniformity, compared with vacillation and caprice. And in the next place, it enables them, by showing as they may easily do, the irrelevance of certain Presbyterian arguments, if aimed at one phase of episcopal opinion, to persuade many credulous or careless readers, that they are equally irrelevant, in reference to every other, or rather that there is no other form of the episcopal theory, against which the arguments in question can be urged. To this advantage our neighbours have no right, and we propose to deprive them of it, by a simple statement of the facts, as they exist. So far, then, is the name *Episcopacy* from denoting a determinate, invariable, system of opinion, even on the subject of church-government, that it includes extremes the most remote and contradictory. Of this sufficient evidence is afforded by the popular distinction between High Church and Low Church, both in England and this country. Without, however, undertaking to determine the specific difference between these celebrated titles, and the sects or parties which they severally designate, we shall proceed to set before the reader a still more nicely graduated scale of subdivisions among those who glory in the common title of

Episcopalian. At the bottom of this scale, not in point of common sense or moral worth, but of pretension and exclusiveness, we place the few Episcopalians in England, and the fewer still in these United States, who seem to be such by mere accident or force of outward circumstances, and who are so indifferent to all distinctive principles and forms, that they could pass into a different communion, with scarcely any conscious sacrifice of sentiment or inclination. We do not vouch for the existence even of a solitary specimen of this kind in America, unless imported from the mother country, where we can testify to its existence, at no very distant date. Next above these, upon the principle of graduation which we have propounded, must be rated those Episcopalians, who decidedly prefer their own to every other church organization, but exclusively upon the ground of taste, association, or expediency. Above these is another class who, in addition to the reasons just recited, or instead of them, prefer episcopacy on the ground of its superior antiquity and apostolic origin, without, however, urging it on others as obligatory. Next to these are such as teach not only that episcopal church-government is ancient and of apostolic origin, but also that it is enjoined in scripture, and that those who hold to any other form are guilty of a culpable departure from the rule there given; but without ascribing to this sin the power to annul the virtue of all ministerial acts, and the claim of those communions, which are guilty of it, to be recognized as branches of the Christian church. Another step upon the ladder brings us to a class distinguished from the one preceding by its doing what the latter refuses to do, insisting on episcopacy as essential to the being of a church, and making this the summary and final test of any man's relation to God's "covenanted mercies." This is essentially the highest rank attainable, in theoretical or practical exclusiveness; and yet within it there is still a subdivision into those who make allowances for providential breaches of succession, and for times of ignorance at which the churchman, by divine example, is allowed to wink, and those who, by maintaining the perpetual, absolute, and indispensable necessity of this organization to the being of a church at all, have reached the last round of the ladder, the sublime of nonsense. Here are six distinguishable classes, all Episcopalians, that is, all believing in diocesan episcopacy, so far as practically to prefer it, and yet differing among them-

selves, as to some essential principles, more widely than some of them differ from any Presbyterian whatever. It may be said, indeed, that these distinctions have relation merely to the motives, which induce a preference of episcopacy, while the system is itself the same in every case, the episcopacy under which low-churchmen live being precisely that to which their high-church brethren are more zealously attached. But although this is true, with respect to Episcopalians themselves, there is no small difference between the phases, which we have described, when considered in relation to the controversy between them and others. The diversity of grounds, on which the several classes plead for their favourite church-organization, enables skilful disputants, on that side of the question, to elude the force of many arguments, by interchanging the hypotheses, assumed by the different schools or parties, whenever a logical necessity for that manœuvre suddenly arises. Thus the man who has been arguing for the necessity of this organization, as the only safe one, because the only one as he says sanctioned by apostolical example, is no sooner met with arguments, which go to prove the want of such example, than he skips to the adjacent ground of those who plead for its expediency and salutary influence, and there pursues the fight as if he never had been standing upon any other spot. It is in vain that we call for proofs of its apostolic origin, or bring proofs of its recent date. Be it so, says the opponent, but behold the blessed influence of this *régime* upon the churches which live under it. Begin to call this fact in question, and before you can array your proof, the nimble adversary is away upon another point, and answers you by saying that when God commands we must obey, without inquiry into the effects of such obedience. A knowledge of these practices will put it in the power of some readers to estimate more justly, than they otherwise might do, the value of the bold assertions, which they sometimes hear, that such and such arguments are utterly irrelevant and inconclusive. An argument designed to prove, that the episcopal organization is not essential to the being of a church, is certainly not relevant, much less conclusive, against the *lawfulness* of that organization. Yet by mutual substitution, and by suddenly changing the mark after the arrow is discharged, the minds of many are so far confused as to imagine, that because a course of reasoning does not prove what it was never meant to prove,

