

ANARCHY IN WORSHIP

OR

RECENT INNOVATIONS

CONTRASTED WITH THE

CONSTITUTION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

AND THE

VOWS OF HER OFFICE-BEARERS

BY

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"In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes."—*Judges xxi. 25.*

"It is both certain and evident to all men that the public peace and happiness of any state or kingdom cannot be preserved where the laws, liberties, and customs established by the lawful authority in it are openly transgressed and annulled, more especially where the alteration of religion is endeavoured." *&c.*—*Address of the Prince of Orange to Scotland, October 10, 1688.*

"When nations are to perish in their sins,
Tis in the Church the leprosy begins."

EDINBURGH

LYON & GEMMELL, GEORGE IV. BRIDGE

ANARCHY IN WORSHIP.

EVERY true minister of the Gospel is a watchman, as well as a pastor, and all Christians are bound to defend truth and purity, to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, and to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. When men act on other principles, Christianity is but a name, a "salt that has lost its savour." Still men trifle with religion. Amidst hollow professions some would, in a bad sense, make "the best of both worlds," and instead of coming into collision with sin and ungodliness, they would fain run quietly on opposite rails so as to avoid collision. Even true Christians sometimes seek to anticipate the rest of heaven by resting unlawfully here. The wise as well as the foolish virgins sometimes "slumber and sleep," forgetting the solemn warning, "Woe unto you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers of the false prophets."

The late eminent Dr James Buchanan has justly said: "Many sincere Christians dislike controversy, and so far from engaging in it themselves can scarcely allow that others should. An enlarged view of the history of the Christian Church might serve to convince such persons that all along it has been like a beleaguered city, sometimes in danger from the assaults of its enemies without, still more frequently perhaps from carelessness or treachery within; and that at no era has the truth been more gloriously displayed, or achieved nobler triumphs, than when dangers have called forth a vigorous and manly defence. From the militant state of the Church as a public witness-bearer for God and His truth, in a

cf. Ezek. 3:17-19; 33:1-9.
cf. Jer. 3:15; 23:1, 2.
cf. L.C. #108, 109, 144, 145.
cf. II Tim. 2:3, 4.
Jude 3.
Matt. 5:13.
Mark 9:60.
Luke 14:34, 35.
cf. Matt. 25:1-13.
Luke 6:26.

world which revolts from both, the continuance of controversy might have been expected; but that it is appointed, and that, too, within the visible Church itself, for wise reasons, we have the highest authority for believing. There 'must be horesios' or divisions among you, that they who are approved may be made manifest."

cf. 1 Cor.
11:19

Our own day has furnished abundant illustrations of the general truth, thus so well stated, although the worst is probably yet to come. The point of attack from time to time is varied, but the struggle continues unabated. When Christian men have got somewhat accustomed to defend one true position, the assault is directed to another, and perhaps from a new quarter. Although we shall not venture to apportion the relative importance of great principles, it may safely be affirmed that nothing can be more important than questions connected with the acceptable worship of God. The question of the king of Moab must ever be regarded with deep interest by true Christians, "Wherewithal shall I come before God, and bow myself before the Most High." At one time this question engaged serious attention in Scotland. For two centuries it has been held to be practically settled in the Presbyterian Church. But it is now manifestly raised again from an unexpected quarter, and must be settled anew. Our object at present is to discuss it on its essential merits—I. in connection with Scripture; and II. in connection with the constitution of the Presbyterian Church and the vows of its office-bearers.

cf. Micah 6:6

I. What is the doctrine of Scripture as understood by Presbyterians in regard to the acceptable way of worshipping God?

The importance of this question as practically settling the whole debate needs not to be argued. Man as a sinner, as all true Christians will admit, has no right to approach into God's presence at all. The amity which previously existed in Eden was broken up by the Fall. God "drove out the man," and He alone is entitled to say whether, and on what conditions, he shall ever again be permitted

cf. Gen. 3:24

to approach His throne. It is manifest presumption on the part of fallen creatures to dictate to God either that there shall be worship at all or what form it shall assume. In entering the courts of earthly monarchs, even where a right to enter is conceded, every rule and form of the court must be carefully observed; and far more is this important in entering, by gracious permission, into the immediate presence of the King of kings and Lord of lords. "See thou do all things according to the pattern showed thee in the mount," was the command of God to Moses. "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints." It is in connection with worship that the solemn question is asked, "Who hath required this at your hands?" It is in connection with the second commandment, which concerns the mode of Divine worship, that the Lord says, "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, even unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me." Korah and his company were swallowed up for disregarding the ordinance of God in regard to worship. It was in connection with this that Christ drove the buyers and sellers out of the temple, and that He said on another occasion, "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

