

Hence originates a third evil,—*the ignorance of the people*. Where Ministers have studiously avoided doctrinal preaching, the people are consequently unacquainted with the distinguishing principles of the Gospel; and, educated in religious ignorance, are prepared for the reception of any specious error to which they may happen to be exposed.

9. But we cannot close our observations without hailing the happier day that has now begun to dawn upon the Orthodox Presbyterian churches. The spirit of prayer that descended upon our forefathers, has begun to be shed abroad upon their sons. Prayer meetings begin to be common in our congregations. The family altar, whose fire had so long been extinguished, begins to be again kindled at the morning and evening sacrifice. A spirit of religious inquiry has begun to exhibit symptoms of activity. Zeal and devotedness in Ministers, and Elders, and people, are springing up in renovated vigour. The dry bones begin to live, and to stand upon the earth an exceeding great army.

Nor should we overlook another happy symptom of reviving health in our churches. The religious spirit that is reviving amongst our people, while distinctly *Presbyterian*, is not *sectarian*. The Orthodox Presbyterian extends the hand of fellowship to all who hold the truth as it is in Jesus; and rejoices in that spirit of reciprocal kindness, with which he is greeted and received by the evangelical Christians of all other outward communions.

Presbyterians are likewise beginning to exhibit another symptom of revival, in the direction of their eyes rather to the *doctrinal principles*, than to the government and title of their church. Presbyterian is, no doubt, a title of which we are not ashamed; the form of our church government is, no doubt, a matter of serious importance; but the doctrines of our church constitute her real characteristics; the lights of our hope and confidence, for time and for eternity.

10. When we look back to the days of our mighty fathers, we feel shamefully diminished in the contrast. In Scotland, and in England, and in Ireland, they exhibited, of old, a knowledge, a skill, and a power in theology, with which we dare not venture into distant competition. But while we admire and venerate the works they have left behind them, and utterly despair of any rivalry in their la-

hours, we would most willingly, and not hopelessly, imitate their devotedness and zeal, and follow them in support and defence of the truth. They had to war with superstition: we have to contend with scepticism. They had to struggle against ignorance: we against false learning. They had to contend against the errors of Popery: we against the heresy of Arianism.

Lastly; it is pleasing to trace the happy change which has of late been exhibited in the few Presbyterian publications which the press of the country has produced. For years gone by, Presbyterian publications (few indeed, in number,) were absolutely deficient of any religious character. Latterly, this fault has been happily amended. Little indeed has been done. The laborious avocations of a Presbyterian Minister, leave him little time for the more learned studies. And, no doubt, to preach, to pray, to visit the sick, and to catechise, are of far more importance than any other work in which a Minister can be engaged. Yet, we are happy to state, that in these latter years, Presbyterian publications have possessed a tone of religious decision, utterly wanting in their predecessors; and that the labours of several Presbyterian Ministers have afforded examples of some of the best defences of Gospel truth.

How far our own humble publication may become worthy of its name, it rests not with us to determine. The success of our labours depends upon the blessing and grace of God. But, according to to the grace given to us, we shall endeavour to be plain and faithful. We shall assail error; we shall defend the truth; committing our cause to him, who will, in his own time, "bring forth judgment unto victory."

ON THE DOCTRINAL PRINCIPLES HELD BY THE
FOUNDERS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN
IRELAND.

No. I.

THE sentiments of those individuals who have been made the instruments of extending the boundaries of the church of Christ, and planting the standard of the cross in dark and uncivilized regions, have been, at all times, objects of considerable interest to their descendants. Great