it does not prove the very point it was intended to establish.

But it is not merely the diversity of principle among Episcopalians that we wish to bring before the reader, but the singular discrepancy which exists, among those holding the same doctrine on the subject, as to the mode, in which the truth of their opinions is to be established. We have seen that some prefer episcopacy as the most salutary system of church-government; some as the most ancient; some as obligatory; some as essential to the being of a church. It might, however, be expected, that all those who are agreed in either of the two last propositions, would be equally agreed in resting their belief upon the same authority. But this is very far from being the true state of the case. Of those who are unanimous in making an episcopal organization the test of catholicity, some do so expressly on the ground, that it is clearly taught in scripture, while others, and among them the most strenuous adherents to episcopacy as an indispensable condition, teach, that it is not at all enjoined in scripture, and employ this fact, as a convincing proof, that some of the most sacred duties are made known to us exclusively by catholic tradition. Yet nothing is more common than to find the authority and arguments of one of these two classes wielded against those who are assailing the opinions of the other. It is scarcely necessary to remind the reader that between these two schools of high-church episcopacy, there is a more irreconcilable variance of principle, than between one of them and their common enemy. An Episcopalian and a Presbyterian, however zealous for their respective systems, may agree in acknowledging the word of God as the supreme and final arbiter of their disputes. If so, the points of difference between them are as nothing in comparison with those of mutual agreement. But the points of difference between the two sorts of Episcopalians here referred to, are of such a nature, that the one can succeed in establishing its own position only by subverting the position of the other. The Puseyite cannot possibly demonstrate, that episcopacy, though divine in origin and absolutely binding, is known to be so only by tradition, without thereby disproving, that its necessity is taught in scripture. Yet these antipodes are brought together, and familiarly referred to, as near neighbours, when the object is to magnify the triumphs of episcopacy and the discomfiture of its opponents. This kind of misrepresentation may, in certain

cases, be the result of controversial artifice, but we are well persuaded that with many, and especially with some who deal most largely in colloquial discussions of the subject, it arises from sheer ignorance, an innocent persuasion, that the name "Episcopacy" guarantees the unity of all who bear it, and that when its champions turn their arms against each other, all the blood that flows, though on the same side of the battle-field, is that of enemies, and all the victories achieved in this inglorious and suicidal contest between one Episcopalian and another, are so many triumphs over the unhappy Presbyterians. Here, then, is another most instructive fact, which we advise the reader to bear constantly in mind, and use upon occasion, to wit, that the advantages, which prelatists so loudly boast of having gained in controversy, are, in many cases, nothing more than the advantages which one kind of episcopacy gains over another, to the disgrace and injury of both.

But let us look a little further into this imaginary unity. Let us single out that class, which we have spoken of, as holding the necessity and imperative obligation of the system, but on scriptural authority. Here, at last, we might expect to meet with some degree of uniformity. But even here, we find the same contrariety of principle and argument. Between the doctrine that the "bishops" of the New Testament were bishops in the modern sense, and the doctrine that they were Presbyters, there is not only a marked difference, but irreconcilable repugnance. If, indeed, it were a question of mere names and technicalities, upon a common basis or hypothesis of facts, the variation might be trivial. But let it be observed that the position to be proved, is that a superior order of clergy is essential to the full organization of the church, because such an order is distinctly recognized in scripture, as a part of the system originally instituted. Let it also be observed, that we are now speaking of those who profess to rest exclusively upon the testimony of the scriptures. That is to say, they insist on the necessity of 'bishops' in the modern sense, because the original existence of that order is so clearly taught in scripture. We ask where, and one voice answers, in the various passages which speak of 'bishops,' while another simultaneously replies, in those which speak of the apostleship as permanent. If, in reply to one of these assertions, you proceed to show that the primitive presbyters and bishops were identical, you are