Ex. 25:40;
Num. 8:4;
Heb. 8:5
Ps. 89:7

Isa. 1:12

Ex. 20:5;
Deut. 5:9

Num. 16
cf. Matt.
21:12-14;
Mark 11:15-17

Mark 7:7

It is important to understand clearly the true scriptural principle of worship as laid down by our Reformers, and to distinguish it from other views and from counterfeits. The principle of pure worship as held by Presbyterians in opposition to other theories is set forth clearly in our Standards.

In the Westminster Confession of Faith, to which the office-bearers of the Presbyterian Churches are bound, it is said, chap. xxi. sec. 1, "The acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His own revealed will, that He may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, or in any other way *not prescribed in the Holy Scriptures*." Some attempt to evade this has been made by quoting another passage,

chap. i. sec. 6, where it is said that "there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God and the government of the Church, *common to human actions and societies*, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed." The two qualifications here, however, clearly define the meaning of this statement, and prove that the quotation is quite irrelevant. The passage only refers to such unimportant matters as are "common to human actions and societies," and it declares, at the same time, even in regard to such matters, that everything must be "according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed."

L.C. 109

S.C. 51

The Larger Catechism lays down the principle that the second commandment forbids "all devising, counselling, commanding, using, and anywise approving any religious worship *not instituted by God Himself*." The Shorter Catechism declares that the second commandment "forbiddeth the worshipping of God by images, or any other way *not appointed in His Word*."

Two theories of worship, as opposed to the monstrous corruptions of Popery, were advocated at the Reformation. The one was, that nothing should be introduced into the worship of God which was expressly prohibited in Scripture. This was much, but not enough.

"The Church," it is said, "hath power to decree rites and ceremonies; . . . and yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain anything that is contrary to God's Word written." This, although embodying as we think an unfounded claim in so far as "the Church" is concerned, is of true importance, and a great step in advance as compared with the darkness and assumptions of Popery, but it is far from being all that is required to secure purity of worship. Many Presbyterians at present are so profoundly ignorant in regard to this whole controversy, that they argue as if this were the principle of their own Church and of Scripture; and they ask, with a foolish and stupified air of triumph, where God has

"prohibited" instrumental music and other corruptions of worship under the New Testament dispensation? But it is plain that this is not our principle, and that it comes far short of what is necessary to clear the worship of God of human corruptions and abuses, inasmuch as many things, as crossing in baptism, kneeling at communion, even the mass itself, are not expressly "prohibited" in Scripture, and yet are manifestly inconsistent with the purity of Divine worship. Hence the true scriptural principle and that of our Church is, that we must find a Divine warrant or "prescription" for everything that we do in the worship of God. It is not enough that a thing is not forbidden. It must be expressly commanded by God, and that as a duty binding under the New Testament dispensation, or it is absolutely inadmissible in worship. John Knox clearly announces and defends this principle: "All worshipping, honouring, or service invented by the brain of man," says he, "in the religion of God, without His own express commandment, is idolatry."

He continues:—

"Forth, of God's Scriptures will I bring the witnesses of my words. And first let us hear Samuel speaking unto Saul after that he had sacrificed unto the Lord upon Mount Gilgal what time his enemies approached against him. Thou art become foolish (saith Samuel), thou hast not observed the precepts of the Lord, which He commanded thee. Truly, the Lord had prepared to have established this kingdom above Israel for ever, but now thy kingdom shall not be sure. cf. 1 Sam. 13:13,14

"Let us consider what was the offence committed by Saul. His enemies approaching and he considering that the people declined from him, and that he had not consulted with the Lord, nor offered sacrifice for pacification of the Lord's wrath, by reason that Samuel, the principal prophet and high priest, was not present, offered himself burnt and peace offerings. Here is the ground of all his iniquity, and of this proceedeth the cause of his ejection from the kingdom, that he would honour God otherwise than was commanded by His express word. For he, being none of the tribe of Levi appointed by God's commandment to make sacrifice, usurpeth that office not due to him, which was most high abomination before God, as by the punishment appeareth.

