

IN RELATION TO DISCIPLINE.

That a state of affairs even approaching to that over which we now mourn should obstruct the exercise of Discipline, may not only be easily supposed, but unhappily the very evils which rendered it imperative necessary, conspired to prevent the possibility of its regular exercise. A Church unsound in faith is necessarily corrupt in practice. Truth is in order to Godliness; and when it ceases to make us pure, it is no longer considered worthy of being contended for.

With the woful departures from sound doctrine, which we have already pointed out, and the grievous declensions in Church order heretofore stated, has advanced step by step, the ruin of all sound discipline in large portions of our Church, until in some places our very name is becoming a public scandal, and the proceedings of persons and churches connected with some of our Presbyteries, are hardly to be defended from the accusations of being blasphemous. Amongst other evils, of which this Convention and the Church have full proof, we specify the following:

1. The impossibility of obtaining a plain and sufficient sentence against gross errors, either *in thesi*, or when found in books printed under the names of Presbyterian ministers, or when such ministers have been directly or personally charged.

2. The public countenance thus given to error, and the complete security in which our own members have preached and published in newspapers, pamphlets, periodicals, and books, things utterly subversive of our system of truth and order, while none thought it possible (except in a few, and they almost fruitless, attempts) that discipline could be exercised, and therefore none attempted it.

3. The disorderly and unseasonable meetings of the people, in which unauthorized and incompetent persons conducted worship in a manner shocking to public decency; females often leading in prayer, in promiscuous assemblies, and sometimes in public instruction; the hasty admission to church privileges, and the failure to exercise any wholesome discipline over those who subsequently fell into sin, even of a public and scandalous kind; and by these and other disorders, grieving and alienating the pious members of our churches, and so filling many of them with rash, ignorant, and unconverted persons, as gradually to destroy all visible distinctions between the Church and the world.

4. While many of our ministers have propagated error with great zeal, and dis-

turbed the Church with irregular and disorderly conduct; some have entirely given up the stated preaching of the Gospel, others have turned aside to secular pursuits, and others still while nominally engaged in some part of Christian effort, have embarked in the wild and extravagant speculations which have so remarkably signalized the times, thus tending to secularize and disorganize the very ministry of reconciliation.

5. The formation in the bosom of our churches, and ecclesiastical bodies, of parties ranged against each other, on personal, doctrinal, and other questions; strifes and divisions amongst our people—bitter contentions amongst many of our ministers: a general weakening of mutual confidence and affection: and, in some cases, a resort to measures of violence, duplicity, and injustice totally inconsistent with the Christian name.

METHOD OF REFORM.

Such being the state of things in the Presbyterian Church, we believe that the time is fully come, for the adoption of some measures, which shall speedily furnish relief from the evils already referred to. Under this conviction, we present ourselves respectfully before you, praying you to lose no time, in so adjusting the important matters at issue, as to restore at once purity and peace to our distracted Church. We are obliged to record our most solemn and settled belief, that the elements of our present discord are now too numerous, too extensively spread and essentially opposed, to warrant any hope that they can, in any way, be composed, so long as they are compressed within the limits of our present ecclesiastical organization. Mutual confidence is gone, and is not to be restored by any temporising measures. This is a sad, but a plain truth. It is a result over which the Church has long mourned, and at which the world has scoffed—but for the production of which we, and those who agree with us, cannot hold ourselves responsible, firmly believing, as we do, that we are, in this controversy, contending for the plain and obvious principles of Presbyterian doctrine and polity. In a word, it needs but a glance at the general character, the personal affinities, and the geographical relations of those who are antagonists in the present contest, to be satisfied that our present evils have not originated within, but have been brought from without, and are, in a great degree, the consequences of an unnatural intermixture of two systems of ecclesiastical action, which are, in many respects, entirely