anxiety is felt to know how these venerable men thought and spoke, and reasoned on the subjects that have afterwards agitated the churches which they founded; though it has too often happened, as a natural consequence of the veneration which was justly entertained for their persons, that their opinions, when known, became the objects of a superstitious regard, and were too frequently converted into an infallible rule of faith. Such was the case with the early fathers of the church, during the dark ages of Popery. Their writings were indeed most diligently collected, and most minutely explored; but the authority of their sentiments was exalted above that of the Bible, and considered as sufficient in itself to decide every controverted point. While Protestants, however, entertain the highest veneration for the characters of the men who in times, either of Pagan darkness and idolatry, or Roman Catholic error and superstition, were the means of extending or of purifying the church; and while they also feel the deepest interest in ascertaining the views of Scripture-truth held by these Fathers and Reformers, they do not prosecute this inquiry for the purpose of idolizing their opinions, or of hereby regulating their own faith. The Bible being their only rule of faith and practice, the sentiments of the most eminent men in the world would not avail against its authoritative declarations. Though they, "or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel" than that already revealed in the Scriptures, it must at once be rejected. But this principle does not prevent Protestants from inquiring into the doctrinal views of their more remote predecessors, as a matter of historical research. It neither supersedes the necessity, nor diminishes the interest of such an inquiry, which has at all times been considered as a legitimate branch of ecclesiastical history, and been pursued at the cost of much time, labour, and expense.

Particular circumstances, moreover, may occur in the history of the church, which might render such an inquiry peculiarly interesting and important. Should two parties, for instance, arise within the same communion, who though differing widely in doctrinal sentiments, severally claim to be the genuine followers of those men who had originally formed and constituted their religious society; it then becomes indispensably necessary to ascertain what the sentiments of such men were, on the points that may be controverted;—not, however, with the view of determining by which party the truth, abstractedly considered

may be held,—for that is to be decided only by an appeal to the Word of God; but in order to ascertain by which party the doctrinal opinions of the founders of their church,—be they in themselves right or wrong,—are really entertained.

Such a case as we have here supposed actually exists, at the present time, in the Synod of Ulster. This body is divided into two parties, known by the respective designations of *Orthodox* and *Arian*. The peculiar principles by which each party is distinguished need not be enumerated in this place. They are well known to be directly opposed to each other on the most momentous points of doctrine; while they also differ with regard to the principle by which the Synod ought to be regulated in licensing and ordaining its preachers. The *Orthodox* maintain that they are propagating the doctrines which were professed by the first planters of the Presbyterian church in this kingdom; and that, in refusing to intrust the exercise of the sacred office, within the pale of their communion, to persons who deny and impugn these doctrines, they are only acting on the uniform usage of the church in her earliest and purest times. The *Arians*, on the other hand, knowing how different their doctrinal views are from those of their predecessors, do not directly insist on their identity with them in this respect, but make such allusions to former times and to previous states of the church, as are calculated to lead to a belief of this. Hence they assert, that it is the *Orthodox* who are the innovators—that different principles from those now professed by their opponents were once predominant—that they constitute the party who are the only genuine Presbyterians—and that all their opposition to recent measures of the Synod springs from the desire to bring the Body back to its original principles. What can such allegations mean, if they be not intended to convey the impression that a greater similarity exists between the present *Arians* and the fathers of our Church, than between the *Orthodox* and those venerable men? Perhaps it will be alleged, that the resemblance pleaded for, only extends to a similarity in the principle of having no creed, and of requiring subscription to none. Be it so. We shall in due time expose the incorrectness of this statement also. But for the present we maintain that the tenor of the language used by the *Arians*, in reference to former states of

the church, is calculated to lead all who are not intimately acquainted with the subject—nay, to our certain knowledge, it has already led many to entertain the belief of their identity, in point of doctrine with the founders of the Presbyterian church. Hence it is, that we have deemed the inquiry proposed in this paper a fit and reasonable one, in order that the erroneous views which have been hastily entertained on the subject may be corrected, and the public mind be accurately informed what were the religious principles of the men to whom we owe the blessings of the Gospel, and of religious liberty in Ulster.

That all these eminent servants of God were orthodox in the sense usually attached to this phrase, there cannot be the slightest doubt. Arianism was, in their day, utterly unknown as an existing heresy among the clergy of the Presbyterian church, either in Scotland or Ireland. It was conceived to be a perversion of the Gospel worse than Popery itself; and the good men of that period had as little expectation that any of their descendants should embrace this system, as we now have of any of our successors enrolling themselves under the banners of Mahomet. Not having to contend with it, therefore, in any shape, nor being under any apprehensions of its ever intruding itself into the precincts of their church, we need not expect from them any such pointed testimonies against it, as had they fallen on these latter days, they would most cheerfully and zealously have borne. But that they were firm believers in the Trinity, the fall of man, the vicarious atonement of Christ, justification by faith, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit, is as certain as that Knox or Calvin himself held these doctrines.

