

on both sides, were allowed to vent themselves to an unbecoming extent. One protest followed another in opposition to their motion, and the majority were evidently against it. It carried, however, because it was almost physically obstructed, and because the minority having protested against its being put at all, felt themselves shut up by their protests, not to vote in the matter. For already Mr. Gib, with others, had protested that this vote should not be put, and that every thing regarding the question should be thrown out of the minutes; and Mr. Moncrieff, with others, had protested that in the step they were now taking, amidst so much strife and confusion, the meeting was not, and ought not, to be held and reputed a due and lawfully constituted meeting of the Associate Synod. But when in opposition to these remonstrances, coming from a majority, and whilst both Moderator and Clerk had ceased to act, the others carried their question through the silence of all but themselves, Mr. Mair, the former Moderator, read out the following declaration and protestation:—

"Whereas this meeting of Synod have now passed a vote, and made a resolution upon the affirmative of that question which has been insisted upon, in opposition to a proceeding unto the Reasons of protest against the sentence of Synod in April, 1746, with the answers to said Reasons: and considering the two protestations which have been entered this day, concerning that affair; and considering that, by the foresaid step, this meeting of Synod have materially dropt the whole testimony among their hands, allowing of, at least for a time, a material abjuration thereof: and considering that, besides a considerable number of elders, the majority of ministers in this meeting, who are the proper judges in a controversy of faith and ease of conscience, and who could be judges in the present controversy, have been all along, at this meeting, contending for the proper business and duty of the Synod, in opposition to the contrary torrent:—Therefore, I, Thomas Mair, minister of the gospel at Orwell, Do hereby Declare and Protest—That the lawful authority and power of the Associate Synod is Devolved upon, and must lie in a constitute meeting of the foresaid members, ministers, and elders, together with any other members who shall cleave unto them, in a way of confessing what sinful steps and compliances they have fallen into on this occasion: As likewise I declare and protest, that the foresaid members ought, in duty to the Lord and his heritage—to take up and exercise the authority and power of the Associate Synod, lawfully and fully devolved upon them as above: and, for this end, to meet to-morrow, at ten of the clock forenoon, in Mr. Gib's house—that they may regularly enter upon and proceed in the business of the Synod."

When this Protest was read, Mr. Mair, with twelve ministers and ten elders, withdrew. The two parties, in this manner, separated from each other; and afterwards each constituted into a distinct Synod, under the same designation, which each claimed as properly and exclusively its own.

It would be tedious, and it is unnecessary, to quote at large all the motions and protestations that were made, and to bring forward the diversity of sentiment which appeared in the Court during this season of altercation. "Let it be admitted," (says Dr. Thomson, in his sketch of history,) "that, in the stormy contentions which ended in the breach, there was a mournful display of unhallowed human passion, still, a calm and unprejudiced onlooker might have marked throughout the contest on either side, the working of a sincere though imperfectly enlightened conscientiousness. It was not the squabble of opposing ecclesiastical factions for power or secular advantage, but the stern unyielding struggle of men who were haunted with a morbid dread of lowering or defeacing the testimony which they had raised. The lesson which these good men now needed to learn was that which the present age of the Church seems destined pre-eminently to develop—that there are many points on which men may conscientiously differ, and which ought to be left to each individual's personal conviction; and the meaning of the Burgess Oath is one of these. Luther, at the Reformation, forgot this principle, and his vehemence divided between the Churches of Germany and Switzerland. The Fathers of the Secession forgot it, and hence a degree of unbending obstinacy, made stronger by their very conscientiousness, growing into alienation and fierce contention, and ending at once in the rupture of private friendships, and of public bonds.

'Each spake words of high disdain
And insult to his heart's best brother.'

The Lord divided them in his anger, and covered the daughter of Zion with a thick cloud, giving them also the wine of astonishment to drink. The breach is almost the only dark spot in the history of the Secession, and it is the only fact in its history of which many of its enemies and detractors seem to be aware."

It will be seen, in our next communication, how Providence has overruled this controversy about the Burgess Oath for good to both parties, and for the general interests of the Church.

To be continued.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PSALMS.

The Book of Psalms is the best expression of the devotional feelings which were cherished by the Jewish Church. As a fruitful tree strikes a deep root into its proper soil, raises its trunk aloft, and spreads abroad its branches, covered with foliage, blossoms, and fruit; so is this book, as it enters into the depth of human feeling, the best exponent of the faith, hope, and love, which for centuries previous to the coming of Christ, nourished the sacred fire of devotion in the heart. But we ought not to suppose that the Psalms lost their significance with the past dispensation; or that they formed any part of that fading and antiquated economy which, previous to the introduction of the Gospel, waxed old and was ready to vanish away. They still describe the feelings and exercises, the joys and sorrows, the hopes and fears of believers; for, under every dispensation, "as in water, face answereth unto face, so the heart of man to man;" and hence, when the child of God is about to depart and to be with Christ, he generally prefers the book of Psalms to every other portion of the inspired volume. He seems to feel as if the veil was removed that conceals the most holy place from his view; as if he were permitted to obtain a glimpse of the now heavens and the earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness; and he sings amid his tears, almost in the language of that world where tears shall be wiped from every eye. "O sing unto the Lord a new song, for He hath done marvellous things; his right hand and holy arm hath gotten him the victory." The Psalms are, in fact, both a nourishing and a manifestation of the life of God in the soul, during every period of the Church's history. In the words of Professor Umbreit, "When Christ says, 'I am the way, the truth and the life,' according to this threefold distinction of the nature of religion, we can distinguish, as a very profitable contemplation, the corresponding contents of the Scriptures which he came to fulfil. Moses pointed out to his people, on the stoney tables of the law, the way in which they should walk; how they might be rendered worthy of the complacency of the Holy God, who made heaven and earth; and who, as the Eternal One, had entered into covenant with Abraham and his seed. The prophets announced the truth in the thunder of their discourses; and they demonstrated it in the clear mirror of history. The Psalmists reveal in eternal songs the life of the pious, who walk in the way of God, and are led by the truth."* When such is the moral and spiritual value of the Psalms, it must be a profitable exercise to specify some of their leading characteristics.

1. The Psalms abound in references and allusions to the historical parts of the Old Testament. Thus when the Psalmist describes the character and blessedness of the righteous, he says, "His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night—whatsoever he doth shall prosper." Now this passage, as to language and sentiment, is just a poetical version of the command given to Joshua.—"But thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do all that is written therein; for thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success—that thou mayest prosper withersoever thou goest." The reason why the later sacred writers so frequently quote the earlier, is, because the Bible contains the literature, as well as the religion, of the Jews; and because the history of the Israelites is viewed as an emblem of the religious experience of God's peculiar people in every age. The bondage of Egypt is a type of the more degrading slavery of sin and Satan; the wilderness is this world, Jordan is the river of death, and the land of promise is an emblem of the heavenly Canaan, "the inheritance of the saints in light." The reference, therefore, to Joshua in the first Psalm, seems to indicate, that

* Umbreit's Christian edification from the Psalms.