

till at length its friends augment in number, power, and daring, and the very citadel of truth may be menaced or taken. We are well warned by the example of other Churches. The progress of semi-Pelagian views in some of the Churches of America, has dissolved their union and threatened their very existence. In England, Arminian error has lamentably spread, and if we except the Episcopalian Church, which, with a Calvinistic creed and, to a great extent, an Arminian or Semi-Popish Clergy, has been its great bulwark, the influence of Wesley has been next in order,—whose personal piety, unequalled zeal, and untiring activity, aided by an effective, though somewhat secular and tortuous system of Ecclesiastical policy and great multitudes of zealous followers, have contributed to diffuse that system through the length and breadth of the land. By such examples let us take warning, and whether sustained by many or by few, continue to display a banner because of the truth.

“In judging of individuals or Churches, indeed, it becomes us wisely and charitably to distinguish between those who hold the head, and those who deny Him, preaching another Gospel, and gladly to own the former as Christian brethren, although in some things they be otherwise minded, and in our judgment, warped and misled by error. It is our duty to rejoice in whatever benefit to the souls of men God may effect by the instrumentality of their labours, lest we should incur the rebuke of our Lord, addressed to His rash and weak disciples, “Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us.” And Jesus said, “Forbid him not, for he that is not against us is for us,” Luke, ix. 49, 50. But it must not be forgotten, that error whether in doctrine or conduct, does not lose its character by the piety of those on whom it is chargeable; that even those whom we must account not enemies but brethren, may be left to walk disorderly; and, that in no alliance is error more dangerous than in that of zealous and good men.

“In looking back on the circumstances of the Secession Church from its commencement, now more than a hundred years ago, and observing the way by which the Lord our God hath led us, it becomes us gratefully to own his abounding goodness and mercy. In particular, He hath so watched over the interests of Gospel Truth among us, as that no departure from the faith, no division or conflict of sentiment on any evangelical doctrine, has prevailed in our Church. Individual members have gone out from us; but the Body has been preserved from all suspicion of apostacy from the purity of doctrine originally professed by the Secession Church. By the entire Body the same glorious Gospel of the Blessed God has been professedly held fast; and with the necessary allowance for diversity of gifts, various measures of religious attainment, and an unavoidable and wholesome variety of expressions and illustrations, from every pulpit the same Gospel has been declared. Hitherto, purity of doctrine has been the acknowledged distinction of the Secession Church, the great instrument of its extension, and we trust will continue to be, its chief and most powerful attraction.

“Finally, let us rejoice that the interests of truth and of the Church are entrusted to Christ. Zion is engraven on the palms of His hands; her walls are ever before Him. He is too vigilant and too faithful a guardian to permit any portion of His own truth to perish. For this purpose He was