The most eminent of those Ministers who introduced the Presbyterian name and discipline into this country, in the first period of our church's history, were Edward Brice of Braidisland, R. Cunningham of Holywood, John Ridge of Antrim, George Dunbar of Larne, Josiah Welsh of Templepatrick, John Livingston of Killinchy,* Mr. Hubbard of Carrickfergus, Robert Blair of Bangor, James Hamilton of Ballywalter, Andrew Stuart of Donagore, Henry Colwart of Oldstone, Robert Hamilton, Samuel Row, and John McClelland. These men, during their abode in Ulster, were associated together in

the closest bonds of religious fellowship. Nothing could exceed the mutual harmony in which they lived and acted, except it were the zeal with which they laboured for the propagation of the truth. They were men much in prayer and in meditation on God's word and works. They preached every day of the week when their bodily strength permitted. They established a strict discipline by sessions in all their parishes: and observed days of fasting and thanksgiving both jointly as Ministers, and in their respective congregations. They held frequent meetings for prayer and conference; especially a monthly one of Ministers and people at Antrim, when two or three days were generally spent in exercises of devotion—measures which the history of the church shows to be as indicative of orthodox principles in those who engage in them, as the profession of the soundest creed in words could be. Though they could not, in conscience, submit to the rites and ceremonies of the Episcopal church, they heartily approved of her confession, which had been drawn up by Archbishop Usher, and adopted by the convocation in 1615, and which was strictly Calvinistic. When this confession was by the artifice and authority of Strafford, in 1634, exchanged for the thirty-nine articles of the English church, they did not object to it; conceiving the new confession to be of the same tenor in point of doctrine as the former, though they loudly complained of the canons which were at the same time introduced. And when they were obliged by the bishops to lay down their ministry and abandon the kingdom, this severity was distinctly stated to be owing, solely to their refusing to comply with the rites and government of the church, and not to the slightest discrepancy between their doctrinal sentiments and those of the established confession. Such of these Ministers as lived to reach Scotland, immediately joined the Presbyterian church there; and rendered her most important assistance, in her successful struggles to cast off the yoke of prelacy, and return to the principles that were avowed and propagated by Knox. Several of them soon rose to be among her most influential members; and to be distinguished for their zeal and ability in vindicating the Gospel from the doctrines of Arminianism, which, under the influence of the Scottish Prelates, had made their way into that kingdom: And nearly all of them were members of that church when the Solemn League and Covenant

* These six congregations are now held by reputed Arian Ministers.

was drawn up and subscribed, and the Westminster Confession of Faith received and adopted, without a dissenting voice. These Ministers were Robert Blair, who was at first Minister at Ayr, and was afterwards removed to St. Andrews; James Hamilton settled first at Dumfries, and shortly after at Edinburgh; George Dunbar at Calder; Henry Colwart at Paisley; John Livingston, first at Stranraer, and afterwards at Ancrum; John McClelland at Kircudbright; Samuel Row at Dunfermline; and Robert Hamilton at Ballantrae. Hubbard, Brice, Welsh, and Stuart had died in Ireland before the persecution began; and Cunningham and Ridge died at Irvine shortly after they reached Scotland.

This brief review of the characters and history of the Fathers of our church, in the first or earliest period of her history, is decisive as to their doctrinal principles. Though we have little but their actions to appeal to, yet even by these fruits may we assuredly know that they were strictly Orthodox in their opinions. When did Arians, even supposing that there were any in the church at this period, ever act like these venerated men? We know, indeed, that they have signed Calvinistic creeds, and have obtruded themselves into many churches under a false profession. But when did they *frame* such confessions, or recommend them to others? When were they ever known to carry the Gospel into dark and uncivilized regions, where it had been previously unknown;—to act as laborious, prayerful, devoted missionaries? When has it been their practice to hold social meetings for prayer, and the performance of devotional exercises, for their mutual encouragement and support in the work of the ministry? We answer, as a sect or body of professing Christians, *never!* It would be foreign, however, to the design of this paper, to contrast any further the conduct of acknowledged Arians with that of the founders of the Presbyterian church, for the purpose of illustrating their contrariety in point of doctrine. We have referred to this mode of proof, merely because of the paucity of records that remain relative to this branch of the personal history of our early fathers in the ministry. The only individuals among them who have left any written memorials of their lives or sentiments, are Blair and Livingston; and even in these memoirs, in consequence, as we have already stated, of the Arian heresy being altogether unknown among the

