

bly. It is true that new denominations, anxious to make proselytes, have sometimes shown a disposition to gather from all quarters, with little regard to peculiar principles. But it ought to be remembered, on the one hand, that the Relief Presbytery set out with liberal principles, expressing their readiness to extend the fellowship of their Church, irrespective of sectarian peculiarities; and, on the other hand, it is well known, that the various existing denominations were greatly fettered by their respective peculiarities; and it can easily be conceived that individuals from all these denominations felt themselves circumscribed by the restraints of the bodies to which they adhered, and found this new denomination of Relief, a source of relief to themselves. Besides, the peculiar principles of the Secession, and Reformed Presbyterians, in particular, at that time, were such as to prevent many who were connected with the Established Church, but disapproved of its corruptions, from joining these bodies; and thus this new body of Relief did open a door for them into which they could enter with a clear conscience.

The fact is, that there was both scope and occasion for such a denomination, as the Relief professed to be, at the time it was organized; and the hand of Providence was seen in lending to its formation, as it induced many who were dissatisfied with the Establishment, but who could not enter into some of the peculiarities of the existing dissenting bodies, to unite on those liberal principles which were now set forth. "Hence," says Dr. McKerrow, in his History of the Secession Church, "it does not appear that the formation of the Relief Presbytery had any influence in impeding the progress of the Secession in either of its branches. By opening a wider door of separation than that which the Secession had previously opened, many were thereby induced to leave the mother church, who might otherwise have remained in her communion; and by thus increasing the number of separatists, it tended to weaken the power of the Establishment. But at this early period, the Secession and the Relief seldom, if ever, crossed one another's paths, as betwixt the ground which each occupied, there was a strong line of demarcation drawn."

Although the differences between the Relief Church and the separate Churches of the Secession, are now almost forgotten, yet at that period they were fully apparent, and to many appeared formidable. It is, therefore, not surprising that in the circumstances to which we have referred, a war of opinion should have broken out; and that pamphlets should have been written on all sides on the questions of difference among these different denominations. But this served the purpose of eliciting truth, and preparing for that gradual approximation which has already brought them into harmonious union.

It was fully twenty years after Mr. Gillespie's deposition, that the ministers of the Relief Church had increased to that extent as to warrant, and render necessary, their erection into a Synod. Before this, indeed, they were ranged into two Presbyteries—the Eastern and the Western. In the year 1772 these Presbyteries met together to consult about the propriety of constituting themselves into a Synod, and arranging themselves under several Presbyteries. This was agreed to, and done accordingly. We have not, however, the means, at present, of giving the names or the number of those who at first composed the Synod of Relief. But it was in the year 1773 that the first meeting of this Synod was held.

Having now brought forward our account of the Relief Church, as of the two Secession Churches, into full shape and organization, in their Synodical capacity, we shall leave them here, reserving some account of their ecclesiastical operations, in their distinct and separate state, till we have overtaken something of this kind in respect to each of the branches of the Secession.

In a few papers, therefore, which may follow, we purpose to look at the Burgher, the Anti-Burgher, and the Relief Synods, as distinct denominations of christians, conducting their operations, chiefly on the field of their own country, yet also as extending their influence and operations to remote parts of the earth.

(To be continued.)

TITLES OF THE PSALMS.

The question has been asked, with especial interest, Whether were the titles to the Psalms prefixed by their authors, or were they added in subsequent time by some unknown person? It has been asserted that

there is a manifest analogy between these titles and the subscriptions to the Apostolical Epistles, which are universally admitted to be the additions of a later age; and this, it has been alleged, is a strong presumptive proof against the originality of the superscriptions of the Psalms.—*That there is a slight analogy cannot be denied, though it is generally pursued too far; and it has been almost uniformly forgotten that a mere presumption can never invalidate a positive argument.* The titles in question could not have been prefixed by any uninspired writer between the death of Malachi and the birth of Christ; for those who made the Septuagint version from the Hebrew into the Greek, made out of them no intelligible sense, plainly showing that they were not then understood. Besides, all the Psalms have titles, with the exception of thirty-four, called in the Babylonish Talmud, Orphan Psalms; and here the question naturally rises, If the titles were not added by their respective authors, on what principle did a later writer prefix them to some Psalms and withhold them from others? The superscriptions to David's Psalms are bold, original and independent; while those employed by his singers, Asaph, Korah, and Heman, are generally borrowed from him, as prominently "the sweet singer of Israel." But if they were the invention of a later age, why should this rule never be reversed? Why should the word "Selah," and the phrase, "To the chief musician," only occur in Psalms either by David or his singers? Such circumstances bear too manifest marks of design and original intention, to be the random guesses of any uninspired man. And hence we infer that the titles prefixed to the Psalms form part of the word of God, and that when rightly understood, are "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness."

The originality of the titles to the Psalms may be conclusively proved from the fact that similar inscriptions are prefixed to poems, written either contemporaneously with the Psalms or a considerable period after them. As an example of the former kind we may refer to David's lamentation over Saul and Jonathan. It is styled the Bow, a designation exactly similar to the enigmatic superscriptions of many of the Psalms. It is indeed strangely called in our English version, "the use of the bow," as if David had commanded the Israelites to be taught the literal use of the bow, that they might be better able to repel any future attack of the Philistines. But the title has manifest reference to the elegy itself, and not to the art of war; as is evident by omitting the supplemental words, printed in italics, "*the use of.*" He bade them teach the children of Israel The Bow: "behold it—the Bow song—is written in the book of Jasher." 2 Sam. i. 18.

As an undoubted instance of imitation, we may take the title prefixed to Hezekiah's prayer,—"*a writing of Hezekiah, the king of Judah, when he was sick, and recovered from his sickness.*" Isaiah xxxviii. 9. "This is the title, or inscription, of the following Psalm," says Dr. Alexander, "not inserted by a copyist or compiler, but prefixed according to the ancient oriental usage, by the author himself, and therefore forming an integral part of the text." It is admitted to have a distinct reference to the titles of such Psalms as these,—"*Of David, a writing, when the Philistine found him in Gath.*" "*Of David, a writing, when he fled before Saul, in the cave,*" &c.

But, perhaps, one of the strongest proofs of the originality of the titles prefixed to the Psalms may be derived from the third chapter of Habakkuk. There are not only many direct references in this chapter to the Psalms; but Selah, a word peculiar to those Psalms composed by David and his singers, occurs three times in it, and the beginning and conclusion of the chapter is evidently derived from the Davidic Psalms. It is entitled—A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, on Shigionoth, literally, "wanderings," an undoubted reference to Shiggaion, or "errings," occurring in the title of the seventh Psalm. The close of the chapter—"To the chief musician on my stringed instruments"—is also the substance of the title prefixed to several Psalms. Thus the fact that titles are prefixed on the one hand to hymns written about the same time with the Psalms of David; and that the sacred writers, on the other, who lived at a comparatively late period of the Jewish commonwealth, imitated the superscriptions of an earlier age, is a clear proof that the titles of the Psalms were prefixed by their original authors; and are, therefore, "*given by inspiration of God.*" But the best mode of vindicating the authenticity of their titles is to point out the meaning of such as are enigmatical and