

T H E

Free Presbyterian Magazine

And MONTHLY RECORD.

VOL. VI.

JULY, 1901.

No. 3.

The Assemblies.

IN last issue we briefly noted the opening of the General Assemblies of the Established, United Free, and Free Churches. At present we intend to give some account of the more outstanding transactions of these Courts.

ESTABLISHED CHURCH.

The retiring Moderator, Dr. Norman Macleod, Inverness, said in the course of his sermon that he had no sympathy with those who told them that the power of Christianity was on the wane, and that "the good Lord Jesus had had His day." He verily believed that never since Christ ascended to His throne had He a more numerous, a more devoted, or a more holy people than He had now in this and in other lands. This they might thankfully acknowledge, while evils sure and great were pointed out, not for the sake of magnifying the Church's shortcomings, but for the far higher end of inciting to greater diligence, to livelier faith, and to labours more abundant. In regard to union, he remarked, among other things, that there did seem to be growing up amongst them in Scotland a better understanding, a greater willingness to co-operate, more toleration, less bitterness, and a larger charity; and he sincerely hoped that the union recently consummated might be the precursor of a larger union, or if not, at all events of greater peace and harmony in the future.

Dr. Macleod, at the beginning of these remarks, disclaims sympathy with the sceptics who say that the power of Christianity is on the wane; and he declares his belief that Christ never had "a more numerous, a more devoted, or a more holy people than He had now in this and other lands." Dr. Macleod overlooks the existence of another class of people who believe thoroughly in Christianity, and who hold that Christ shall reign until all His enemies are made His footstool, but who observe and deplore the low state into which the cause of Christ has fallen at the present time. These persons freely grant that professors of Christ were never more numerous than they are now, but they are compelled to conclude, from observation, that true vital Christianity was

seldom a rarer commodity in the world. It is easy to guess what kind of views Dr. Macleod must have of holiness, if we are to judge by his ecclesiastical surroundings from his youth up. Such views are quite consistent with the total absence of the genuine article. As to the matter of union, he is gratified with the "greater willingness to co-operate," and the "larger charity" that prevails, and hopes well of the union between the Free and U.P. Churches. Now, we need hardly say that we feel ourselves at entire variance with this view of things. What is the meaning of this larger charity? It is just this, that spiritual life is ebbing away; men's consciences are becoming more inert; their apprehensions of the truth becoming darker; and their hold of distinctive principles is becoming weaker. They now can agree with one another, no matter how diverse the views. We do not approve by any means of division for its own sake, but we hold that the divisions of former times were unspeakably more precious than the unities of the present. The former divisions had the love of truth, the love of righteousness, and the love of Christ in them; but the unities of the present are but the coalescence with one another of numbers of spiritually unenlightened men. Never was there such a boast of light and liberty as now, and never was there in reality more darkness and bondage.

On Wednesday, 21st May, prior to the opening of the Assembly for the day, the usual Communion Service took place in St. Giles' Cathedral. The Rev. Jacob Primmer occupied a seat near the Communion table, and at the close of the service, after the benediction had been pronounced, and while the congregation were dispersing, he rose and said—"I beg to protest against this service as illegal, being contrary to the laws and constitution of this Church and realm, which our King, only a few weeks ago, swore that he would defend and maintain. May God help me!" An elder, Mr. W. W. Drysdale, sitting behind Mr. Primmer, said—"As a lay member of the Church of Scotland, I heartily concur in the protest that now has been made, as the service is unconstitutional, being contrary to the law of Church and State." No attention was paid to these protests.

On Thursday, the 22nd, the subject of co-operation with other Churches came up. There were overtures from several Presbyteries favourable to this object. Rev. Dr. Scott submitted a deliverance in which the General Assembly, while expressing their stedfast adherence to the principle of national religion, enjoined all their ministers and members to cultivate unity and co-operation in Christian work with the ministers and members of other Evangelical Churches. The motion was seconded by Sheriff Johnston. At this point Dr. Norman Macleod introduced a deputation to the House, who presented a memorial laying the matter of Christian unity before the Assembly, and asking it to appoint Sabbath, the 15th day of October, 1901, in all parishes as a day when it should be recommended that special intercession

and prayer be made on behalf of Christian unity. The deputation was as follows:—Representing the Church of Scotland, Rev. Dr. Wallace Williamson; representing the United Free Church, Rev. Dr. Whyte, Rev. Dr. John Smith, Rev. Dr. Bannerman, and Professor Crum Brown; and representing the Scottish Episcopal Church, Bishop Wilkinson and Canon Ellis. Bishop Wilkinson, Dr. Whyte, and Dr. Smith delivered addresses. The moderator (Dr. Mitchell), on behalf of the Assembly, thanked the deputation for their addresses, and Canon Ellis replied. Dr. Scott again moved that the Assembly receive the overture, and cordially declare their readiness to co-operate with all concerned in an endeavour to set apart a day for common intercession in the matter, and remit to the General Committee with power to confer and make the necessary arrangements. Lord Aberdeen spoke strongly in favour of the motion. Principal Story moved as an amendment that the question of appointing a day of prayer be postponed. He should be entirely false to his own principles and convictions if he did not oppose the proposal of the setting apart of a day of prayer. He knew it was against the fever-heated feeling of the Assembly—if he might say so. He did not think that any such appointment on the part of the Assembly would be judicious or would be right. He did not think the object aimed at would be promoted by the Assembly, as representing the National Church, undertaking the very solemn responsibility in the face of the country of appointing a day for special prayer for the blessing of unity. If they came to that, he thought many of them preferred not to have their prayers prescribed for them, even by the General Assembly, and might choose other subjects for special petition than that of unity. He doubted very much, indeed, if one large united Church in this country, be it Presbyterian or Episcopalian, would be any blessing to the cause of religion. He would be told that what they were speaking about was spiritual unity. It was not a disembodied spirit; it must manifest itself in some shape. It was to his mind a very serious question that they should take up that appeal for unity, urged as it had been that day by one of the best of men, he believed, but still by the outstanding representative of Episcopacy in Scotland. There was no doubt whatever that Bishop Wilkinson was that. He was one of the greatest proselytisers in Britain. ("Oh".) He considered it his duty to be so, and he (Dr. Story) did not blame him. When they went to the country with a prescribed day of prayer for the unity of the Church, they were misleading their people; they were injuring the feelings of many of them. There was a suspicion and dread encouraged by some foolish young, inconsiderate men that there was a party in the Church of Scotland who wished to unite itself to Episcopacy. He knew there was a deep feeling among the people of Scotland—perhaps they might call them the peasantry, the backbone of the country—a strong

feeling about their Presbyterian Church government. There were districts in Scotland where the memory of the Covenanters had not been extinguished, where the clamour and bang of industry had not quenched the echo of the martyrs' psalm. To these people it would appear treachery to their principles if they were to adopt the course suggested, for the unity which the Assembly meant would be misinterpreted to mean union with other Churches. That was the truth as regarded a large part of the country, and they had to consider, not the feelings of the few, but of all. He could not forbear from alluding to that meeting where some members of their Church and others went to meet with Scottish Bishops, who addressed them in simple innocence. (Laughter.) One of those reverend gentlemen said that he desired to express his thankfulness in the words of a Scotchman speaking in 1610 of certain events that took place at that time. He did not know if Dr. Cameron Lees knew what the history of the Church of Scotland was in 1610. Perhaps if he did he would have felt much cold in that meeting. Dr. Story thought that 1610 was rather a doubtful date, for in that year there was a packed Assembly held, many members of which were paid to enable them to come; and the Scottish Bishops had been very selfish in deducting the amount of tithes given. They were all replaced in the position of Bishops before the Reformation. Three of them were sent up to be consecrated in London, to bring down the true apostolical succession to Scotland. Every man at his induction had to swear obedience, not only to the King, but to the Bishop. Each could fine, each could imprison or suspend, without any authority other than his own. They were appointed by the King for the one purpose of quenching the Presbyterian Church. The Englishman could find no language but the language of the fanatic strong enough to express his views of the appeals for unity from the members of the Church of Scotland. There were thousands in the country who would not understand their trafficking with those ideas of unity, and appointing a day of prayer for the promotion of such unity as that. He moved that the question of the appointment of a day of prayer be postponed until it was fully considered.

Rev. Dr. Campbell, Dundee, seconded. Rev. Robert Thomson also spoke against the memorial. He said there was a temporising with Prelacy. There were several other speakers favourable to the movement on behalf of unity. On a division, Dr. Scott's motion was carried by a large majority.

On Monday, the 27th, the subject of the Confession of Faith was discussed. Principal Story, as convener, presented the report of the Committee on the powers of the Church relative to the Confession of Faith. It appears the Committee was divided into three sections of opinion. The section whose report was denominated the report of the Committee came to the following conclusions as to the powers of the Church with regard to the

Confession:—(1) The Church Courts have in their judicial capacity the fullest powers in dealing with cases of alleged error in doctrine; (2) The Church may also by a Declaratory Act explain or define doctrinal points as to which the Confession is ambiguous or silent; (3) But so long as the Act of 1690 remains in force the Church has no power, by a Declaratory Act or otherwise, to modify, abridge, or extend any article of the Confession. Principal Story moved the adoption of "the second dissent" from this report. He took the line of insisting upon the spiritual independence of the Church, and urged that it was a court of authoritative interpretation as well as of discipline. His opinion seemed to be that the Church could interpret for its members any of the doctrines of the Confession, and could frame a Declaratory Act in respect of any of these doctrines, not merely in regard to such doctrinal points as to which, according to the Committee's report, the Confession was ambiguous or silent. Sheriff Vary Campbell seconded Dr. Story's motion. The Rev. Dr. Mair, Earlston, moved the adoption of the Committee's report. He said that they had come to the conclusion that it was not within the power of the Church to make any alteration in a document which was embodied in the statutes of the realm, and which could not be touched except by those who had power over these statutes. They did not say that the Confession, in relation to its authoritativeness, was infallible, but that if the Church, which had already given one interpretation of the Scriptures in the form of the Confession of Faith, should change its mind and wish to put another interpretation in Scripture, they should do as their forefathers did, and go to the State and ask it to give effect to their desires. (Applause.) There could be no doubt as to the power of the Church in the exercise of its absolute jurisdiction in matters within their spiritual province, and that in all cases of alleged error in doctrine it could not be controlled by the civil courts. The Church might also by a Declaratory Act explain or define doctrinal points as to which the Confession was ambiguous or silent; but so long as the Act of 1690 remained in force the Church had no power, by Declaratory Act or otherwise, to modify, abridge, or extend any article of the Confession. The Procurator (Sir John Cheyne) seconded Dr. Mair's motion.

The Rev. Dr. Scott moved the following addendum to the deliverance of Dr. Mair:—

"In resolving in the meantime, to proceed no further in the matter, the General Assembly refer to their Act on Subscription of Office-bearers in the Church (1889), in which they declared their desire, by the changes then enacted, 'to enlarge rather than curtail any liberty heretofore enjoyed, and to relieve subscribers from unnecessary burdens as to forms of expression and matters which do not enter into the substance of the faith.' The General Assembly renew this declaration; and recognising that the complete and exclusive jurisdiction in all causes concerning

the faith which is inherent in the Church of Christ has been ratified and guaranteed to the Church of Scotland by National Statutes, and that the Church's ultimate authority in all such matters are the Holy Scriptures and the Holy Spirit, the General Assembly are confident that the Office-bearers in the Church will so exercise its jurisdiction as not to oppress the consciences of any who, while owning the sum and substance of the doctrine of the Reformed Churches, are not certain as to some less important determinations also contained in it."

