

dilly the vices of his age; and as it is the only ancient philosophical declaration on morality, that we could venture, with certain limitations, to call good and wise. If great as Cicero was, he was still a fabulist in theology, and a complete errorist in natural philosophy—for only in his ideas of morals did he shine—and in regard to the immortality of the soul, and a future state, he had to make it his dying confession, that "whether he should live again or not, or whether it was better to live or to die, the gods alone could determine." Thus the last of the great philosophers lived, reasoned, doubted, and died; and his writings virtually convey in them his testimony, that man cannot be truly wise without a revelation from God.

Such is the outline of the conclusion to which we are forced to come in regard to the much-vaunted wisdom of the ancients. Egypt had her philosophers; but where have we the proof of the excellence of their philosophy? Greece had her "seven wise men,"—only seven! who were worthy of high place in the temple of reason—not even one in a century!—but allowing them all the merit of mental superiority that could be claimed, we ask for the proof that they did what infidelity asserts that reason is capable of performing? Rome had her one philosopher, at all worthy of the name—only one!—and he proves, not the sufficiency, but the incapacity of the human mind for self-instruction in the highest subjects of belief, duty, obligation and destiny. There was, however, a philosopher who, in his youth, "was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," who did give the ancient world light, but it was not by the knowledge he had gathered from the colleges of the Nile. He got it during his "season" of forty days and forty nights, held on the cloud-covered, and lightning-guarded Sinai. God was the Teacher, and Moses was the Scholar—and that great Hebrew, not only immeasurably surpasses all heathen sages collectively, but a close examination, were we to enter on it, would afford strong evidence that, from his system, the most eminent of the heathen philosophers derived the few glimpses of approximating truths, which are to be seen in their writings. Why is it that Moses should be overlooked in the infidels' catalogue of ancient philosophers? If they will deny his inspiration, still we demand that they deal fairly with his system. If he divulged to the powers of his reason alone, then he stands by for the first of philosophers, and even Socrates and Cicero are intellectual dwarfs beside him. If he said that Moses did not write it, and that it is not credible, yet here we have it; and it existed before the Greeks had a sage, and the man who wrote it, whoever he was, is entitled to more honor than that which deism pays to its heroes. We do not take up the question of inspiration, but ask, are the writings of Moses superior to those of the heathen philosophers? and, if so, why does he not get credit for them? It will not do to tell us that there can be no inspiration, and therefore nothing is to be believed that assumes or asserts to be inspired, because, here are writings, which are superior, and are so, either because Moses was the greatest of ancient wise men naturally, or his greatness was caused by divine and direct instruction. Sceptics will allow no praise to the wisdom of the Hebrew legislator, but they boast of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero! and assert that their wisdom is enough for mankind; but, we ask, if they were so great, what did they accomplish for the religious and moral condition of the times in which they lived? If they could not, by their wisdom and personal influence, reform these, how can their systems possibly benefit this? If their wisdom failed them, it would fail now; and despised as the New Testament is by a godless class, yet we will take up the writings of the fishermen of Galilee, and the Apostle Paul, and in these, in a single page—we will find more real philosophy, which the world can feel, and by which it has been blessed, than in all the writings of all the philosophers of the whole ancient heathen world.

ERRATUM.—In last line of former page, for "officing," read *appearing*.

[FOR THE CANADIAN PRESBYTERIAN MAGAZINE.]

UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH HISTORY

BY THE REV DR. FERGUSON, CLEDOXIA.

Having no separate interest from the Church of Scotland, and having no plan arranged for acting apart from the National Synods, the Four Brethren, after the decision of the Commission of November, 1733, were in a situation of uncertainty,—not like that of men who leave their native country from choice, having in view some object on which they

are earnestly bent,—but like those who have been driven from it by banishment. What then was to be done? They had been contending for evangelical truth, and were they to leave it wounded on the field?—Were they to discontinue their unwearied exertions in resisting the force of error and corruption, as the sentence of the Commission enjoined?—Were they to forsake their beloved people, to speak no more to them in the name of Christ, and to leave them to be addressed by some of those ministers whose tyrannical exercise of ecclesiastical power had brought matters to this crisis, and who might corrupt their minds from the simplicity that is in Christ? This would certainly have been to withdraw ere the contest was decided. It would have been submission to authority evidently opposed to Christ's. It would have been an undutiful desertion of the scene of labour in which the Lord had placed them, and where Providence was able to continue and prosper them.

Leaving their honourable and faithful protest with the Commission, in which they declare the necessity they were under to make a Secession from the established judicatories, the Brethren retired deeply impressed with the solemnity of their new position. After serious conversation, and, we doubt not, fervent prayer, the Brethren, with a view to return to their respective places abroad, and to their stated labours, parted, without proceeding to any measure, only agreeing to meet in a few weeks for consultation, and for seeking the Divine direction as to the path of duty. They separated from each other, now knit together more closely than ever in heart and interests. They resolved to prosecute, as before, the duties of their sacred calling. In their faithfulness to Christ they were encouraged by the approbation of serious Christians in many parts of the country, and in particular by the adherence of many enlightened and conscientious persons in their respective congregations.

In the course of about three weeks afterwards, the Four Brethren met at Gannoy Bridge, in the neighbourhood of Kinross, in the house of a pious individual, who took the deepest interest in their cause, and where they felt themselves at home, and from its sequestered situation would not be liable to interruption. Here, having spent nearly two days in prayer and conference, they proceeded, in the name of Christ Jesus, the great King and Head of the Church, on the evening of Thursday, the 6th of December, 1733, to constitute themselves into a Presbytery, which was afterwards called "The Associate Presbytery." To this important step an interesting reference is made by Mr. Wilson, in the continuation of his Defence.

"The Seceding ministers met at the Bridge of Gannoy, at the time agreed upon, and the 6th day of December was spent in prayer, humiliation and conference, concerning the present providences of God towards them. They agreed to meet again the following day for prayer and conference, when the following question was proposed.—Whether or not it was their duty, in their present situation—when the present judicatories had cast them out from communion with them, and when they had, upon just and necessary grounds, declared a Secession from them, to constitute themselves into a Presbytery? There was much and serious reasoning upon both sides of the question, they endeavoured, in their reasoning, to compare the Word of God and his providences towards them, together, and, after prayer and reasoning upon the same, the question was put, Constitute presently into a Presbytery, or not? And the Four Brethren did, all with one voice, give it as their judgment, that they should constitute presently into a Presbytery. And the Rev Mr. Ebenezer Erskine was, by their unanimous consent, desired to be their mouth to the Lord in this solemn action, and he was enabled, with much enlargement of soul, to consecrate and dedicate them to the Lord, and to the service of His Church, particularly of His broken and oppressed heritage, in the present situation, into which, by the holy and wise providence of God, they were brought."

It was thus, that after all this violent agitation of human passions, all this tyrannical perversion of justice, on the part of the Courts of the Establishment, the Secession Church originated.

The causes of Secession had long existed, and had been gathering force. The process against the Four Brethren only fired the date, and marked out the path for this important event. Their reckless expulsion from the Establishment at once relieved their own minds from the fear of schism, and rendered it impossible for others to charge them with it, without the grossest perversion of reason, or ignorance of the true meaning of the word.