Irish or Scottish clergy, we do not meet with any explicit testimonies against its dangerous errors. But the language—the sentiments—the incidents noticed, and the proceedings recorded—with the tone of thinking and speaking on religious subjects, by which their pages are pervaded, can leave no reader in a moment's doubt, as to their having been the staunch and uniform upholders of that system of faith, to which the term *Orthodox* is usually applied. With a few extracts from their writings, in corroboration of these remarks, we shall conclude the present paper.

First, of Livingston. He thus relates the early determination of his mind to enter on the ministry of the Gospel:

“I do not remember the time or means particularly whereby the Lord at first wrought upon my heart. When I was but very young, I would sometimes pray with some feeling, and read the word with delight; but thereafter did often intermit any such exercise; I would have some challenges, and begin, and again intermit. I had no inclination to the ministry till a year or more after I had passed my degrees in the college, and that, upon this occasion, I had a bent desire to give myself to the knowledge and practice of medicine; I was very earnest to go to France for that purpose, and propounded it to my father, that I might obtain his consent; but he refused the same. About the same time, my father having before purchased some land, the rights whereof were taken in my name, propounded that I should go and dwell on that land, and marry. But finding that that course would divert me from all study of learning, I refused that offer. Now, being in these straits, I resolved that I would spend a day alone before God; and knowing of a secret cave, I went thither, and after many to's and fro's, and much confusion, and fear about the state of my soul, I thought it was made out to me that I behoved to preach Christ Jesus; which if I did not, I should have no assurance of salvation. Upon this, I laid aside all thoughts of France, and medicine, and land, and betook me to the study of divinity.”—*Life*, p. 5, 6.

In reference to the second period of his life, when he was as yet only a Probationer, he observes:—

“Those books whereby I profited most, were the sermons of Mr. Robert Rollock, Mr. Robert Bruce, Mr. J. Welsh, and Mr. David Dickson, whom I thought of all I had read breathed most of the spirit of God, were best affected, and most clear, plain, and powerful. Several of Mr. Robert Rollock's sermons are in print. I got in loan a large book of sermons of Mr. Welsh's, in which are almost nothing but unfolding of the inward exercise of a Christian. Mr. Robert Bruce I several times heard, and in my opinion never man spake with greater power since the Apostles' days. There are five or six of his sermons printed: and Mr. David Dickson I often heard, and borrowed several of his written sermons.”—*Life* p. 12.

It need scarcely be added, that more zealous upholders of Calvinism are not to be found than these eminent Ministers, to whose sermons Livingston thus affixes the unqualified mark of his approbation.

When in Ireland, he thus narrates the ordinary proceedings of himself and his brethren in the ministry:—

“Not only had we public worship free of any inventions of men, but we had also a tolerable discipline; for after I had been some while among them, by the advice of heads of families, some ablest for that charge were chosen elders, to oversee the manners of the rest, and some deacons, to gather and distribute the collections. We met every week, and such as fell into notorious public scandals, we desired to come before us.—We needed not to have the communion oftener, than twice a year in each parish, for there were nine or ten parishes within the bounds of twenty miles, or little more, wherein there were godly and able Ministers that kept a society together, and every one of these had the communion twice a year at different times, and had two or three of the neighbouring Ministers to help thereat, and most part of the religious people used to resort to the communions of the rest of the parishes. Most of all the Ministers used ordinarily to meet the first Friday of every month at Antrim, where was a great and good congregation, and that day was spent in fasting, and prayer, and public preaching. Commonly two preached every forenoon, and two in the afternoon. We used to come together the Thursday’s night before, and stayed the Friday’s night after, and consulted about such things as concerned the carrying on of the work of God: and these meetings, among ourselves, were sometimes as profitable as either Presbyteries or Synods.”