Rev. Dr. Glasse moved that the subject be remitted back to the Committee for further consideration, and that the Committee be instructed to report to next Assembly. He said that it would be most deplorable if they were to consent to put their liberty as theological teachers into the hands of a Church Court. The difficulty with the Confession of Faith was not that they were in doubt about some of the less important matters in it. The fact was, he was afraid a great many of them not only had their difficulties on what might be called the incidental statements in the Confession of Faith, but they had very serious difficulty indeed with its principles of Calvinistic theology. How many of their ministers believed in the doctrine of election by privilege and not service? How many believed in predestination without regard to conduct and character? How many preached the doctrine of irresistible grace? This matter should be sent back to the Committee, to bring up another report securing to them their liberties, and giving them a little guidance in a very trying position. Rev. Joseph Mitchell, Mauchline, seconded.

On a division by show of hands there voted for adding Dr. Scott's addendum to Dr. Mair's motion 155, against 65—majority for, 90. There next voted for Principal Story's motion, 117; for Dr. Mair's motion (as amended), 156; and for Dr. Glasse's motion, 20. Dr. Glasse's motion was dropped, and a vote by the doors between Principal Story's motion and Dr. Mair's motion resulted in the latter being carried by 178 votes to 146.

It may be clearly seen from this discussion what is the trend of matters in the Church. A small majority may meantime, from a variety of considerations, stand in the way, but ultimately the Anti-Confessionists will triumph.

On Friday, 31st May, the Rev. Dr. Mitford Mitchell, handed in and moved the adoption of the report of the Committee on Psalmody and Hymns. In moving the adoption of the report, he said that the first paragraph in the proposed deliverance authorised the Committee to proceed with the publication of a Gaelic Hymnal. The scheme had received the approval of a large number of the Highland Presbyteries, and the Committee had selected a number of hymns, and along with the Committee on Highlands and Islands, were now preparing the hymnal, and asked the consent of the Assembly to publish it. The Rev. Robert Macdougall, Resolis, in regard to the proposed Gaelic

Hymnal, said it was not desired, and he hoped it would not be proceeded with. He had not found a single Gaelic-speaking layman who was in favour of the Gaelic Hymnal, and he was sure he voiced the feelings of tens of thousands of Gaelic-speaking people in the north of Scotland when he said they did not want the Hymnal. (Applause.) The Rev. M. Macallum, Muckairn, said he thought it would be a great pity if the Assembly gave its imprimatur to a Gaelic Hymn Book, which the Presbyteries of the Highlands never saw—(laughter and applause)—and moved an addition to the deliverance instructing the Committee to send copies of the text of the proposed Gaelic Hymnal to the Highland Presbyteries for suggestions, and to report to next General Assembly. The Rev. Dr. Norman Macleod, Inverness, seconded. He thought Mr. Macallum's proposal was a moderate and a reasonable one. He did not think you could judge of a hymn fairly when only the first line of it was submitted for your approval. (Laughter and applause.) The deliverance, as amended by Mr. Macallum's suggestion, was adopted.

An overture was transmitted by the Presbytery of Hamilton, setting forth that there was a growing disregard for the sanctity of the Lord's Day, as shown by the amount of unnecessary work openly carried on in iron works, railways, mines, and other industrial concerns, and as the Act of 1690, by which the Confession of Faith was made part of the common law of the land, and other Acts forbidding the profaning of the Sabbath, were very difficult to be put in force, the Assembly should take such steps to approach Parliament with the request for legislation to prevent all unnecessary labour on the Lord's Day; or should indicate how the existing Acts might best be put in operation.

The Rev. M. S. Dickson, Old Monkland, who appeared in support of the overture, said in their Presbytery they were face to face with many problems with which perhaps other Presbyteries were not familiar. They saw men living seemingly in almost entire forgetfulness of God and their duty towards Him, and the overture was brought up because they thought that this desecration of the Lord's day had a great deal to do with the social evils and the moral and spiritual abasement of the lives of the people. It was within the knowledge of the House that for two Sundays, if not more, over two hundred workmen were employed at Glasgow Exhibition, simply because the day of the opening had been changed and the work had to be hurried. He thought the National Church ought to have something to say in regard to that.

The Rev. A. Miller, Bluevale, in seconding the motion, suggested that the committee to be appointed should be instructed to investigate the facts. He had very little faith in any proposal for legislation in the matter—(hear, hear)—but he had profound faith in the deep religious instincts of the Scottish people, and he believed that if the facts which were familiar to ministers in industrial centres were made known, and the names of the firms

who employed their men on the Sabbath day published, together with the number of men who were employed, and if the nature of the work in which they were engaged were investigated by a strong committee of the Assembly, the evil, which was a great and growing one, would be stopped. He should like to see the Church of Scotland take up a firm position in the matter.

The Rev. Dr. Donald Macleod, Glasgow, supported the suggestion for investigation. Allusion had been made, he said, to two Sundays' work which had taken place at Glasgow Exhibition. The reason for that was, he had been informed, that a very dangerous process of removing scaffolding had to be undertaken, and it was thought Sunday was the best day on which it could be done.

Principal Story said he thought Dr. Macleod's informant must have been presuming on his gentle, and in this case, credulous nature. (Laughter.) He could testify that on that day not only was scaffolding being removed, but there were steam rollers running and work generally going on. The reason was that the building and its contents were not ready, and it would have meant a slight diminution of the profits of the concern if the Sunday had been properly observed. The same applied to the collieries and iron works elsewhere. It seemed to him there was no difference there between a Sunday and what was known as a Continental Sunday, except that on the Continent the people made no pretence to observe it. He did not blame the working man for profaning the Sabbath, because he was obliged to do it. He hoped the Committee would go to the root of the matter, and that, when a man was clearly convicted—as clearly as if he had been tried before a Court of Law—of keeping his men at work on Sundays, he would have no pious divine coming forward to defend his action or minimise it. (Laughter.)

The motion to appoint a Committee of Inquiry was agreed to.

The above discussion was a very mixed and uncertain affair. It appears that the speakers are chiefly opposed to the grosser forms of Sabbath desecration. These, of course, interfere with church connection and church attendance. One wonders indeed that Principal Story should open his mouth in condemnation of Sabbath work at all, as he is a well-known advocate of "the Continental Sunday."

The Rev. Jacob Primmer, Townhill Church, Dunfermline, petitioned the Assembly to instruct the Dundee Presbytery to cease from obstructing him in the discharge of his right to complain anent "unsoundness and heterodoxy in doctrine" and "divisive courses" by a minister under their jurisdiction. The petition set forth that, having learned on the most credible and reliable evidence that one of the ministers in the Presbytery of Dundee was guilty of "unsoundness and heterodoxy in doctrine" and following "divisive courses;" having visited the minister's church and seen a popish altar placed close to the wall with different coloured frontals and vestments, with large brass cross,

vases, and flowers, and two large candles; and having been informed by eye-witnesses that a service similar to the popish sacrifice of the mass was celebrated in that church with lit candles, genuflections, the celebrant most of the time turning his back on the congregation, who had to come up to and kneel in front of the altar, where they had given to them the bread and wine, the petitioner wrote a letter to the Clerk of the Dundee Presbytery, and attended a meeting of that body on 1st May, but on the Presbytery agreeing to sit in private he had to retire, and in his absence a motion was adopted that his letter should be allowed to lie on the table without his being heard. Petitioner wrote to the Presbytery clerk asking an extract from the minutes, but he had received no answer. Considering he had been most unjustly and tyrannically treated, and that obstacles had illegally been thrown in his way to prevent him discharging his duty as an ordained minister, he came before the Assembly by petition.

Mr. Primmer appeared for himself, and for the Presbytery of Dundee there were at the bar the Rev. Dr. Burr, the Rev. John Mills (the Moderator), and the Rev. Harcourt Davidson.

It was unanimously agreed to sustain Mr. Primmer's petition, and to instruct the Presbytery of Dundee to hear the petitioner in the complaint referred to, and thereafter proceed as might be just.

The Synod of Glasgow and Ayr overtured the Assembly to consider how far the opening of the Industrial Museum in Edinburgh on Sabbath was likely to affect the observance of the day. Lord Balfour of Burleigh, the Secretary of State for Scotland, and a prominent elder of the Church, was responsible for the opening of the Museum on the Lord's Day, and so he arose and made a long speech in his own defence. We can only give a point or two of it here. He wished distinctly to say that, for the action which he took, he accepted responsibility. He did it himself after due deliberation, not suddenly or unadvisedly, as he thought, but after careful reflection. He gave due notice of it before it was to come into effect, and he was afraid, as he stood there, he could not either profess repentance or say that he would do otherwise if he had the opportunity again. In the course of last year the Department over which he had control, obtained authority over the Museum. He had then to consider how it could be made more useful to the people of Edinburgh and of Scotland, in an educational and in many other ways. He was revising the hours during which it was available to the public, the terms on which they were to be admitted, and a variety of other things, and as a part of that revision, as a part of what he thought was his duty, he resolved to have it opened for three hours upon the afternoon of the Lord's Day. (Slight applause.) He supposed they would understand that he did not do that lightly or unadvisedly or without due reflection. He did not do it without knowing that he should give a certain amount of pain to many people whom he greatly respected, and whose good opinions he

valued, but, balancing one side with another, he came to the conclusion that it was the right and wise and expedient thing to do, and accordingly he did it. He would like to read to the Assembly, a letter which he had received that morning from a minister of a church in Scotland—he would not say of what church and he would not give his name. It was as follows:—“Although it is somewhat late, I cannot refrain from writing to point out that your Lordship has done a very wrong, a very wicked piece of work in setting open the Edinburgh Museum on the Sabbath for the irreligious and to tempt the well disposed. That is, you have wantonly granted leave and licence to the people of Edinburgh to trample under foot God’s holy commandment. And not only so, but you have done this without as much as asking, and indeed in open defiance of the people, who should have been considered. I will only add that you may rely upon it the Lord’s hand will be upon you or in your family or substance—(hisses)—before your death. An elder in the Church of Scotland, and apparently zealous for religion! It is that type of religion that is procuring Heaven’s judgments for poor Scotland.” Between him and those who wrote in such a strain there was absolutely nothing in common. (Applause.) No argument with them was possible. (Applause.) Nothing that he could say could turn them from the view which, without doubt, he believed they honestly and sincerely held.

The Rev. Dr. Gillan asked if Lord Balfour would not give the name of the minister whose letter he had read.

Lord Balfour said that he would not, but he would state, as an elder in that Assembly, that the letter was dated from a manse in Scotland, and that the name of the writer was in the directory of the Church to which he belonged. (Laughter.) Further than that he would not go. He then went on to give his views as to the authority for the Sabbath, and the character of the day. He held that its observance did not depend exclusively or even mainly upon the Fourth Commandment. In his opinion it was certainly not an ecclesiastical institution; it was a divine institution. It was an institution peculiarly Christian in its character; it was acknowledged and observed by the apostles and their immediate successors, but observed in a way absolutely distinct from the Jewish Sabbath. To him, and he ventured to say, to the great mass of the House, the Lord’s Day was first and foremost a day of special religious observance, but it was also a day of rest. As had been said by a very great man, man was a complex animal. He must have rest for his mind as well as rest for his body. Men’s pursuits were various; their rests and their recreations must be various too. These things were not inconsistent with each other, or with (if they would) the higher claims of the day, to which he desired to give due place. He regarded the day as a day of cheerful relaxation—after religious observance—of family reunions, of (within limits) social enjoyment,

as well as of religious ceremony. If they took the other view, they got a burden which, in his opinion, was too great to be borne. (Applause.)

Sir M. Mitchell-Thomson, Edinburgh, in seconding the motion, said he would much rather the question had never been raised, and he trusted the Committee would not go into its merits, but would next year simply recommend the Assembly to take no action, because he thought more harm than good would be done by having it discussed in the Assembly. Having been at the head of the city for three years he felt that he had a considerable responsibility in saying that he entirely approved of the opening of the Edinburgh Museum on Sundays. (Applause.)

Sheriff Vary Campbell, Edinburgh, said he concurred in every word of the noble speech made by Lord Balfour, and also in the remarks of Sir M. Mitchell-Thomson, but there was not the least doubt that these speeches were not in accordance with the Confession of Faith. (Laughter.)

