

# THE HOME AND FOREIGN RECORD.

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## THE GENIUS OF PRESBYTERIANISM.

When our Saviour had finished his glorious work and ascended to the right hand of the Father, he did not leave his people to be shielded by an arm of flesh, or guided by the dictates of mere human wisdom. Though their Master had gone; though they were few and feeble, and surrounded by unscrupulous, powerful and cruel foes, they could still rejoice in His continued presence, superintendence and ready aid in every emergency—for He had pledged his word to be with them “always even unto the end of the world.” The Comforter was theirs—the Holy Spirit who had come to call to their remembrance all the teaching and the doing of their ascended Lord. Sweet brotherly fellowship was theirs—the “delightful communion of saints”—all the more needful and welcome on account of the many ravenous wolves that prowled outside the fold in which the little flock sought shelter. Fear not little flock! The Chief Shepherd, though his bodily presence is withdrawn behind a veil of light which no mortal eye can pierce, is present with you still as your Prophet, Priest, and King; and he will not only sustain and defend you, but he will also guide you aright in worship, in doctrine, in government: He has given you apostles, prophets, evangelists, teachers. He has given you no visible Head on earth that you may continue to look up to himself as the Chief Shepherd and lean on his arm and seek direction from him in times of difficulty and danger.

As a wise householder Christ gave ample regulations for the government of his own house. When troublous doubts and controversies arose in the Church the “Apostles and Elders”, acting under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, met in solemn Synod, and decreed authoritatively what course should be pursued, what yoke should be imposed and what burdens should be removed. The family of Jesus, the primitive Christians, however widely scattered, were one in heart, in life, in action. When one member suffered all sympathized; when the Thessalonian, Ephesian and Corinthian churches flourished under the dews of divine grace the saints that were in Jerusalem rejoiced; and when these were distressed by poverty and hunger the Gentile brotherhood hastened to their relief. The love of Jesus subdued and unified the most antagonistic and repellant elements. Greek and Jew, Barbarian, Scythian, bond and free, rich and poor, became one in Christ. There was no lording over Christ’s heritage then—no proud prelacy trampling under foot the sacred rights and blood bought privileges of that happy brotherhood. There were no feeble spiritual coteries, no shattered fragments of communities standing coldly aloof and usurping to themselves the name and authority of the whole family of Jesus—there was no selfish independence in those days of self-sacrifice, fervent piety and expansive love. The