charged with a misrepresentation of the ground on which 'episcopacy' (one and indivisible) maintains that the necessity of bishops is revealed in scripture. Sometimes, the tone assumed is that of virtuous indignation at the *malu fides*, which could lead even a polemic to suppress the fact, that 'episcopacy' entertains no such opinion. Unable to resist the shock of this severe reproof, you tacitly admit your error, and prepare to combat what has just been stated as the genuine episcopal hypothesis, by showing that the apostolic office is a temporary one, when you are coolly asked what bearing that can have upon the question, since the formularies of the church itself, in the ordination offices, both English and American, identify the 'bishops,' not with the apostles, but with the ἐπίσκοποι of the New Testament. And this you find to be the simple truth. The Church of England, and its daughters, do undoubtedly, in most emphatic terms, interpret what is said in scripture of the qualifications for the office of a bishop, as applying to the case of a diocesan prelate. For if this is not really implied in the appointment of those passages as lessons at the consecration of a 'bishop,' that appointment is either a deliberate perversion of the scriptures, or a tacit acknowledgment that they contain no account of the qualifications for the most essential office in the church. Here is another fact, to which we invite the attention of our Presbyterian readers; the fact that when Episcopalians claim the praise of having proved that their prelates are the successors of the primitive apostles, and not of the primitive bishops, they are really charging their own church with error, and denouncing some of her most solemn offices as palpably unscriptural.

It would be easy to pursue this subject further, and to show what complex contradictions have been introduced into the theories of some high-church Episcopalians by the rise and spread of Oxford new light. An ambitious eagerness to seize and to appropriate the grand results of these astonishing discoveries, has blended with a no less strong desire to hold fast the old-fashioned high-church doctrines, so as to produce an effect absolutely ludicrous, and none the less so as the new views thus adopted and engrafted on the old ones, have been sometimes only half intelligible to the catechumen. In addition to the large class of discrepancies thus produced, we might proceed to show the total want of uniformity among Episcopalians as to the nature of the ministry itself, of ordination, and of apostolical succession; some denying the

transmission of official grace through a series of incumbents, others affirming it; some ascribing to the bishop the apostolic power of conferring the Holy Ghost, which others understand to have been temporary merely; some making all the orders equally essential to the ministry, while others give that honour to the bishop only; some allowing to presbyters, as such, the right of government, in due subordination to the bishop, while others clothe the latter with exclusive powers of discipline, and some even go so far as to make all the official acts of presbyters derive their efficacy from the bishop, whose agents and representatives they are. We have no doubt, that a detail of this kind would abundantly suffice to show, that the most familiar terms in the episcopal vocabulary may have not only different but inconsistent meanings, in the mouths and books of different Episcopalians. As a 'practical improvement' of these facts it cannot be amiss, for those who pay attention to this controversy, always to observe, when anything is said, as to the doctrines or achievements of 'episcopacy,' which of the Episcopalian sects it is that speaks or writes, in order to determine what the language means.

If it be said that Presbyterians are equally divided, we deny it, and maintain that the appearance of disunion has arisen in a great measure, from the injudicious mode, already censured, of exhibiting our doctrines. Presbyterian writers have too often cast their statements of the truth in moulds furnished by their adversaries. To a complex system of unscriptural pretensions, they have sometimes opposed a scheme far more scriptural but little less complex. They have taken the details of episcopacy out of their frames and niches, and attempted to fill these up with something better. But in making this attempt, they have disagreed among themselves, in consequence of having loaded the essential principle, in which they were agreed, with arbitrary and conventional minutiae of mere detail. As soon as any one perceives, as most enlightened Presbyterians do now, that these details are separable from their fundamental doctrine, and that this is eminently simple, the appearance of disunion vanishes. A characteristic difference between the Presbyterian and Episcopal hypotheses, however the latter may be modified, is this, that the one asserts a great deal and proves little, while the other, like the scriptures, asserts little and proves all. The essential doctrine of our system of church government is this, that God has entrusted the ad-