The Rev. Dr. Scott, Edinburgh, said the remarks of Sheriff Vary Campbell showed plainly that the Assembly were doing wisely in sending the overture for the earnest and careful consideration of a committee.—The motion was unanimously agreed to.

We are not at present to discuss the Sabbath question. We simply remark that Lord Balfour will not find it so easy to dismiss the Fourth Commandment, when he observes his work ripening into its appropriate fruits. The moral law has never been abrogated for a moment by Christ; and the Fourth Commandment is in the very heart of it. It is of perpetual obligation. But anyone who looks abroad over the country can see that those people who despise the Fourth Commandment have in general very little respect for the remainder of the moral law. If Lord Balfour gives them liberty to break that law in one point, they will feel justified in despising it in the other nine points.

On Friday, 31st May, the Assembly was closed with an address by the Moderator on "The Minister in the study, the family, the pulpit, and the parish." The address, on the whole, ran upon more orthodox lines than are common from moderators of assemblies now-a-days. We quote one or two of the more satisfactory passages. Under the head of "The Minister in the pulpit," the following occurs:—

"A further duty is to preach the Word; and the great subjects of our preaching are man's ruin by sin, man's redemption by Christ, and man's regeneration by the Holy Spirit. Man the sinner and Christ the only Saviour are the two great all-comprehensive doctrines of Scripture. We have first to answer the great question for ourselves, 'What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is he?'—for until we have settled this, and satisfied ourselves that He is the Son of God, we have really no gospel to preach, and there seems no reason why we should preach at all. We must not only be completely convinced that the story of the Lord

Jesus Christ—of His incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension—is historically true, but we must ourselves have come to Him under a deep consciousness of sin and guilt, and have found pardon, peace, and purity through His Cross. As good ministers of Jesus Christ, we are not called to the pulpit as mere seekers after truth to exercise our minds on difficult problems, but we are called to proclaim positive truths, and, above all, the great truth that Christ died for our sins. Preaching Christ is not merely making Him known as a brother who has compassion for our weakness and who sympathises with us in our sorrows, but as One who bare our sins in His own body on the tree, and who died the just for the unjust that we might be reconciled unto God. We need no restatement of the Gospel such as some have demanded, who would eliminate the very heart out of the Gospel; what we need is the simple earnest preaching of salvation, by repentance and faith in the once crucified but now risen, exalted, and glorified Redeemer. Were this preached as of old, the probability is that we should be enabled to dispense with a good deal of the machinery which makes such a clatter in so many of our parishes, and which takes up so much of our time to look after, as each part requires to be driven separately by the workers for want of a great central motive-power; so that we need one set of machinery for temperance, another for personal purity, others for Christian liberality, and so on; whereas, were men turned from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to the service of God—in other words, if the life which I now lead in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, then the love of Christ constraineth me, and the same power makes me a Christian all through, and leads me to be temperate, pure, liberal, tender-hearted, without any separate organisation being required to keep me so. Or to change the figure: if humanity is a tree tainted at the root, the evil fruit produced on its different branches is not to be improved or removed by merely pruning or removing this branch or that, such as the branch of drunkenness, lust, or covetousness; we must apply the remedy—a graft from the Tree of Life—to the root; and a vitality will be awakened which, so far from requiring the branches to be lopped off, will so change their whole nature by the sap of the Spirit, which flows through them, that the fruit they bear will be good fruit; for just as a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit, so a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit. What is needed is not reformation but regeneration, and until this takes place, all attempts at reformation are merely the lopping off of outward excrescences, which will never effect the constitution and trunk of the tree. Negative theology can do no more than this. It has no power to quicken dead souls and to make them alive unto God. It leads no man to cry out, 'What must I do to be saved?' because, with no adequate sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, there can be no felt need of so great a salvation as that which could be purchased

only by the sacrifice of the Son of God. The greatest enemies of the Protestant faith at the present moment, I hold, are not so much those who are trying to introduce into our churches certain Popish practices, as those who, in the name of the Higher Criticism, are abusing the right of private judgment, writing and speaking with an evident animus against the faith once for all delivered to the saints, too often substituting conjecture for criticism, or when only conjecture is available, selecting by preference that which is adverse to the accuracy and inspiration of Holy Scripture.* It is sad to find so many growing up in our churches in stupid dread of creeds and confessions, knowing neither what they believe nor why they believe it, with no theology, but with a religion which is a mere mass of gelatinous sentiment with no backbone of doctrine, a ready prey to any form of error; while in too many pulpits the spent arrows from infidel platforms are taken up and repointed and turned against the Christian faith, so that even in Protestant churches the miracles are spoken of as mere prodigies and the prophecies as lucky conjectures, and Christ's testimony to the Old Testament Scriptures as worthless, because he was ignorant of many things, and under the influence of Jewish prejudices in all, and Christ's Divinity frequently ignored, and at other times all but openly denied—is it any wonder if, with the Church of Rome holding fast by the doctrine of the Trinity and by the Divinity of Christ as she has ever done, however much these truths may have been overlaid by superstition—is it any wonder if those who have been deprived of an infallible book should seek refuge under an infallible Pope? for there is nothing more common than for men who have been starved with the barren husks of infidelity to gorge themselves with superstition."

Under the head of "the minister in the parish," we have the following passage that gives sound advice:—"In connection with visiting the bereaved, I would just call attention to an error into which we are apt to fall at funerals, in which, out of sympathy with the relatives, the deceased is referred to in the prayers in such terms as to lead many who are present to think, and some audibly to say, that eminent saintship is more common than they had imagined, and that if that man had gone to heaven there could be no fear that any would be excluded. While we sympathise with the bereaved and desire to comfort them, we must guard against being led to exaggerate the excellences of the deceased, and to speak too confidently of their state beyond the grave, especially in cases where their faith in Christ has been by no means clear, and their life in no way consistent with such a profession, as there are many present who will either lose all respect for the minister or, what is worse, become utterly careless and indifferent to all spiritual things."

* Ritualists and Rationalists are, in our opinion, equally dangerous.—ED.

UNITED FREE CHURCH.

On Thursday, 23rd May, Dr. Stalker, Glasgow, submitted the College Committee's report. The report was adopted. Rev. Dr. Watson, Dundee, had given notice that, in connection with the Committee's report, he would call attention to the situation created, and the anxiety awakened in the minds of many throughout the Church, by the volume recently published by Professor George Adam Smith, entitled "Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament." At this point he approached the table and said that he was not to make any motion on the subject, as he understood it was to be taken up in a Pastoral Letter, for which a Committee had been appointed. He was quite contented that it should be remitted to the Committee. There was a very full House in the expectation of a heresy discussion, but the expectation was disappointed.

Principal Salmond, Aberdeen, submitted the report of the Education Committee. This report gave rise to a discussion in which Principal Hutton and Mr. Martin, Leslie, of the U.P. section of the House, expressed their strong voluntary views in regard to receiving Government grants for the Training Colleges. There was about to be some friction on the subject, but with the help of Principal Rainy, the discussion was postponed to a future season, as it did not pertain to the present report.

On the 27th, Colonel Cadell, V.C., submitted the report on the Army Chaplains. Here again the strong voluntary views of Principal Hutton and other U.P.s found vent. They expressed dissatisfaction with the practice of receiving financial aid from the War Office, and urged that this work should be wholly supported by the Church. Rev. Thomas Crerar, Leith, gave in the report on publications and records. After referring to the magazines of the Church, he said that a "Book of Household Prayers" had been completed and published, and at the close of his remarks he presented the Moderator with a copy of it. The report was approved.

Dr. Howie, Govan, presented the report of the Committee on statistics. He said on this occasion the report was incomplete, as there were 101 non-reporting congregations. It had been thought best to leave 98 of these perfect blanks in the tabulated list, both as regards membership and other organisations. It was well known that the membership of many of the non-reporting congregations was meanwhile in a fluid condition, and that it might be some time before the exact facts as to the numbers adhering to the United Free Church were definitely ascertained. It was also well known that means had been employed in some quarters for preventing members joining the United Free Church—the effects of which could not be permanent. Misrepresentations as to the attitude of the United Free Church towards Holy Scripture, the Confession of Faith, and the Catechism, had been

industriously circulated by those who ought to know better, and he could scarcely doubt that, when the facts became known, many who had hitherto hesitated to join the United Free Church would ultimately see their way clear to do so. Although the report connected the divisions that had unfortunately arisen in a number of congregations, with the Union, it was well known that, after all, the real cause of division in the Highlands (where 91 of these non-reporting congregations were found) was due, not to the Union but to an impression gone abroad to the effect that the United Free Church had abandoned parts of the Bible. A polychrome Bible was being used for inflaming the minds of the people against the United Free Church, and preventing them entering its fellowship. Their attention was called to parts of the Bible which were said to be rejected by this Church, and to other parts which were held to be *in dubio*. Anything more outrageous in the way of sectarian controversy he could scarcely conceive. The first two questions put to ministers, professors, probationers, and even ordinary office-bearers, were the most effective refutation of the slander thus propagated. They proved conclusively that, whatever statements might be made by individuals on their own responsibility, the Church, as a Church, steadfastly adhered to the doctrine of the Confession of Faith anent the inspiration, infallible truth, and divine authority of Holy Scripture as proceeding from God, who is the Author thereof, and that these attributes were held to belong to every part of the Old and New Testaments. (Applause.) Personally, he could not belong to a Church which maintained any other attitude towards the Bible, and he could not do other than appreciate the devotion and loyalty of his brethren in the Highlands to Holy Scripture. If the things reported to them had been true, they would have been warranted in remaining outside the United Free Church. When, however, they discovered that these things were not true — as they would doubtless do when they read the pastoral address issued by this Assembly—he was confident that they would see clearly that they were not furthering the cause of the defence of the Bible by remaining apart from a large body of fellow-Christians who were equally loyal in their attachment to Holy Scripture.

Dr. Howie stigmatises as misrepresentations the statements that have lately been made in the Highlands in regard to the attitude of the United Free Church towards Holy Scripture, the Confession of Faith, and the Catechism. These statements were, we believe, correct in the main. Their chief defect, in our opinion, lay in this, that they did not sufficiently emphasise the Church's guilt, not merely at present but during years past, in tolerating errors in regard to the Bible. Dr. Howie thinks it a terrible thing to say that the United Free Church has abandoned parts of the Bible, and insists that the Church, as a Church, steadfastly adheres to the inspiration, infallible truth, and divine authority of Holy Scripture. But can Dr. Howie deny that leading professors of

the Church denied long ago the infallibility of the Bible, and that at this very moment, Professor George Adam Smith, and those who agree with him, are abandoning large parts of it? Has the Church no responsibility for her teachers, whom she entrusts with the theological education of her students? And if it has been proved—as it certainly has been, to the very hilt—that the most of her professors, with her full knowledge, inculcate disbelief in the infallible truth of the Old and New Testaments, it has thereby been assuredly proved that she endorses their teaching. What is the value of the first question put to office-bearers, when almost every step of the Church for years past gives the lie to that question? It only indicates how deep Jesuitical dishonesty has entered into her vitals, when she can exact an answer from her office-bearers which avouches belief in the Scriptures as the Word of God, but which, at the same time, makes a vast number of them perjurers before God and man. To associate loyalty to Holy Scripture with the United Free Church is only a mere hallucination, no matter though it has got into the brain of a doctor of divinity.