On his banishment from Scotland, at the Restoration, he wrote a farewell letter to his parishioners, in which, after giving them many important counsels, he adds:—

“I recommend to you, above all books, except the blessed Word of God, the Confession of Faith and Larger Catechism.”

This eminent servant of God, after numerous trials and vicissitudes, died at Rotterdam, in Holland, in 1672. He died as he had lived, an *Orthodox Presbyterian*; for on his death-bed he made this solemn declaration:—

“I die in the faith that the truths of God, which he hath helped the Church of Scotland to own, shall be owned by him as truths, so long as sun and moon endure.”

The only other Minister of this period, of whom any printed records remain, is Blair. He has written “Memoirs of his Life,” in which the most decided intimations of his religious principles are given. When a regent or professor in the College of Glasgow, he thus describes how he was led to receive and live upon Christ, as “God manifest in the flesh:”—

“Then began I in earnest to study his person, his natures, and his offices; how he is made to us of God, not only wisdom as the great promised prophet, righteousness as our justifier and absolver, but also sanctification as our king, to reign in us, and work that which is well pleasing in his sight. Then looked I with pleasure upon his human nature,

wherein he is sib (related) to us. Comfortable was the report that ‘unto us a child is born and a son given.’ Isa. ix. 6, who shall be the peace when the Assyrian shall come into our land, and when he shall tread in our palaces, Mic. v. 5, and who being made like one of us, partaking of flesh and blood with the children, both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified, are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren. Heb. ii. 11. And the consideration of his human nature, wherein he ‘is touched with the feeling of our infirmities,’ issued in strong consolation; for upon this ground we are exhorted to ‘come boldly into the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.’ And so our Saviour was made fit to be a sacrifice to satisfy for sin, and a more familiar (friend) to whom we might, have recourse for sanctification to help us against all temptations as our need requireth, seeing, ‘for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.’ I John iii. 8. Now, as the consideration of his human nature proves thus comfortable in order to our sanctification, so also his divine nature; for the child that is born to us, the Son that is given to us, his name is ‘the mighty God, the everlasting Father.’—Life, p. 25.

When settled in Ireland, he gives nearly the same account as Livingston does, of his diligence in the work of the ministry, and the progress of practical religion among the people:—

“My charge was very great, consisting of about six miles in length, and containing about 1200 persons come to age, besides children, who stood greatly in need of instruction. This being the case, I preached twice every week, beside the Lord’s Day; on all which occasions I found little difficulty, either as to matter or method. But finding still that this fell short of reaching the design of a gospel-ministry, and that the most part continued vastly ignorant, I saw the necessity of trying a more plain and familiar way of instructing them: and, therefore, besides my public preaching, I spent as much time every week as my bodily strength could hold out with, in exhorting and catechising them.”—Life, p. 52-3.

We meet with another incidental but decided proof of his religious principles, in reference to a most important article of the Christian Faith, in the following account which he gives of his intercourse with the celebrated Usher, Archbishop of Armagh—a narrative which, however brief, cannot fail to interest every *Orthodox Presbyterian*:—

“In March, 1627, my noble patron, Lord Claneboye, having had a great esteem of Primate Usher, would have me to accompany him to a meeting of the nobility and gentry of Ulster with the Primate. Accordingly I went, and had a kind invitation to be at his table while I was in town. But having once met with the English Liturgy there, I left my excuse with my patron, that I expected another thing than formal liturgies in the family of so learned and pious a man. The Primate excused himself, by reason of the great confluence that was there; and had the good nature to encourage me to come to Drogheda, where his ordinary residence was, and where he would be more at leisure to be better acquainted with me. I complied with the Primate’s invitation, and found him very affable and

ready to impart his mind. He desired to know what was my judgment concerning the nature of justifying and saving faith. I told him in general that I held the accepting of Jesus Christ, as he is freely offered in the Gospel, to be saving faith. With this he was well satisfied; and by a large discourse confirmed and further cleared the same, by the similitude of a marriage, where it is not the sending or receiving of gifts, but the accepting the person, that constitutes the marriage. From this he passed on to try my mind concerning ceremonies; wherein we were not so far from agreeing as I feared. For when I had freely opened my grievances, he admitted that all these things ought to have been removed; but the constitutional laws of the place and time would not permit that to be done. He added that he was afraid our strong disaffection to these would mar our ministry; and that he had himself been importuned to stretch forth his hand against us; and that, though he would not for the world do that, he feared instruments might be found who would do it; and he added that it would break his heart if our successful ministry in the North were interrupted. Our conference ending, he dismissed me very kindly, though I gave him no high titles; and when trouble came upon us, he proved our very good friend."—Life, p. 64.