"Consider well that no excuses are admitted by God: as that his enemies approached and his own people departed from

him; he could not have a lawful minister, and gladly would he have been reconciled to God, and consulted with Him of the end and chance of his journey; and, therefore, he the king, anointed by God's commandment, maketh sacrifice. But none of all these were admitted by God, but Saul was pronounced false and vain. For no honouring knoweth God, nor will accept, without it be the express commandment of His own Word, to be done in all points. And no commandment was given unto the king to make or offer unto God any manner of sacrifice; which, because he took upon him to do, he and his posterity were deprived of all honours in Israel. . . . Disobedience to God's voice is not only when man doeth wickedly contrary to the precepts of God, but also when of good zeal or good intent, as we commonly speak, man doeth anything to the honour or service of God, not commanded by the express word of God, as in this matter plainly may be espied. . . . And that is principal idolatry when our own inventions we defend to be righteous in the sight of God, because we think them good, laudable, and pleasant. We may not think us so free nor wise that we may do unto God and unto His honour what we think expedient. No! the contrary is commanded by God, saying, 'Unto my word shall ye add nothing; nothing shall ye diminish therefrom, that ye may observe the precepts of the Lord your God,' which words are not to be understood of the Decalogue and moral law only, but of statutes, rites and ceremonies; for equal obedience of all His laws requireth God. . . . Of this falsely conclude they, the Kirk may do all that seemeth good for the glory of God, and whatsoever the Church doeth that accepteth and approveth God.

Deut. 4:2

cf. Deut. 12:8;
31, 32cf. John
10:27; 10:5John 18:37
cf. John 10:26
Eph. 2:20cf. WCF XXV.
1,6

"I could evidently prove, what they call the Kirk, not to be the Kirk and immaculate spouse of Jesus Christ, which doth not err; but presently, I ask if the Kirk of God be bound to this perpetual precept: 'Not that thing which appeareth righteous in thine own eyes shalt thou do, but what God hath commanded, that observe and keep.' And if they will deny, I desire to be certified who hath abrogated and made the same of none effect. 'My sheep hear my voice, and a stranger they will not hear but flee from him.' To hear His voice (which is also the voice of God the Father), is to understand and obey the same; and to flee from a stranger is to admit none other doctrine, worshipping, nor honouring of God than hath proceeded forth of His own mouth, as He Himself testifieth, saying: 'All that are of the verity hear my voice.' And Paul saith, 'The Kirk is founded on the foundation of prophets and apostles,' which foundation, no doubt, is the law and the evangel. So that it may command nothing that is not contained in one of the two—for if so it doth, it is removed from the only foundation, and so ceaseth to be the true Kirk of Christ.

Secondly, I would ask if that Jesus Christ be not King and Head of His Kirk? This will no man deny. If He be King, then must He do the office of a king, which is not only to guide, rule, and defend his subjects, but also to make and statute

laws, which laws only are his subjects bound to obey, and not the laws of any foreign princes. Then, it becometh the Kirk of Jesus Christ to advert what He speaketh, to receive and embrace His laws, and where He maketh end of speaking or law-giving, here to rest. So that all the power of the Kirk is subject to God's word. And that is most evident by the commandment given of God unto Joshua, His chosen captain, and leader of His people, in these words, 'Be strong and valiant that you may do according to the holy law which my servant Moses commanded unto thee. Decline not from it, neither to the right hand nor to the left,' &c. 'Let not the book of the law depart from thy mouth, but meditate in it both day and night, that you may keep and do in all things according to that which is written therein,' &c. Here was it not permitted to Joshua to alter one jot, ceremony, or statute in all the law of God, nor yet to add thereunto, but diligently to observe that which was commanded. No less obedience requireth God of us, than He did of Joshua His servant. For He will have the religion ordained by His only Son Jesus Christ most strictly observed, and not to be violated in any part.

Josh. 1:7,8

"For that I find given in charge to the congregation of Thyatira, in these words, 'I say unto you and unto the rest that are in Thyatira who have not the doctrine (meaning the diabolical doctrine before rehearsed), and who knoweth not the deepness of Satan, I will put upon you none other burden but that which ye have. Hold till I come.' Mark well, the Spirit of God calleth all that is added to Christ's religion the doctrine of the devil, and deep invention of the adversary Satan. As also did Paul writing to Timothy. And Jesus Christ saith, 'I will lay upon you none other burden than I have already, and that which ye have observe diligently.'