On the 28th, Principal Rainy rose to submit the report of the Committee on Church and State. One quotation from the report will show that Disestablishment views are held as strongly as ever, and will be vigorously pushed in the United Church:—"We gladly acknowledge also that our Union was surrounded by a remarkable atmosphere of friendly feeling, and has suggested many friendly aspirations for the future. This ought to be very gratefully recognised on our part; at the same time it seems to render it only the more fitting that we should be quite frank as to our own position. The Committee understand this to be, that we must regard the statutory connection now maintained by the State in Scotland with the Established Church as objectionable in principle, and that its termination seems to us to be a necessary step towards the relations between Churches in Scotland which, we believe, are very widely desired. The Committee see no benefit to be gained by allowing doubt to arise on the point." Principal Rainy and Principal Hutton made speeches in support of the report. These speeches clearly indicated that they would contemplate no union with the Established Church until it was first disestablished.

Mr. D. A. Scott, Edinburgh (elder), moved as an amendment, "That in respect of divergence of opinion in the Church, the Assembly consider it undesirable that they express any opinion on the connection between Church and State." Rev. D. MacLennan, Laggan, seconded. It was also supported by Sheriff Jameson (elder), Edinburgh. On a vote being taken, the amendment was called first, and only nineteen members supported it. The motion was carried by a large majority. Principal Rainy submitted the report of the Committee on the Highlands and Islands. Dr. Rainy, Mr. Lee, Mr. Mackay, Cromarty, and others deplored the

recent separation in the Highlands, and reiterated the cry that the people have been misled. We need expect no other view of the situation from men who have been calling light darkness for many years. It is a great mercy nevertheless, that such a large number of people have refused to be entrapped in Satan's latest device for the ruin of the country—a union in error, not in truth.

On 20th, Dr. Ross Taylor, Glasgow, submitted the report of the Sustentation and Augmentation Fund Committee. He said that at the close of the eleventh month of their financial year the contributions to the Sustentation Fund through the associations, showed the serious decrease of £9,651 8s. 1d. ; but that he was thankful to-day that during the past month, this decrease had been reduced by £1,727 2s. 3d. If they deducted also the amount which would have been payable to the brethren who had not acquiesced in the union, the deficit was brought down to about £5,700 of which about £2,200 might be ascribed to the divided condition of Highland congregations when ministers were loyal to the Church. The decrease in the rest of the Church was thus £3,500, an amount to be regretted, yet only a small fraction of the entire sum. In a subsequent part of his speech, he indicated that the decrease in the first year of their union would mean a drop of £15 in the income of many hundreds of their ministers. After the report was spoken to by others, it was adopted.

On Thursday, 30th May, Principal Rainy submitted the draft of a pastoral address to be issued to the people of the Church in the name of the General Assembly. A considerable part of the address is devoted to declaring that the Church adheres as heretofore to the doctrine of the Confession of Faith on the fundamental matter of the inspiration of the Scripture, a declaration that we have no hesitation in saying is a positive untruth. A word of caution is also given to all professors, ministers, and probationers as to the way in which they should handle the Word of God. It appears that the leaders of this ecclesiastical organisation are alarmed at the publicity the erroneous views of their teachers have attained, and so lest the people should become dissatisfied and go elsewhere, they are forward to warn their professors and others in regard to the matter.

On the 31st, the Assembly was closed by an address from the moderator, Dr. Thomas Kennedy. It was intimated that the next General Assembly would be held in Glasgow in 1902.

FREE CHURCH.

The opening services of this Assembly were conducted, on Tuesday, the 21st May, by the Rev. Colin A. Bannatyne, Colter, the retiring Moderator, who preached from 1 Cor. iv. 4, "He that judgeth me is the Lord." At the close of the sermon the Assembly was duly constituted by prayer. The roll of the Court was then read. Afterwards the Assembly proceeded to the election of a moderator. Rev. Mr. Bannatyne moved that the Rev.

James D. MacCulloch, Glasgow, be appointed moderator. Major Greig seconded the nomination. Mr. MacCulloch was then escorted to the chair by the leading ministers and elders of the Church, and was welcomed by the retiring Moderator. He then delivered an able address in which he answered the charge that had been made against them by their opponents of the United Free body, namely, of "playing at the Free Church," and set forth their claim to be the genuine representatives of the Church of the "Disruption." Towards the close of his address he referred to the questions of numbers and property, and said "What had numbers and what had money and prospects to do in the matter? Were they commanded to follow only where the multitude led, or devote their service where it secured the handling of money? Numbers, wealth, property had their advantages, and they might be very great, but alas for them, if the time should ever come when they should say of numbers, or of riches, or of property, "These be thy Gods, O Israel!" (Applause.)

On the 22nd, the Rev. John K. Cameron, Assembly Clerk, submitted the report of the Committee on Bills. It contained, among other things, a petition from the office-bearers, members, and adherents in the Congregation of Tongue, pointing out that they had been deprived of the regular ministrations of a pastor since their former minister entered the United Free Church. They petitioned that Mr. John Macdonald, who had acted as missionary of the Church with great acceptance, should be settled as Free Church minister there. The petition was signed by 334 persons, and was backed up by a strong recommendation from the Presbytery of Dornoch. The Rev. John Noble, Lairg, on behalf of the Presbytery, said that he had found the whole population practically unanimous in the matter of the petition, and not only unanimous but enthusiastic.

Mr. Archibald Macneilage, Glasgow (elder), moved an overture anent the appointment of a committee on public questions. In his speech he dealt with the matters of Sabbath observance, Romanism, and Ritualism, and Disestablishment. In regard to Ritualism, he referred to the deputation of Presbyterian ministers who waited on the Bishops of the Scottish Episcopal Church, the successors of Laude and Sharpe, asking them to ordain a day of prayer for re-union. Rev. J. Macleod, Glasgow, seconded the approval of the overture, which was agreed to. The general treasurer submitted the report on finance and membership. As to finance, the total receipts were £3,901, and the disbursements, £2,414, leaving a balance of £1,487 in hand. The sustentation fund amounted to £2,830, out of which 25 ministers had received for the half-year, £1,950. As to statistics, the number of congregations he had received contributions from was 81. There were, according to the incomplete statistics returned to him, 260 elders, 139 deacons, 4,008 members, 27,000 adherents, 251 Sabbath school teachers, and 2,110 scholars. Mr. Macneilage

moved the adoption of the report, which was seconded by the Rev. N. Campbell, Creich, supported by Mr. Hay Thorburn, and adopted. A report on home missions was also submitted. At a later diet Mr. W. R. Brown submitted a special report on the sustentation fund. He showed that each of the ministers had received on 1st November, 1900, £75, and on 1st May, there was paid to each of them the balance of £85, required to make up a dividend for the year of £160, but from this the committee deducted as usual the premium of £7 to the widows' and orphans' fund. An amendment to the deliverance was moved by Mr. Macneilage, and seconded by Mr. Hay Thorburn, to the effect that there be paid to each minister an additional £7 as a contribution to the widows' and orphans' fund. This was agreed to, and the deliverance was adopted.

Mr. W. R. Brown submitted the report of the committee on foreign missions. The Church, he said, had found itself for the moment not in actual touch with any mission. All the foreign missionaries had preferred to attach themselves to the larger denomination. The Assembly's deliverance included a proposal to grant the sum of £90 as a contribution to the mission of the United Original Secession Church at Seoni, India, and the sum of £21 as a contribution to the Zenana missions at the same place. In regard to Jewish missions, it authorised the committee to consider the propriety of still devoting the money at its command to the same fields, or should the committee so resolve, to some other work among the Jews. The Assembly rejoiced that new circumstances did not necessitate any change of attitude towards the Livingstonia mission, and they urged upon the committee to do its utmost to continue and to increase the Church's support of the work which is under the care of Dr. Laws. Rev. N. Campbell seconded the deliverance, and the Assembly was addressed on the Seoni missions by the Rev. Thomas Matthews, Kilwinning, a deputy from the O.S. Church, and on the Jewish missions by the Rev. D. Maclean, Moy.

On the 22nd, the Rev. Colin A. Bannatyne, presented an overture from the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale, on the subject of the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill. He moved, "That whereas by the passing of the second reading of the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill by the House of Lords a critical stage in this matter has been reached, and whereas the Church has for long protested against this assault upon the requirements of the divine law and the Confession of Faith, it is overtured by the Assembly that they take this whole matter into their serious consideration and devise such measures regarding it as may tend to promote the glory of God and the good of the Church." The deliverance was agreed to, and the matter was remitted to the Committee.

The second overture was also presented by the Rev. Mr. Bannatyne, and came from the same Synod. It related to the King's Protestant Declaration. Mr. Hay Thorburn, seconded the

adoption of the overture. Mr. W. R. Brown moved a resolution on the subject to the following effect:—"That the Assembly viewed with concern, though not with surprise, the recent outcry for an alteration of the terms of the Declaration of adherence to Protestant Reformed Religion required from the Sovereign on the accession to the Throne. The Assembly was persuaded that the object aimed at was the entire removal of that constitutional guarantee of the Protestant monarchy; and that the Assembly was of opinion that the Declaration should be left unaltered." Mr. Brown's resolution was agreed to.

At a later diet, Mr. Macneilage submitted a verbal report on the *Monthly Record*, which, he said, had up till last night no official connection with the Church. Rev. Angus Galbraith, Lochalsh, moved a deliverance declaring the Assembly's appreciation of the manner in which the *Record* had been conducted, thanking the editor for his services, and deciding to take over the *Record* as a Church publication under the management of the following Committee:—Rev. Mr. Bannatyne, Rev. Mr. M'Culloch, Mr. Macneilage (convener), and Major Greig. Rev. Ewen Macleod, Oban, seconded, and the deliverance was agreed to.

The moderator, as convener, submitted the report of the Highlands and Islands Committee. The deliverance was approved.

On Friday, the 24th, the clerk (Rev. J. K. Cameron), intimated that four overtures had been transmitted to the Assembly from the Synod of Ross, the Presbytery of Dingwall, the Presbytery of Chanonry, and the Synod of Glenelg. These overtures related to the Declaratory Act of 1892, and other legislation of the past. They were all, he said, in somewhat similar terms, the following being the overture from the Synod of Ross:—"That whereas, the General Assembly had of late years passed Acts, of which the Declaratory Act of 1892 is one, against the wishes of a protesting minority, who now form the Free Church of Scotland; whereas these Acts, though regarded by the majority as merely relieving Acts, affected unfavourably the purity of worship in the Church and relaxed office bearers' adherence to the standards of the Church, and whereas the tendency of the times demand that the Church's testimony for the truth should be free from all ambiguity, it is overtured to the Assembly to take these premises into their serious consideration."

The Rev. Angus Galbraith, Lochalsh, spoke in support of the overture from the Synod of Glenelg. They knew, he said, that some of their people had had difficulties, and it had been put in their ears that they were still under the Declaratory Act. He did not admit that. They had never yielded to it, and would never do so. (Applause.)

Mr. W. Rounsfall Brown, Glasgow, said he thought the Act was not altogether the out-and-out evil thing which some people said it was, but it was so indefinitely expressed that there was room for people to hold very conflicting opinions as to what it meant. He

moved that they receive with sympathetic interest the four overtures, and, having regard to the rather indefinite range of the overtures, remit them to a Committee to consider, and to report to next Assembly what measures were best fitted to meet the purpose of the overtures; and meanwhile the Assembly recall Act XII., 1892, anent the Confession of Faith, which was passed by a former Assembly against certain distinct protests and dissents, the protection afforded by which protests and dissents being available to all who concur therein.

The Rev. John Macdonald, Raasay, seconded.

Mr. A. Macneilage, Glasgow, thought it would do just as well if the resolution simply stated that, having regard to the questions raised, the Assembly should remit, &c. He had a good deal to do with the agitation against the Declaratory Act, and if any one thing more than another influenced him to remain with the minority in the Free Church in October last, it was the certainty that at no very remote date they would get rid of the Declaratory Act altogether. It ought to be distinctly understood that there were those amongst them who were not able to see where any good was to be found in the Declaratory Acts, even as regards their grammatical construction, for he did not think that any inspector of schools could devise a better exercise for a class in English grammar than just to take the Free Church Declaratory Act of 1892, and ask the children to be good enough to analyse it in accordance with the rules of correct syntax. There were, however, far worse difficulties than that. What they should make known very plainly was that all of them, as far as they knew, who constituted the Free Church of Scotland, were pledged by every principle of honour, and by their own desires, to be rid not only of the Declaratory Act of 1892, but of any legislation in the Free Church during the past twenty-five years, which impugned the simplicity of Presbyterian worship and the attachment of the Church to the doctrinal testimony concerning the infallibility of the divine word.

