

CHAPTER II.

1792.

Until he joined the Reformed Presbyterian Church.

YOUNG McLeod having received a very respectable classical education in his native isle, animated by that spirit of liberty and independence which always formed a prominent trait of his character, turned his attention to the United States of America. In the year 1792, when scarcely eighteen, he sailed from Liverpool for New York. Shortly after his arrival, he ascended the Hudson to Albany, and thence proceeded to Princetown and Duanesburgh. These townships lie a few miles west of Albany, and south of the Mohawk river. Here he fell in with a few families who had some considerable time before emigrated from the Highlands of Scotland. Several families of the emigrants also had located themselves in Galway and Milton, a few miles north of the same stream. With these honest, unsophisticated farmers, young McLeod soon became a very great favorite. His manners were agreeable; his mind noble, generous, and ardent. He was affable, condescending, and national. He loved the country of his birth; he loved and cherished his countrymen wherever he met them. It mattered not to him how humble their sphere of life, or how scanty their worldly means. His esteem was regulated

by what he believed to be the quantity of moral worth. Among these honest, simple, and virtuous countrymen of his, he found congenial spirits, and kindred feelings. They were friends of that Redeemer whom he loved.

Religiously educated as Mr. McLeod had been in his native land, what matter of thankfulness was it, that the prayers of a godly father, the petitions and careful instructions of an affectionate and pious mother, were not unproductive! They, through the grace of God, were followed by early and abundant fruits in the land of his adoption. He loved the courts of God's house, and delighted in the contemplation of the beauty of the Lord displayed in the sanctuary. Born and brought up as he had been in the bosom of the church of Scotland, his predilections were Presbyterian. Extensive investigation, reflection, and reasoning thoroughly confirmed and established his Presbyterian principles. The abuses and corruptions with which the established church of Scotland abounded, were seen and lamented by him. Her beauty had been tarnished, and her energies cramped and trammelled by her adoption of the Revolution settlement. None could view with stronger disapprobation than he did, the Erastian establishment of her constitution, and the disfranchisement of sacred rights—the ecclesiastical slavery involved in the odious system of patronage, brooding as an *incubus* on that devoted church. Although in the United States neither Establishment nor Patronage existed, yet he declined connecting himself with any of the different denominations of the Presbyterian Church, until by close and minute inquiry he might ascertain, so as to satisfy himself which of them was in nearest accordance to the "Law and the testimony." The Scottish Highlanders above-mentioned, with whom he fell in shortly

after his arrival, were at that time in a similar process of examination after religious truth. They were anxious to know the truth as it is in Jesus. They, with much diligence and prayer, engaged in the use of the means. In conjunction with Mr. McLeod, they constituted societies for prayer and Christian conference. They procured the testimonies of such churches as they considered approximating nearest to the requisitions of the Word of God. They read, compared, and discussed the doctrines contained in them, praying for divine light and direction, and thus, in process of time, finally adopted the testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church. It is believed, indeed, that seldom has any society more intelligently embraced the articles of their religious creed than did these societies on both sides the Mohawk river, with which Mr. McLeod had connected himself. They were composed of men of genuine piety, of primitive simplicity, of strong common-sense. And they were warm-hearted, ardent, and of rigid moral integrity. Yes, the names of an Alexander Glen, a John Burns, a Robert Speir, a Hugh Ross, an Andrew McMillan, a Walter Maxwell, &c., although they may soon be forgotten in the vicinity of Schenectady, will be held in everlasting remembrance in the realms of eternal day.

The convictions and ultimate decisions, resulting from these intellectual inquiries after truth, were much aided and greatly expedited by the conversation and public discussions of the Rev. James McKinney, a member of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, who had emigrated from Ireland in 1793. Mr. McKinney was a native of Ireland, of respectable parentage and family connections, of vigorous intellect, and strong passions. His education was solid and substantial, but without much polish or refinement. He did not

much regard the cold formalities or ceremonious etiquette of fashionable patrician society. He was a warm-hearted, generous Irishman. He was zealous, enterprising, vigilant, and indefatigable in his Master's service. And, although rather stern in his manner, and uncompromising in his sectarian principles, he both was and deserved to be eminently popular among his scattered adherents. He had been, from his early youth, an enthusiastic admirer of republican institutions, as exclusively congenial to the universal rights of man.

During the French Revolution, this gentleman had acted a prominent part in the organization of a volunteer corps—a little patriotic band, in the neighborhood of Dervock County Antrim, Ireland. This was sufficient to excite the jealousy and resentment of the minions of despotism in that vicinity. For the display of this love of liberty, he was obliged, like many others, near the close of the last century, to exile himself from the land of his nativity. This reverend gentleman, in 1793, had preached in Princetown, a few miles from the city of Schenectady, for several Sabbaths, with much acceptance and success. Mr. McLeod's connection with the Reformed Presbyterian Church was among the first fruits of Mr. McKinney's ministry in this place. As already mentioned, he had received in his native land the rudiments of an education for the ministry in the established church, in which he had been born and brought up. The second sermon which Mr. McKinney preached in Princetown was on the fourth verse of the twenty-seventh Psalm: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord, all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." The effect of this sermon on Mr.

McLeod's mind immediately determined him to embrace the principles, and qualify himself for the ministry in the Reformed Presbyterian Church. He graduated with distinguished honor in Union College, Schenectady, in 1798.