

CINCINNATI JOURNAL.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 26, 1837.

ERRATUM.—In the second paragraph of "The Farmer's fireside," for *unallowed* read *unalloyed*.

We return our thanks to our Representative in Congress, *Hon. A. Duncan*, for the Texian Documents.

THE CONTROVERSY.

To our New School Brethren:—

We have communications on hand in relation to the Controversy in the Presbyterian Church, which we think it not best to publish. The Journal was among the foremost to take decided ground against the proceedings of the last Assembly. We believe that nearly every substantial argument against these proceedings, which has since been urged, was early presented to our readers. It was shown, that upon every principle of jurisprudence and morality, the lapse of thirty-six years had precluded the raising of any question about the *Constitutionality* of the Plan of Union of 1801:—that the last General Assembly in assuming to call it in question, was arrogating to itself, more of wisdom or of purity, than had existed in all the Assemblies for the last thirty-six years:—that according to every principle of law, civil or ecclesiastical, the question must be considered as settled, and according to every principle of morals, rights acquired under it, ought to be regarded as sacred:—that the Presbyteries in the disowned Synods, had as a constituent part of the Church, revised and new created the Constitution, and it was absurd to give to a Constitution which they had made, such an operation as to disfranchise themselves.

It has been shown that, admitting the validity of the act abrogating the Plan of Union; or admitting that this plan never had any Constitutional efficacy, yet the ministers within the Synods are Constitutionally members of the Presbyterian Church, for they came in by means of, and in accordance with the Constitution, so far as has been shown, without an exception. Many of them came into the church in other parts of the country, and have been transferred to the Presbyteries within these Synods. And if any were irregularly admitted, yet being admitted by a competent tribunal, the General Assembly has solemnly determined by its adjudications, that this can never be a reason for expelling such; but that a minister being admitted by a Presbytery, whose act is not reversed on complaint or appeal, cannot be put out of the church, or deprived of his office, but upon charges, trial and conviction before his Presbytery. That the ministers therefore were regular members of the Presbyterian Church, and could not be divested of the rights secured to them as such, but by Constitutional means, that is, by trial and conviction before their respective Presbyteries.

It has been shown too, that at the utmost that can be claimed, not more than two Churches, if any, are necessary to form a Presbytery—that the Constitution looks only to the number of *ministers*, and that on these alone, the representation is based. The fact that the Presbytery has connected with it Congregational Churches, in no way invalidates the *Constitutional existence* of the Presbytery, and at most, could only render the Presbytery liable to be dealt with by the Synod to which it belongs, and the Synod, at most, could only require of the Presbytery to bring the Churches into order, or upon their disobedience, to cut them off. And that the Synods have not done this, could not even be a ground of complaint before the General Assembly, because Synods, Presbyteries and churches, had only acted in the matter in obedience to the General Assembly. That supposing the crime of churches, in not being organized with ruling elders, as great as any would choose to regard it, yet this is their own offence, and does not render other churches, in the same Presbytery or Synod guilty, much less render them *de jure* out of the Presbyterian church, or authorize the General Assembly to declare them out. It has never been pretended that in every Presbytery, and every Synod there are not more or less of churches which all admit to be Presbyterian.

And it has been shown also that it is a fundamental principle, not only in our church, but in all communities not under the arbitrary power of a despot, that the accused be notified of the accusation brought against him, be openly tried, meet his accusers and the witnesses face to face, and have the opportunity of producing witnesses in his own defence, and all this according to the defined and settled forms of law, before any judgment can be pronounced against him, or any of his privileges, rights or property taken from him, and every act so done against him, without process, is a nullity, and has no binding force. All these great principles were disregarded or violated by the late Assembly.

These things have all been presented to the public and argued, with other points, at length. And these arguments have never been answered, and in the nature of things, never can be. It is true, that we have heard the reply over and over again, that these Synods all stood upon the Plan of Union grew out of it, and of course must fall with it.—The fact has been asserted until many feel that it must be true, and never question it, though it has never been proved and never can be, for no one can tell what would, or what would not have been, had this Plan of Union never been formed. Whether these Synods and Presbyteries would have existed, or these ministers who have been cut off, except those who were licensed or ordained in other parts of the church, would have belonged to them, must of course be only a matter of conjecture, and *conjecture* has never before, in this land, been made the basis of such an act. And there is moreover this certainty about the matter, that neither the Synods or Presbyteries, are based on, or connected with the Plan of Union, and that the ministers did not become connected with the Presbyterian church *by virtue* of it.