Mr. Macneilage's suggestion was accepted, and Mr. Brown's motion was agreed to.

Mr. Rounsell Brown afterwards submitted the report of the Committee regarding the collections for schemes of the Church, and among the Sabbath collections suggested was one for the Livingstonia Mission, which, as Mr. Brown explained, was controlled by a Committee largely composed of members of the United Free Church. Mr. Brown spoke strongly in favour of the collection for Livingstonia, and pointed out that there would be no impropriety in giving their people an opportunity of subscribing.

Mr. Macneilage expressed the opinion that while they would be able to contribute to the mission as individuals, it would be quite a different matter to do so as members of the Free Church, and he also pointed out that Mr. Brown had been struck off the Livingstonia Committee because he had not connected himself

with the United Free Church. He hoped that the day might come when a more magnanimous view of the Free Church would take possession of the persons who led the United Free Church, but in the meantime he thought this Assembly should not acquiesce in the slight cast upon the testimony of the Church. He moved that the collection should be deleted from the list as a General Assembly collection, and after further discussion this was reluctantly agreed to by Mr. Brown.

The Commission of Assembly was appointed to meet on the second Wednesday of August, the fourth Wednesday of October, and the third Wednesday of March. The Act, which was read, gave power to that body to take all necessary steps to raise or defend legal actions in connection with the Church.

The Assembly was closed by an address from the Moderator. It will meet again on 20th May, 1902.

Remarks.—It is not our intention to say much in reference to this Assembly and its proceedings. At the same time we feel it necessary to say something in order that there may be no misunderstanding as to our views. In the first place, we may be permitted to remark that, while it affords us genuine satisfaction that so many ministers and such a large body of people have refused to enter into the United Free Church, and have disassociated themselves from the downgrade majority who went into the Union, yet we cannot, so far as matters have gone, recognise the present Free Church in its ecclesiastical position as representing the Free Church of 1843. Our anti-union friends have simply taken up the Free Church where Principal Rainy and his party left it. That position we think they themselves will admit is very different from what obtained in 1843. Before then they can consistently claim to be representatives of the Disruption fathers, they must at least make important changes in the way of renouncing certain past legislation of the Church. This some of them appear anxious to do, and time will reveal what will be done. As regards the Declaratory Act of 1892, they seem to be divided in their views about it. Mr. W. R. Brown's utterances especially are far from satisfactory on this and other topics. It is vain however for them to speak of themselves as a *protesting* minority in relation to the Act. Every one of them knows very well that they had no liberty to protest in the real sense of the term, and that the protests that were recorded in several Presbyteries were deleted by the express orders of the General Assembly. If they were a protesting minority, then their standing ground in 1892 or 1893 ought to have been outside the nominal Free Church and not within it. However, we don't intend to pursue the subject any further at present. Let us say in conclusion that we pen these remarks not with the slightest desire or intention to hurt our anti-unionist friends but simply to make our views clear to all parties. To have given a sketch of their proceedings in these columns, and not at the same time to have expressed our views of their ecclesiastical position would have been entirely misleading.—ED.

A Sermon.

BY REV. DAVID DICKSON, MINISTER OF IRVINE, 1618-42.

~~~~~  
 "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff."—ISAIAH xli. 14, 15.  
 ~~~~~

GOD has threatened the overthrow of idolaters in the former part of the chapter. Now, in this part of the chapter, He promises to do for His true worshippers—that He shall uphold them, deliver them, comfort them, and make them victorious over all their enemies, whom here He comprises under the name of adversaries great and small, the angels that lay about them.

The encouragement given to them in the former verses, is repeated and insisted on by a promise of help (verse 14), and of strength and victory over their enemies (verses 15, 16); and if need be, a drink of comfort is promised in their conflict, or time of sore trouble (verse 17). It is very fit ye should hear this, because ye are called to war; ye must fight, before ye can win to heaven. There is more ado, than to say your prayers, come to the kirk, and haunt communions; for ye must run, strike, fight, and endure sore bickerings, before the crown be gotten: there is no coming to heaven with ease; but as Christ came to heaven, so must all his, through many tribulations and conflicts. But this generation has neither will to work nor fight. Their hearts faint, their feeble knees bow, and their hands refuse to work: men sleep over in security, and dream of the fool's paradise. They come to the communion to be cleansed, and fall over again, as swine in the mire; as if the coming to the communion, were like the confessions made to the Papist priests, and their absolutions. But the truth must be told. Now ye have a fight, a task-work, ere ye get the treasure; a hell to go past, ere ye win to heaven. As ye have reconciliation to seek with God, so ye have the devil and the world to encounter with; therefore ye have need to guard your selves upon all hands.

After that here a Redeemer is promised to Jacob, he is encouraged to go in the battle: "Fear not, thou worm Jacob." As if he said, I know thee; thou hast a great turn to do, and thou art but a feckless and feeble thing, in the sense of thy own weakness; yet, fear not, for I will help thee; I thy Redeemer have said it. Oh, but what shall I do with my strong and mighty adversaries, that are like mountains and hills, says Jacob? The Lord answers, Thou shalt thrash them like a sheaf of corn, and winnow them like chaff. I shall make thee like a new-shod flail

with iron, or like a cast wheel shod with iron nails, that takes the corn off the straw ; so that albeit thy great enemies be as mountains, and thy smaller enemies as hills, yet I shall cause thee beat them as a sheaf of corn, that lies still before thee, and stirs not, till thou be tired of threshing, and then casts it by thee, and when it is threshen, is letten through the wind ; and thy enemies shall be carried away, as chaff, that is carried out of the gate with the wind. Now, because Jacob might think this an easy victory over his enemies, therefore he tells them in the next words, that for all this, he will be put to a sore pinch before this victory be gotten in his sense ; for it is a victory that is given to faith, and faith will count no more of all enemies, the devil, the world, and the man's own corruptions, than a thresher will count of a corn-sheaf, when it looks to the Lord's strength. But before sense get the victory, there will be a strange warsling * sweating, and breathing, and such a weariness in the conflict, that there must needs be a drink of consolation. Therefore the Lord says, "When the poor and needy want water, and their tongue fails them for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, and will not forsake them." I know, that for all the notable victory I have promised, Jacob will faint ; but when Jacob is so forfoughten,† that he cannot cry to me for a drink, yet I will hear him when his tongue cannot speak, when he cannot pray for swooning. I will hear him, and not forsake him. This for the meaning of the words : let us now make our use of them.

1. "Fear not." When God is speaking to Jacob and ail His redeemed people, He says, "Fear not ;" which lets us see, that God knows that His people are very feeble and weak in the time of trouble, trial, and tentation, and how much we are taken up with the sight of impediments, when we meet them in a strait. We are all stout enough till we be assayed, but when we have adversaries to meet with, and see their strength, then our hearts fall into the dust. We are like Peter, who minted to his Master on the water ; but when the wind blows, and he is like to sink, he cries, "Help Master, I perish !" I grant, it is no wonder the godly be feeble, they carry about with them so great misbelief and manifold corruptions ; yet let them know, that know their fears.

2. "Fear not, saith the Lord." We see there is no remedy for this fear but the voice and word of the Lord ; only His encouragement can hold us up in the conflict, and no created power will bear us up in the strait ; His voice and word give boldness and courage. Thou who art afraid to win through thy sins, and get impediments overcome, take the Lord's word, the staff of His promise, to strengthen ; let this word dwell plentifully in thee. Take the sword of the Spirit, the leg-harness of resolution, the helmet of hope (spoken of in Ephesians vi.), and guard thyself with the word on all quarters.

3. In the tenth verse He forbids Jacob to fear, and here He

* Wrestling.

† Over-fought, exhausted with fighting.

repeats it. It lets us see that, as nothing is more comfortable to a feeble or fleyed* soul than the word, so the Lord is not sparing of it, but large in His promises; He repeats, inculcates, and strengthens in the battle. So that look how feared we are and what need we have of encouragements, as ready is the Lord to lay them to our hand, both to rebuke our fear and strengthen our doubtings. The same He does to Joshua, to Jeremiah, and here to Jacob.

4. "Thou worm Jacob." Jacob a worm, (1) For weakness; for what is all flesh but grass, when it is to stand out against the fight of sin, the devil, and the wrath of God? (2) A worm, for unworthiness; for of all the unworthy things that can be, a piece of sinful flesh is the unworthiest, for sin disgraces the substance wherein it is. (3) A worm, for afflictions and dejection in the mire of trouble; therefore in the xxii. Psalm, "I am a worm, and no man;" for it is a worm's place to be trodden in the dirt; so was Jacob, an offcast for reproach and affliction. (4) A worm, because of the sense of his own naughtiness; a worm in his own estimation, because of his present estate; he was so cast down and discouraged in himself, that he cannot lift up himself, as David, "I am a beast before thee" (Psalm lxxiii.), I have not the understanding of a man. Here then God, by calling Jacob a worm, recounts all his objections which might mar his faith; as if He said, Jacob, I know well enough that thy weakness, unworthiness, thy afflictions, and estimation thou hast of thyself, make thee fear; yet fear not for all that. It lets us see that the consciousness of these, which is in man, makes him to fear, and breaks his courage. Try what makes thee fear that thou shalt not win to heaven. I speak to thee who art yoked in the battle, and not to lazy sluggards that love to loiter and sleep, and will not wrestle against sin, Satan, and their own corruptions; but to the striver I speak. What makes thee afraid? I am weak, sayest thou? and I have many strong enemies and adversaries, sins, and God's hand is upon me day and night, both upon body and soul; I am unworthy to stand upon God's earth; I am sensible of my own naughtiness, and see reasons anew within me. I answer, All is true that thou sayest; but God who knows all this, saith, "Fear not, thou worm." Therefore seeing God knows thy weakness, unworthiness, and every evil that troubles thee, and meets them with, "Fear not," take heart—strive on!

5. "Fear not, thou worm." Jacob, I know thou art a worm and what are the causes of thy fear, and yet that hinders me not to make unto thee a promise of help against all thy enemies. It lets us see, seeing our weakness, unworthiness, troubles, and sense of want, hinder not God to make a promise, neither should they hinder us to embrace the promise. If we find ourselves unworthy worms, and God saying, Fear not, then we should answer God and say, Albeit, Lord, I be a weak unworthy worm, and my foes

* Frightened.

many and strong, yet seeing Thou forbiddest me to fear, I will not look to my own dead body ; but having Thy promises, as Abraham did, I will give glory to Thee in believing, whatever unlikelihood be in the performance of the promise. I will not look to these, but to Thee who promisest.