The only other evidence of the religious opinions of Blair, to which we have space for referring in this paper, is afforded by the following notice of a conference he had with one of the Judges of Assize, before whom, when on the Northern Circuit, he had the opportunity of preaching at Downpatrick:—

"After sermon on the Lord's Day, one of the Judges, wanting to confer with me, sent for me to his lodgings; where, after professing his satisfaction with what I had delivered, especially in my last sermon, 'for therein,' said he, 'you opened a point which I never heard before, viz. the covenant of redemption made with Christ the Mediator, as head of the elect;' he entreated me to go over the heads of that sermon with him; and, opening his bible, he read over and considered the proofs cited; and was so well satisfied, that he protested if his calling did not tie him to Dublin, he would gladly come to the North, and settle under such a ministry."—Life, p. 69, 70.

From these extracts it is easy to perceive what were the religious principles of Livingston and Blair; and when we know these, we know the principles of their brethren. So close and intimate was the union that subsisted between the fathers of our church, that the sentiments of one were the sentiments of all. They were stedfast believers in the deity of Christ, and the efficacy of his atonement; and their views of saving faith, of the covenant of redemption, and the doctrines of grace, were in exact accordance with those laid down in the Westminster Confession of Faith. Such were the religious principles on which the foundation of the Presbyterian church in Ireland was laid by these wise master-builders,—Jesus Christ him-

self being the chief corner stone. It was the owning and inculcating of these principles that gave our church, in those days, all her power and glory. In proportion as she abided in them, did her cause prosper in the land. When she declined bearing testimony to their truth, her prosperity was impaired and interrupted. Indifference, formality, and error with its attendant evils, discord and disunion, prevailed. She is now anxiously and zealously retracing her steps. She claims the sympathies and prayers of every *Orthodox Presbyterian*, in her struggles to regain her ancient purity. May this humble periodical aid her therein; and be the means of assisting her to return to the avowal and propagation of those evangelical truths, which we have here shown her fathers maintained, and in which they gloried.

RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCE.

ORDINATIONS.—On the 1st Sept. the Rev. John Stewart, a licentiate of the Presbytery of Letterkenny, was ordained to the pastoral charge of the newly-erected Congregation of Port-Stewart, by the Presbytery of Route. The Rev. Joseph Bellis, of Deroock, preached from Col. i. 28. The Rev. John M'Loughlin, of Drumachose, explained and defended the validity and scripturality of Presbyterian ordination. The Rev. Dr. Boyle, of Dunluce, offered up the ordination prayer, and then delivered a most eloquent and impressive charge to Minister and people. After the conclusion of the services, all the clergymen who attended dined with John Cromie, Esq. who kindly and hospitably entertained them in his house.

On Friday, the 25th September, at Mountmellick, Queen's County, the Rev. Thomas Clarke was ordained pastor of the lately formed Presbyterian Congregation in that town, in connexion with the Presbyterian Synod of the Secession Church. This Congregation is the only Presbyterian establishment in Queen's County, and was formed by the exertions of the Synod's Home Mission. Previously to the ordination, a sermon was delivered by the Rev. D. Stuart, of Union Chapel, Dublin, from Ezek. xvii. 22, 24. The Rev. Joseph Lowry, of Lissara, succeeded, and gave an account of the scriptural constitution of a church, and stated, also, from the Scriptures, the nature and right of Presbyterian ordination; and having, in connexion with the brethren present, ordained Mr. Clarke by prayer and the laying on of hands, concluded with delivering the charge to the Minister and people. In the evening, the Rev. John Coulter, Gilnahirk, Moderator of the Synod, preached from 1 Cor. ix. 16. "Necessity is laid upon me, yea, wo is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel." The services were conducted in a large room over the Market-House, the usual place of worship not being sufficiently spacious to accommodate the Congregation, which was numerous and respectable.