In this state of things it is worth while to fill up a religious paper with a continued repetition of the same arguments? Or, these still standing unanswered, to continue a discussion upon minor points? Can we hope to convince any one whose mind is armed against these? We think not.—That any should maintain the constitutionality of the acts of the Assembly, or be ready to sustain such acts, would, in our younger days, have been to us a matter of extreme surprise. But we have lived long enough to learn how impenetrable is the panoply of prejudice, when the mind is fully encased in it, and how unyielding the influence of party feeling, when a man has surrendered himself to its sway. But are all such necessarily dis-

honest? By no means. We think that they are not innocent in continuing under the power of these feelings, yet being under their power, they are not conscious of their effects upon their understandings and upon their hearts. We may well believe that there are many who think that they understand the law of the case, better than Chancellor Kent, and that they can judge with as much impartiality, and yet differ entirely from him.—But all the world except those interested, can easily see how greatly they delude themselves, but yet all the world cannot make them see it.

What in this state of things are we to do? We have no wish to increase their prejudices, or still further to embitter party spirit. And besides, by continuing to dwell upon the subject, we are in danger of bringing our own feelings towards erring brethren, into a highly improper and uncharitable state, while we unfit our own minds for the discharge of the many christian duties resting on us. It is certainly our duty to do all in our power to restore our disfranchised brethren to their rights, and to heal the wounds in the constitution of our church. But we can do all that is practicable in this behalf, without suffering the controversy to engross our thoughts. It seems to us that we may now well say, though with a very different spirit, as a certain Governor of the South once said, "Having exhausted the argument let us stand to our arms." The arms of a Christian are FAITH and PRAYER. These are the weapons which we must now use. If the rich blessings which God may yet have in store for us, could be drawn down by the fervent prayers of his people, we and those who now seem so widely separated from us, may yet embrace as brethren and rejoice together in the fullness of the gospel of peace.

Let us then turn to this bright ray of hope which beams upon us in the midst of darkness, if we will but open our eyes upon it. *The Lord's ear is not heavy that he cannot hear, nor his arm shortened that he cannot save.* He is more ready to give good gifts than an earthly parent. His words are faithfulness and truth, and his promises will not be broken. When his church feels the need of his gracious help and with confession and penitence and faith pours out her strong cries before him, he has ever heard and answered. And did we ever, more need the descent of the Holy Spirit upon all our churches and upon all our land, than now? Do we not sit in darkness, and have we not abundant cause to mourn the hidings of his face? Help is ready, and light will break forth in darkness, and the Holy Spirit will come into the midst of us, if we will but prepare our hearts and make supplications, pouring out our very souls before him. O that his glory might be manifested in the conviction and conversion of the multitudes who are now in the broad and frequented way to eternal death! O that a spirit of prayer might come upon our churches! For then, while we are yet speaking, the blessing will come.

We have in conclusion to make one request, and we beg that it may not be regarded as a formal one, or one to be read and forgotten. We make it of ministers and people—of all who have an interest at the throne grace—of all who love the souls of their fellow man.—It is this, that all now unite in earnest, persevering prayer with strong faith and hope, for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon this Valley.

Let us all resolve now to give our hearts to this one thing. In our families, morning and evening, in our closets, in our social meetings, let this be the burthen of our prayers, let this desire fill our hearts—let us not pray as a matter of form with no faith or expectation of an immediate answer, but with that strong faith which makes us to take hold of, and cling fast to the promises of our Lord. If those who profess to love the cause of the Redeemer will do this, how will hearts be made to rejoice in the greatness of the blessing that will come upon us! We will trust that this will be done, and that from this time, all will feel that strong and united and continued supplications must be made, for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and that *not one* christian who reads this will fail to unite in asking with earnestness and faith for this great mercy. Will you reader, do it, or will you refuse?