Seeing God knows the fears and passes them by, let us pass them by also, for He makes not a promise for anything in us, but for His own love and grace's sake. Therefore let us not, because of our unworthiness, refuse the promise. If it were for our deservings, it were not grace. Labour indeed to be sensible of thy weakness and unworthiness, that thou may the better take the promise. But, alas ! the most part are not sensible of their weakness and unworthiness ; but bolster up themselves with some one conceit or other ; as those who say to Christ, Hast thou not taught in our streets ? have we not eaten and drunken at Thy table ? have we not preached in Thy name. And yet, never have their hearts been brought low in the sense of their own vileness and unworthiness ; never have they searched the reason of their fears or doubts. To whom, I say, it is very needful that they should search the causes of fear and doubting to work humiliation ; for fault of this, sin is not repented, God's anger not laid to heart ; hell is not seen gaping for them, but rather a covenant is made with hell and an agreement with death. I grant we should not doubt nor fear, yet we should dispute about the causes of fear and doubting ; and if any dispute not, let them beware lest they presume. Therefore, hear the reasons of the doubts of thy conscience ; and if thy conscience say thou hast reason to fear and doubt, because thou art a rotten hypocrite, thou hast never pannelled thyself before God's tribunal for sin ; thou hast never taen pains to know if thou art reconciled to God ; thou hast never been loathsome in thine own eyes ; and for thy prayers, hearing, reading, communicating, they have been but counterfeit. When the conscience thus accuses, thou hast reason to dispute the matter ; thou must either grant or deny when thou art challenged on true grounds ; and if, after dispute and trial, all be found true that is said, hast thou not reason to be humbled, and to fall down and mourn in the sense of thy own vileness ? And yet I would not that in this estate thou should quit the promise, but keep the promise fast in thy hand, and mournfully cry to God with thy mouth for pardon. Jacob, thou seest he is a worm, weak and unworthy in his own sense ; and therefore if thou be unhumiliated, proud, and beastly, thou hast cause to fear and doubt. If thou hast never doubted, beware lest thou never believed. Yet I commend not doubting, but I speir, How came thou to that strength of faith, that never staggered, or felt thy own weakness ? Beware thou be not circumvented by the devil's delusions ! Therefore rest not without impregnable grounds : labour first for a sense of unworthiness and wretchedness, and grip the promise of not fearing. Here I have digressed a little ; but men's sluggishness and

customary slighting of God's service, makes me fear, that many a one is not prepared for the consolation that here is offered to such as are become worms, as Jacob, in their own estimation. However, the point I had in hand is this, that unworthiness should not hinder to take the promise, seeing it hinders not God to make it.

6. "Worm Jacob, I will help thee." Wherefore will God help Jacob? because Jacob is a worm, and cannot help himself. It lets us see, that our weakness and unworthiness are so far from hindering God to make the promise, that it is the very fit disposition in us to stir Him up to make a promise to help us. And therefore the feeling of our weakness and unworthiness should be so far from hindering us to believe the promise, as it should further us to it, for now we are in the disposition fittest to receive God's help; our sense of the need of help, should make us take it; the sense of our weakness and wants should make us apply the comforts. This is a notable means to overcome Satan and all our doubts. When Satan says, Thou art vile, weak, and unworthy, therefore thou cannot lay hold on God's promise; retort his argument and say, that by the contrair, because thou art so, thou shouldst lay hold. If he say, Will such a feckless weak wretch as thou stand out against principalities and powers; or will such a worm as thou bear out the godliness thou aimest at? thou mayest answer, Because God has letten me see my weakness, worthlessness, and sinfulness, and in sense of it has laid me low, flat along upon the earth, as a worm, therefore I know he will help and regard me in this low estate.

7. We see, albeit Jacob be a worm, he must neither misken himself, nor refuse God's offer of help; but his disposition must be such, as he must both be abased in himself, and confident in God; for these two stand well together. Take it for a proof of faith, when thou findest both; and of presumption, when these two are parted. If thou believe in God, and see not thyself a worm, thou but presumest; but if the sense of thy vileness make thee tremble to draw near to God, and yet thou comest, then thou art confident. Let this then be the trial of thy faith: Art thou vile, wretched, and unworthy in thyself, and at the same time believest in God?—thou hast found faith, for the composition of the sanctuary is in the ointment. Now, to deny thyself, is to be a worm; and to lean on Christ is to believe in Him. That this may be done, hold the glass of the law still before thine eyes, to shew thy vileness, and so be humble; and Christ shining in the mirror of the gospel, His goodness and pity to make thee believe—look on both, and thou shalt be borne through.

8. "I will help thee."—the reason why Jacob should not fear. It lets us see that, having God on our side, we should not fear. If God be with us, who can be against us? Follow God at the back, and in His name pray, work; then fear not, for He will be with thee in all thy ways, to guide thee, and has given His angels charge over thee, that thou should not dash thy foot against a

stone. Hold thyself in God's way, and at His back, and fear nothing.

9. While God says He will help Jacob, it imports that He will join Himself with Jacob in the turn; for He sayeth not simply, I will do the turn, but, I will help thee to it. It is true, God doeth the turn; but He doeth it by Jacob. It lets us see that God so works His work in all His own, as that they are not idle but are employed in the work. This reproves those who will lay over the matter upon God, and go idle themselves. It is true all we can do is nought; yet by us, as instruments, God will work. It reproves those who say, It is bootless for me to mint for repentance till God please to give me it; and so they will follow the devil's service merrily: and if God will fetch them from the devil's back, it is well; if He will not, they cannot help it. But I tell these men, they tempt God never to give them repentance. If they will have mastery of their sinful corruptions, they must put to their own hand to the fight, and they must bear some bulk with God. Albeit they can neither fight nor work, when God bids them put out their hand to do anything, they must assay to put it, albeit it be lame and sick, and so God shall furnish strength to do the work; for God, and anything with Him, are strong enough against all our foes, spiritual and bodily.

10. "Says the Lord, and thy Redeemer." He puts three styles to the promise, or shews His great name in three titles, that Jacob may know who is the promise-maker; for it is a matter of singular worth, to know what he is who makes a promise, and the promise takes worth from him who makes it; and so, we see the Lord sets His name to the promise, and subscribes it. See here God's willingness to make His kirk believe His promises: He not only makes promises, but subscribes, and would have us to read His written subscription at the end of the promise. He is not like the false flatterers in the world, that will make many fair promises, and when it comes to the subscribing or sealing, will draw back. But God both promises, and subscribes it in all His three styles—the LORD, thy REDEEMER, the HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL. In all God's promises, read God's stamp and subscription, and when thou perceivest the promise to be His, distrust not: say not it will never be, call not His obligation in question, controul not His truth; for that would crab* an honest man, far more the God of truth.

11. These three styles are God's name in three titles, which let us see the distinct persons of the Trinity; for here both the works of creation, redemption and sanctification are clearly shewn, whereby He lets us see there is a consent given to this promise by all the three persons of the Trinity, and God is content that His great styles lie in pawn till He perform the promise He has made, that as He would give honour in these three styles, so shall He get it in performing of this promise. Therefore, when God lays His crown royal in pawn, His name Jehovah, having being of

* Offend.

Himself and giving being unto all ; His name in redeeming us, His people, His name of sanctifying them ; He intimates that, as He loves to be honoured in one and all of these styles, so shall He surely perform His promise ; and He will no more quit His being of Himself, redeeming and sanctifying of His people, than He will quit the performance of His promise. Neither yet think that there is a division among the persons of the Godhead when a promise is made ; for when the Lord says it, it is the Redeemer says it, and the Holy One says it ; for He promises nought that the Son knows not of ; for both their promises are one—their word and works are one to us.

Verse 15, "Behold, I will make thee a new threshing instrument." Here the Lord's promise to make them strong against their adversaries. As a sheaf of corn is unable to resist the threshing instrument, so shall their adversaries, spiritual and temporal—compared to mountains and hills—be unable to resist them.

1. It lets us see, that the victory of God's people over their enemies, looking to God their helper, is as easy, as the threshing of a sheaf of corn. I say, it is easy to faith, albeit not to the flesh ; for the apostle Paul, when he looks to his flesh in his conflict, he says, "O miserable man that I am ! who shall deliver me ?" But when he comes to faith, he says, "I am persuaded that neither height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." There he threshes all his enemies, sin, Satan, the world, and all that can be against him. And in the cxviii. Psalm, "They ran about me like bees, but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them all." For temptations come about him, like bees swarming upon all hands, and no place to fly to : but in the name of the Lord, that is, his faith looking to God, he will destroy them all. He only stands, and sees the salvation of the Lord ; holds on the whole armour of God, resists the devil, and he flies from him ; yea, no enemy, great or small, but faith in God makes them all fly.

2. "Thou shalt fan them." We see Jacob's adversaries who were great like mountains, being threshed and put to the wind : they seem strong and terrible, and he like a weak worm ; but from once they be holden to the wind of God's promise, they are blown away as chaff. It lets us see, that the godly seem weak, and their adversaries strong, before God put to His hand : but then, the godly seem strong, and their adversaries weak ; for when the devil's strength is compared to God's, it is but like chaff to the wind, or the forces of kings and potentates. Therefore the prophet says, "What art thou, who art afraid of man whose breath is in his nostrils, and forgettest the Lord his Maker ?" And David says, "I will not fear what flesh can do to me." This is after fainting. Therefore winnow all the doubts which arise from the strength of thy adversaries, and thine own weakness ; but see that thou winnow them at God's barn-door, in the sanctuary, as David in the

lxxiii. Psalm. When he had almost fallen at the sight of the prosperity of the wicked, he went to the sanctuary, and there he saw, they were set on slippery places, and horribly consumed in a moment.

3. "Thou shalt beat small" and "the wind shall carry them." They are something before God put to His hand—mountains and hills—and Jacob nothing; but from once God put to His hand, Jacob is strong and they are weak. So it is at this day with the kirk and her adversaries; that which was something is nothing, and nothing is, by God's hand, become something. For who would have said that the King of Sweden,* when he came from

* Gustavus Adolphus.

home with six thousand men, when his enemies were six hundred thousand, should have done that which is done. But through God's putting to of His hand, he has done great things.

4. We see in God's promises it matters not what strength they have or want, to whom the promise is made, for the whole strength stands in the promise. And when God threatens it matters not what strength be in the party threatened; for albeit they were as mountains, yet He who threatens can make a worm thresh them. God's flail can ding them all in dust. Look never how weak or how strong those are to whom God speaks, for the weak shall be strong, and the strong shall become weak.

"And thou shalt rejoice in the Lord." Jacob's part of the battle is won, and now God must have His victory. We see it is a part of the Lord's honour, and our thankfulness, to rejoice in the Lord when we have gotten victory. Has God promised that He will be our God, and renewed covenant with us, and communicated Himself in the sacrament, and has done it? It is our part to rejoice, in testimony of our thankfulness.

2. He says, that worm Jacob shall rejoice, which lets us see that we may be a worm in our own sense, and yet rejoice in the Lord, and in Him, triumph over all His enemies. These two stand well together, for we are bidden rejoice in trembling.

3. Rejoice is for the time bygone and present, and glory is for the time to come; which lets us see that the fruit or right use-making of our delivery past, is to make us rejoice for the present, and glory for the time to come. And indeed the godly, if they will not look to themselves but to God, may rejoice for time bygone, and glory for time to come: they may boast themselves in God all the day long; they may not glory in their own strength or wisdom, but let him that glories, glory in the Lord: through Him they do valiantly. Albeit they have many strong foes, and great adversaries, yet God shall tramp them under foot, and rule over them with a rod of iron.

Verse 17. "When the poor and needy seek water." This victory formerly promised, is not very easy to sense; for albeit faith may hold on this victory, yet flesh and sense will flag and fail, and be more worm-like and naughty before the battle be ended.

Therefore a promise is here subjoined to such as in their own sense are weak in the conflict, that they shall get a drink of consolation. We see, whatever promise be made to God's children of victory over their foes, yet they may not think but to find great pain to the flesh, and sore and uncouth skirmishes; albeit faith get the victory easily, yet it is hard victory to the flesh. Wonder not to find it so that ye be like Elisha at Jordan, crying, Where is now the God of Elias? I am like to be overcome. In such straits as these, think not that God will fail in His promise.

Question. But how far may victory of faith be kept under in the flesh? *Answer.* Till one become poor and needy, fainting, forfoughten, and fallen by, and their tongue so failing that they cannot seek a drink, yea, no water or drink of consolation at all; but debarred the sight of all comfort in the conflict—so deprived of all comfort that their tongue is so far sealed that they dare not say, God help me! or pant unto God. Think it no wonder when thou art thus borne down, and thy face thus rolled in the dust. Know it is but thy flesh and thy pride that God is abasing; He is but making thee nought to thy own sense. It is true, all will grant in their words that they are nought, but it is mickle to get acknowledgment of our own naughtiness from experience; therefore that we may win to this God yokes us with a hard party, and so empties us in ourselves that, being closely contemned of ourselves, we may seek help in Him. Therefore, at the hardest pinch look up to God, for there is adversity betwixt faith's estate and flesh's estate. Think not that faith is failed when flesh fails, for David says, "My heart and flesh fail, but God fails me never." God and His word cannot fail, whatever we feel or fear.