ministration of his word, his sacraments, and the discipline of his house, to A MINISTRY, whose right to act is therefore a divine one, though bestowed for the benefit of the church at large ; that this divinely constituted ministry is ONE, possessing in itself all the powers necessary for its own maintenance and propagation ; and that all divisions and gradations which exist within this ONE MINISTRY, although not necessarily unlawful, are of human institution, and cannot be obligatory, much less essential to the being of a church. In short, the Presbyterian principle is that of A DIVINELY INSTITUTED MINISTRY, in opposition to no ministry at all, or one deriving its authority from men, and of ONE MINISTRY in opposition to two, three, or more, jointly or severally requisite to constitute a Christian church. On these points all Presbyterians are agreed. On these points let them be contented to insist. Collateral and minor points are proper subjects of investigation and discussion by themselves ; but in relation to our controversy with Episcopalians—and it is of this exclusively that we are speaking—our strength lies in simply and distinctly setting forth the few essential principles which we maintain, in contrast with the fanciful and complicated theories which we oppose. The attempt to strengthen such a demonstration by asserting the divine right of ‘synodical and classical assemblies,’ in all points as they are among ourselves, or disproving that of surplices, and liturgies, and confirmation, must impair the strength of our defences by concealing them, by overlaying them with things good in themselves, but forming no part of the naked rock, on which our fortress is immovably established. The more we can make that rock stand out to view, in its impregnable simplicity, the more effectually shall we make the weakness of all other systems to appear ; and this is the defensive method, which we have already, in this article, so strongly recommended ; not a mere resistance to each petty effort made against us, but a continued and repeated exhibition of the truth, as it is taught in scripture, taking just as much pains not to add, as not to take away, from that which we believe to be essential. A direct exhibition of the truth thus made, necessarily includes a refutation of all opposite errors, and its bearing upon this result might easily be pointed out, with far more effect than could be looked for, from an empirical reply, in form, to every jumble of incongruous objections, which our adversaries may think fit to throw together. With these desultory hints to such as

may be called to buckle on their armour in this warfare, we dismiss the subject till another opportunity.

ART. V.—*The General Assembly of 1843.*

THE General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, met, agreeably to appointment, in the Central Presbyterian church in the city of Philadelphia, on Thursday, the 18th of May, A. D. 1843, at 11 o'clock, A. M.; and (Dr. Edgar, the moderator of the last Assembly being absent) was opened with a sermon by the Rev. Robert J. Breckinridge, D. D., from Acts xv. 14. "Simeon hath declared how God, at the first, did visit the gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name."

After the sermon, Dr. Breckinridge, being the last moderator present, took the chair and opened the session with prayer. Dr. Breckinridge presided at the organization of the Assembly, according to the precedent set some years since at Pittsburgh, when it was decided that, in case of the absence of the moderator of the preceding Assembly, the last moderator present, whether in commission or not, was the proper person to preside until a new moderator was chosen. In our Form of Government, ch. 12, §. 7. it is said, "The General Assembly shall meet at least once every year, on the day appointed for the purpose, the moderator of the last Assembly, if present, or in case of his absence, some other minister shall open the meeting with a sermon, and preside until a new moderator be chosen." This rule seems inconsistent with the usage under which Dr. Breckinridge acted; and as cases might arise in which it would be a matter of importance to decide who was the proper person to preside at the opening of the Assembly, the committee of Bills and Overtures reported the following preamble and resolution, which were adopted, as we are informed, unanimously:

"Whereas there exists a difference of opinion as to the proper person to open the session of the General Assembly, in the case the moderator of the Assembly, immediately preceding, be not present; therefore,

"*Resolved*, That it is the deliberate judgment of this General Assembly, that by the Constitution of our church, no per-