Question. What will God do when we are brought thus low? *Answer.* I the Lord will hear and help. This is a strange kind of hearing—to hear one whose tongue is sealed, so as he cannot speak. (1) We see that the consolation of the godly may be so long delayed, till their strength be found to be spent, and they neither able to help themselves nor seek help—their tongues sealed with thirst. (2) It lets us see that their impotency and weakness in the trial shall do them no prejudice; for the dumb silence of their pressed soul is a loud speech, and an earnest prayer in the ears of God, which He will both hear and answer. When their tongues are tacked, and speak nothing—so straitly frozen, that they cannot stir, no more than a frozen worm in the clay—even then they have a loud cry to God. Know then, that when thou art forfoughten, like one gasping in the water ready to give up the ghost, and cannot cry, "Help me!" this gasping dumbness speaks to the on-lookers, to haste to help, so thy estate hastes the Lord to help thee.

"I the God of Israel will not forsake them." 1. Jacob, who before was called a worm, is now called Israel. It lets us see albeit God call His children worms, yet He keeps His estimation of them as Israelites: whatever styles of baseness He gives for our

humiliation, yet He has the same estimation of us, as when He gives us highest styles. Learn we then so to be base in our own eyes, that we quit not our prerogatives; for God counts of us at the worst, as He doth when we are at the best—as the woman of Canaan was called a dog at the one word, but a woman of great faith at the other word. God counts nothing less of a humble soul, than at another time. Therefore humble thyself under the mighty hand of God, and know, that God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble; yet quit not thy privileges in thy low estate.

2. This name of Israel is a glorious style—a word of estimation—and imports a duty. He was called Jacob, a supplanter, because of a trick which he played to his brother in stealing his birthright; but he is called Israel, because he wrestled and prevailed with God. And his glorious style puts him, and all Israelites, in mind of a duty. Every worm Jacob must be an Israel; every true Israelite must be a wrestler with God in the time of his deepest dejections. Wilt thou then, a pressed worm with sore troubles, make thee for wrestling, as a worm that is trampled in the clay?—at the one end it will sprawl, and stir at the other end. So must thou. Whatever part is loose or free of thee, stir that. If thou cannot pray, meditate, hear, or confer—yet sigh, bow thy knees, lift up thy eyes, and stir whatever is loose.

3. “I the God of Israel, will not forsake.” That is, because I am become your God in covenant with you, I will not forsake you. It lets us see that those whom God has taen by the hand to be of Israel, whatever be their straits, for His covenant’s sake He will not forsake them. Our heart, flesh, and courage may fail, but God neither fails nor forsakes. Forsake not Him, but fight out the spiritual combat as good soldiers, so shall your glorious God be with you. To that God be all praise, for now and ever. Amen.

Letters of the late Donald Duff, Stratherrick.

(IV.)

STRATHERRICK, 6th January, 1873.

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,—Your last letter touched my feelings very much. It seems I am blessed with a privilege of which, alas, I do not make the proper use, and of which it seems you are deprived—I mean, bodily health. O my dear friend, beware of Asaph’s temptation in the 73rd Psalm. The man of God was almost taken off his feet when he saw the prosperity of the wicked, and himself sorely tried morning and evening, but he was the man of God still. And before all was over he became reconciled to the divine will, and I have not the least doubt but that will be the case with you. But you will say it is easy for a man at his ease

and on the shore to counsel a poor man on the top of the waves. Well, the Lord is my witness ; I do sympathise with you, but if I did not believe you to be on the way to the desired harbour, I would not take the whole world to be the means of giving you a groundless hope. But you will say, the least glimpse of heaven would be more than all earthly friends put together. I would remind you of this, that the real nature of true faith is seen when hoping against hope, when providence, and no doubt experience will say, there is no hope. At such a time, to try and trust in His mercy and to wait for His coming, is assuredly very much to His glory. And what can we make of such a promise as this, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest?" Does not Christ mean what He says? Will He not, in His own time, make it good? He knows, dear friend, you are heavy laden in more respects than one. Assuredly not a groan comes from your heart but what reaches His bowels of compassion. His bowels of compassion are assuredly part of His revealed glory. Oh, let nothing in or about yourself make you distrust what He will do for His own glory. And what would be more for His glory, as the Saviour of lost sinners, than to stretch forth His hand and help a poor sinking creature with a burden which he feels unable to bear? But I think I hear Christ saying to you, "When a woman travaileth she is in sorrow until her time is come ; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." Amen!

It must certainly be trying for some, the side Mr. — is taking in the Union affair. But it is very clear God's judgments are lying heavy upon our Church ; the curse of unfruitfulness has taken a fearful possession of us. O may He make your bed in the time of trouble!

D. DUFF.

(V.)

STRATHERRICK, 12th August, 1876.

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,—Your last letter certainly distressed me. Not because your case is a hopeless one ; far from it. Never for a moment can I doubt the safety of your *state*. If I was to believe that Jesus would allow you to perish eternally after all I knew myself about you, I would require to become all at once an infidel. Believe me, I don't flatter you. I would not say so much for all the land between this and Lybster, if I did not believe the same.

The evil one said to Job, "To whom of the saints will you turn?" But it might be said in your case, To whom of the wicked will you turn? so as to find one similar to yourself in all respects. Not to my knowledge in all the Bible can the evil one, who is tempting you to disbelieve the Lord's good intentions towards you, find one individual similar as to the exercise of your mind, and if he cannot bring any example from Scripture, do not

listen to your own carnal reasoning which is sure to take the evil one's part against you. And try, my dear friend, to believe that the Lord has a good intention towards you in all the dealing He takes with soul and body, and painful as you must feel in your present circumstances, this would partly take the sting out of your trouble, particularly as to your mind from which, as far as I can understand, the principal part of your trouble flows. One of the saints in great torments was speaking to his soul, saying, "Faith and patience, hold on a little longer, and all will be over for ever." Yes; all will be over for ever as to your trouble. There never was such a hypocrite as you under the sun, whose main complaints arise from the want of Christ's fellowship and communion. Do you mean to say that it is possible that this can be a Christ-less person? No, my dear sir, this is impossible in the nature of things. It is yet my hope that before your natural sun goes down, the Sun of righteousness shall arise on your soul with healing under his wings. Remember, it is written that when He slew them, and not till then, did they seek Him. Oh, may the sympathising High Priest who can be touched with a fellow-feeling have compassion on you! And with best wishes for friends in your quarter.—Sincerely yours,

D. DUFF.

(*To be continued.*)

Petition against Change in King's Declaration.

THE following is the form of the Petition framed by the order of the Synod. It has received upwards of 14,000 signatures of Free Presbyterians and others.

"Unto The Honourable The Commons of The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in Parliament assembled:—
The Petition of the undersigned members and adherents of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland and others, humbly sheweth:—

"That they view with sorrow and alarm the efforts that are being put forth to have the King's Statutory Protestant Declaration and Oath changed: that they declare their profound conviction that no valid reason can be given why the said Declaration and Oath, in which the Sovereign expresses his entire disavowal of the principles and doctrines of the Papacy, should be altered: that, should the Sovereign's vows, promises, and engagements to uphold the Protestant and Presbyterian religion be, in this manner, tampered with, the allegiance of Protestants to the King's Throne will be greatly imperilled: and that they strongly protest against any alteration being made, substantial or even verbal, in the terms of the King's Statutory Protest and Declaration. And your petitioners will ever pray, etc."

The Gospel in Portugal.

FROM the manner in which the King of Portugal recently assured the representatives of the Evangelical Alliance in London, that Protestants would henceforth be at full liberty to hold their services in his kingdom, we had hoped that brighter days were beginning to dawn upon that country. Evidently the struggle is not yet all over. A French newspaper from which we sometimes quote, had a few days ago the following letter from one who on grounds of prudence wishes his name withheld from the public, but is probably a minister of the gospel there. It reveals a state of danger for our fellow Protestants in Portugal which should be prayerfully remembered by friends of the Gospel in this country. This is the letter:—"Dear Sir,—It was my wish to telegraph to you last week some account from which you might be able to make known to readers of *The French Christian* what is the persecution which, at this moment, falls to the Protestant Christians of Portugal. But this thought I did not carry out, for I feared that some one might stop the message, that being not an unknown experience here.

Our Protestant pastors have been twice called before the authorities. They have been threatened with imprisonment if they should not desist from a Protestant propaganda. We have told them that our mission is a noble, sacred, and altogether Christian one, and that in matters that affect our conscience we could not feel bound by any law, but by the law of the Gospel. As a result, we are promised persecution without cessation or mitigation. Last Tuesday the Presbyterian service which was held in Arriaga Street, was put a stop to, and the congregation was dispersed. Priests watch the police agents in this kind of work, they even accompany the policemen. The Jesuits, although themselves condemned by the laws of Portugal, plead with the Government to subject us to persecution. Every day they demand in their newspapers, their pulpits, as their bishops do in the high Chamber that Protestants should be suppressed. And the Government in order to please them, and in order also to please a *proud woman* has commenced the period of persecutions.

The liberal press has declared itself entirely opposed to this despotism of a Government calling itself constitutional! It is a shame to Portugal!

The Protestant Christians are firm. They are not afraid because that their confidence is altogether in God. They expect troubles, massacres—it was the lot of your brethren before us; but will they persevere in their course.

I pray you, dear Sir, to make use of these notes to write something in your valuable paper in opposition to this persecution and in favour of our brethren in Portugal. On grounds of prudence I will ask you to withhold my name.

Please accept, dear Sir, my friendly salutations.

Yours,

A. P."

Letters of the late Donald Mackay, Student.

STRATHY POINT.

DEAR FRIEND,—I received your very kind and welcome letter some time ago, which I might have answered before now. It is often difficult for me to write, because the truth is so dry to my soul. "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled." But how little I hunger and thirst after righteousness! . . . It is very precious to walk in the light; in fact there is nothing so precious as to walk in the light. If a man is walking in the darkness of this world, it will not do very much for him to hear people speaking about light; he would rather see the day breaking. Yet in the long dark night it might comfort him a little to hear people telling about the beauty of the day. "One thing," says the Psalmist, "I desire of the Lord and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord." He tells us what he would see there, even the beauty of the Lord. O for a heart that would desire no company like Jesus'; but my weariness in secret prayer proves how little I have of His fellowship. To walk in the light means a great deal. May the Lord grant His Church in this land such a walk, and may we be of the number!

We have cause of thankfulness to the Lord for what He has done in raising a witness for Himself in this land. I think I can safely say that no man cares for the truth of God, except God be in him. I think that the reason why the truth is trampled on in this land is the very reason why the Lord was crucified. The apostle, when speaking of wisdom, says—"The wisdom which none of the princes of this world knew, for had they known it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." He that trampleth the word under foot, trampleth the Son of God under foot. It looks as if very few people in this land will stand on Jesus' side, if the testimony to the truth will need to be sealed with blood. And, indeed, I am afraid of myself. When I consider my ignorance of the Lord, it makes me afraid. O how I would like to be such a soul as would have light for such a testimony! I mean that the witnesses will be few in comparison with the many that turn their back on Jesus. . . .

DONALD MACKAY.

STRATHY POINT,
8th May, 1895.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I received your very kind and welcome letter a short time ago. I was glad you had such happy times at the Communion. I know not a greater thing for the remnant, who witness for Him in this generation, than that He would give his presence, and especially at such solemn ordinances.

We are expecting to have the Communion here on the fourth Sabbath of this month. . . . How great is His goodness to them who walk in His ways ; but, after all, how brutish I am, and how little I feel my brutishness ! Do pray for me that He would be like a roe or a young hart, until the day break and the shadows flee away. For if He is mine, and if I am His, a day will break at death. And what a day will that be for them, when they will get full liberty in communion with the Father and with the Son Jesus Christ, and with the saints who were their brothers in tribulation. But may the Lord free me from dreaming of things like these, for a dream proves an empty thing when daylight breaketh. Now, pray for me that I may not be left to myself, for miserable is the man who is left to himself in speaking to sinners. O how precious and how good it would be for us, if our walk would be in the light of heaven, for he who walketh in the light knoweth where he goeth and what he doeth.

With love to you and as many as love the Lord Jesus, though it is often my fear that I do not love Him myself.—I am, &c.,

DONALD MACKAY.

STRATHY HEAD,

21st May, 1897.

MY DEAR BROTHER,—Just a few lines as I expect to see you soon. I am still travelling in the mire, sometimes getting a breathing. I am not so strong this week as I was last week. Not that I mean to complain, for no man has a right to say, What doest Thou ? But I have destroyed myself. I might well say :—

“ My wounds do stink, and are corrupt ;
My folly makes it so.
I troubled am and much bowed down ;
All day I mourning go,
For a disease that loathsome is
So fills my loins with pain,
That in my weak and weary flesh
No soundness doth remain.”

And spiritual death is like a giant holding me, so that I cannot cry. I would count it a great mercy these times, if I would get a breathing so that I could open my mouth, and tell my needs. But just in writing this, I thought of its being a wonderful thing that He says, “ When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them.” I have long learned the lesson that to be carnally minded is death, but if a soul would have any hope of entering on the other lesson, and of spending eternity on it, he should rejoice even although he might have to spend a few days here learning the lesson that to be carnally minded is death, bitter though it is. Sometimes, though I walk in the midst of trouble, the word is sweet to my taste. It is like as if a heavenly

breathing came in between my old man and my new man (if there be a new man). In that moment the soul loves the Truth and everything that is His in the measure it is enlightened in the knowledge of them. We are all going about. M—— is afraid that she will not be able to be at the Communion; but it is written, “Be not faithless.”—I am, yours,

DONALD MACKAY.

Gnòthuicbean Jollaiseach.

AIR a mbios a chaidh seachad thug sinn do ar leughadairean co-dhunadh na searmoin ainmeil le Jonatan Eduards a bha ann an America air “Peacaich ann an lamhaibh Dhia ’na fheirg.” Nach mor an t-iongantas a bhiodh air iomadh coimhthional ann ar duthaich nan cluinneadh iad na teagasgan aig Eduards air an toirt seachad ’nan eisdeachd? Tha an lagh ’na mhorachd agus ’na naomhachd is an soisgeul ’na ghrasmhorachd agus ’na iongantas air fas ’nan coigrich ann an Eaglaisean Albainn. Tha lagh agus soisgeul far an robh iad riamh anns a’ Bhiobull. Tha iad far an robh iad cuideachd ann an Leabhar Aidmheil a’ Chreidimh agus Leabhar nan Ceisd. Bha iad aon uair agus airson uine fhada air an cur an ceill air feadh na rioghachd so aig deas ’s aig tuath. Ach a nis ann an aite oir ’se umha a tha anns a’ choinnleir agus tha aobhar eagail ann gum bi an coinnleir umha fein air atharrachadh as aite.

Aig am an Dealachaidh cha saoil sinn gu bheil e neo-sheirceil dhuinn a radh gur h-ann anns an Eaglais Shaor a bha an soisgeul ’bu phailte agus a bu shaoibhir a bha anns an duthaich-agus ’se gu’n tainig smal air an or fhinealta a dh’aobharaich gu’n do dh’fhuasgail an Eaglais sin i fein o’n teagasg fhallain a tha ann an Leabhar Aidmheil a’ chreidimh—ni a rinn i o chionn naoi bliadhna air ais le Achd-mineachaidh. Ma ’se sin an rathad a chaidh an Eaglais Shaor anns an robh teagasg fallain agus cumhachd an t-soisgeil cha’n iongantach ged a dh’fheuchadh an Eaglais Steidhichte a dh’fhag i as a deigh ri saorsa fhaotainn dha na teagasgan a tha cumanta ann ar la a bhi air an ceadachadh ’na crìochan. Thainig e mach gle shoilleir aig an Ard-Sheanadh mu dheireadh mur b’e gu’n robh i ceangailte le lagh na rioghachd ri teagasgan Leabhar-Aidmheil a’ chreidimh gum deanadh i leithid ’s a rinn an Eaglais Shaor mur rachadh i ni b’ fhaide air falbh buiteach. Agus ceangailte mar a tha i ri Leabhar Aidmheil a’ Chreidimh rinn na cinn-iuil anns an Ard-sheanadh soilleir nam biodh an comas aca nach fhad a chumadh iadsan greim air. Duine sam bith aig am bheil suilean dh’fheudadh e sin a thuigsinn o choinn fada. Bha roinn mhor do bhuill an Ard-sheanaidh air son saorsa a ghabhail dhoibh fein le Achd-mineachaidh no seol air chor-eigin eile ach bha a mhor chuid

dhe-n bharail nach urrainn an Eaglais Steidhichte sin a dheanamh. Ged nach urrainn i ifein fhuasgladh o 'n chuing daorsa a tha iad a meas a bhi am an teagasgan na firinn bha na daoine mora nam measg gun naire sam bith ag aideachadh gun gabhadh iad 's gun tugadh iad saorsa ann an smachd nach dana leo fheuchainn ann an rathad reachd no lagh. Cha do sgaoil a chuir gus am facas cho fad ann an aon rathad agus a bha an t-saorsa neo-laghail so air a ceadachadh. O chionn beagan uine air ais bha am museum ann an Dun-Eidin air fhosgladh air an t-Sabaid—agus is ann le ordugh a Mhorair Balfour a rinneadh so. Thog cuid a bha anns an ardsheanadh an guth an aghaidh so ach bha am Morair fein a' lathair agus labhair e 'ga dhion fhein. Thubhairt e gu dana nach robh e dhe 'n bheachd gum bheil an ceathramh aithne ag iarraidh oirnn la an Tighearna a naomhachadh agus ged a thainig e mach cho saor sin cha tug an t-Ardsheanadh gu cunntas e. O chionn corr is deich bliadhna fichead thainig Dr. Tormod Macleoid a mach le teagasgan eas-urramach doin t-Sabaid agus an uair sin anns an Eaglais Steidhichte feincodalach mar a bha i—bha fianuis air a togail le moran. Is miosa am bas na codal ach far nach eil speis do lagh 's do la Dhe cha'n e codal a th' ann ach am bas. Bha oidhirp air a thoirt am bliadhna ann an rathad na h-Eaglaisean a bhi 'g aonadh ri cheile feadhainn measgaichte a dh' iomadh seorsa—eadar Easbuigich muinntir Steidhichte agus muinntir Aointe. Chaidh buidheann dhiubh far an robh na h-Easbuigean cruinn an toiseach ag iarraidh orra la a shuidheachadh mar la urnuigh anns na h-Eaglaiseanaca air son Aonaidh—cha'n iongantach ged a fhuair iad di—beatha ann an sin oir ma tha buidheann seach a cheile ann an Albainn a tha feuchainn ri streap suas gu mullach a' chroinn 'siad na h-Easbuigich a bhuidheann sin. A ris chaidh buidheann dhiubh air beulaobh an Ard-Sheanaidh Steidhichte agus buidheann eite air beulaobh an Ard-Sheanaidh Aointe ag iarraidh orra la urnuigh a shuidheachadh air son na h-aon chriche. 'N uair a chaidh na craobhan roimhe a dheanamh righ cha d' fhuair iad righ ach an dris agus is soilleir an ni aig an am-sa ma gheibh aon seach a cheite do na h-Eaglaisean lamhan uachdar air cach gur e dris na h-Eaglais Easbuigich a bhios ann an sin. 'Si a fhliuch raointean na duthcha aig am nan geur-leanmhuinn le fuil nam fianuisean agus mur eil i nis fhaisge air a Phapanas an diugh cha 'n eil e ni nis fhaide air falbh uaip. Muinntir a tha creidsinn mar a tha a mhor-chuid dhiubh nach eil duine 'na mhinistear mur bi e air orduchadh le Easbuig agus nach urrainn aona chuid am Baisteadh na Suipeir an Tighearna bhi air a fhrithealadh ach leis na ministearan a fhuair lamh an Easbuig air an ceann cha'n urrainn iad a bhi reidh ri aonadh ach air bonn gum faigh iad an rathad fhein. Cha n-eil e idir eucoltach nach eil tachus air cuid a chinn anns na h-Eaglaisean cleireach ach am faigh iad boineid Easbuig—direach mar a bha *Sharp* agus a chompanaich 'nan latha fein 'nuair a tha suidheachadh fìor-dhiadhachd cho iosal aonadh sam bith a ghabhas aite cha'n urrainn e bhi nach bi e

chum dolaidh na firinn. 'Se cho coma agus a tha muinntir do'n fhirinn is coireach gum bheil iad cho gaolach air dol cuideachd. Oir tha co-chordadh aig an Namhaid ris fein. Nam b' ann do'n t-saoghal sibh ghradhaicheadh an saoghal a chuid fein.

Ann an Eaglaisan Aonaidh Thainig e mach gu soilleir air a bhliadhna gur h-ann a neartachadh a' ghluasaid air son Di-steidh-eachadh a chaidh an t-Aonadh a dheanamh an uraigh. Oir cha robh rusg no comhdach air an iarrtus am bliadhna chan eil iad mar eaglais a creidsinn gu bheil dleasdanas air an rioghachd a bhi 'g aideachadh Eaglais Chriosd agus a thaobh Deachdadh nan Sgriobtuirean mhuch iad oidhirp sam bith air son fianuis a thogail an aghaidh an luchd-teagaisg nam measg fein a tha reubadh na firinn. Dh' orduich iad litir Eaglais a sgrìobhadh gu inntinn muinntir a chur 'na tamh mu'n chunnart mhor a tha ann ar la na h-ana-creidich a bhi suidhe ann an caithir Mhaois. Tha iad a cumail a mach gu bheil an Eaglais a gleidheadh mar a bha i riamh deachdadh a Bhiobuill—ni nach urrainn iad a radh le onoir fhad sa dh'fhagas iad luchd teagaisg Diadhachd Reuson ta anns na tighean foghlum aca. 'Si an aon Eaglais ann am Breatunn as mo a tha 'g abuchadh a ghinealaich so gu bhi 'nan luchd aicheadh a 'Bhiobuill.

J. M.

Notes.

Communion.—First Sabbath of July, Inverness; second, Moy and Tain; third, Bracadale, Skye, Rogart, and Halkirk.

Correction.—In the sketch of the late Norman Macleod, Glendale, in last issue, the word "moderatism" was misprinted "moderation."

A call has been addressed by the Edinburgh congregation to the Rev. George Mackay, Stornoway.—Mr. Ewen Macqueen, student, was licensed to preach the gospel by the Northern Presbytery at Glendale, Skye, on the 17th May. On 6th June a call was addressed to Mr. Macqueen by the congregation of Tarbert, Harris, and he has signified his acceptance of the same.

Salutations to the Pope.—The recent jubilee celebrations held at the University of Glasgow were made the occasion of a bold outrage upon the Protestant feelings of true Scotsmen. The Prefect and Vice-Chancellor actually took on them to send, in name of the "Entire University—the Chancellor, the Rector, the Professors, the Graduates, and the Students," a long letter of congratulation to the Pope, whom they term "The Most Holy, the Most Reverend, and the Most Learned Man." One graduate, Mr. J. R. Haldane, has publicly repudiated all complicity with this disgraceful transaction.