Rev. 2:24,25

cf. 1 Tim. 4:1

"O God Eternal! hast Thou laid none other burden upon our backs than Jesus Christ laid by His word? Then who hath burdened us with all these ceremonies," &c.—("Knox's Works," vol. iii. pp. 35-42; the spelling altered, and the language slightly, to make the whole easily intelligible. It is unnecessary to observe that the quotations are from a translation of Scripture anterior to the present version.)

This is a very clear, strong, and Scriptural statement of the doctrine of our Scottish Reformation, as founded on the Word of God, and in this, as we shall afterwards prove, all the true sons of the Presbyterian Church have ever agreed.

Now the question is, Is this a true or a false principle? If it be false, the Presbyterian Church for three centuries has been under a strong delusion; and all its office-bearers have been bound, and are still bound, to maintain

what is not true. If it be true, it ought to be firmly maintained, and all worship for which a divine warrant cannot be pleaded, ought to be opposed and discarded. Till it is abandoned, every Presbyterian minister can only be an honest man by maintaining it. It is utterly vain, and worse, to dispose of our solemn obligations by vague and pointless declamation. The position taken up by the Presbyterian Church is either sound or unsound. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them." And the only class of men more inconsistent and criminal than those who leave such a matter in doubt, are those who, in accepting office, profess to hold the doctrine of the Presbyterian Church, and promise to maintain it, but who afterwards treat their solemn professions and vows with faithlessness and disregard.

Isa. 8:20

*cf. Isa. 6:2,3;
Ex. 3:6;
1 Kgs. 19:13*

It is too much the fashion in the present day to speak as if men might act in the worship of God according to their own whim and fancy, and without regard to His high and sacred authority. Angels veil their faces in heaven whilst they adore the Majesty of the great God; but guilty man speaks and acts as if nothing were so light and trivial as an act of worship; nay, as if he might convert a professed act of worship into a source of amusement. We know nothing which so clearly proves the deep and fearful depravity of man and the abounding infidelity of the present day in the midst of much high profession. It is an illustration that "blasphemy" and "truce breaking" are closely connected (1 Tim. iii. 1-6). A dreadful story is told of the notorious Claverhouse, viz., that when asked how he would answer for the murder of the pious Ayrshire carrier, he said, "To man I can be answerable, and as for God, I will take Him into my own hands." Whether this be true or not, it is the very spirit in which many professing Christians act in the matter of worship. They forget the warning of God; "These things thou hast done and I have kept silence. Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself, but I will reprove thee and set them in order

before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest He tear you in pieces, and there is none to deliver" (Ps. l. 21, 22).

Is it possible to find a single instance in Scripture of accepted worship that was not prescribed by God? In the first act of worship recorded after the Fall, we are told that the person and offering of Cain were rejected, whilst those of Abel were accepted. Apart from the fact that a mere thank-offering, although it might suit an angel or an unfallen man, was totally unsuitable for a sinner, it is clear that there was a divine appointment of sacrifice pointing to the cross of Christ, for it is said, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." Now faith implies a revelation or a testimony on which to rest, and it is evident that by the first promise in Eden, and the emblematical coats of skins, implying that the innocent must suffer that the guilty might be clothed, the doctrine of substitution was taught to our first parents before they were driven from the scene of their transgression. From the very first, therefore, acceptable worship was coupled with God's appointment of sacrifice, and with the principle that "without shedding of blood there is no remission." Proceeding on this central principle, when men ceased to use their simple altars of earth or stone, and when an elaborate system of worship was introduced embodying still clearer types and emblems of the coming Messiah and His work, nothing was left to the invention of Moses, although so eminent in wisdom, and although God spake to him "as a man speaketh to his friend." The most minute arrangements were made by God in regard to all parts of worship down to the pins of the tabernacle, and He said to Moses, "See thou do all things after the pattern shewed thee on the Mount." God said, "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it; thou shalt not add thereto nor diminish from it." When David gave instructions to Solomon in regard to building the temple, it is said he gave "the pattern of all that he had by the Spirit;" and at the end he repeats this

cf. Gen. 4:3-7

Heb. 11:4

cf. Gen. 3:21

Heb. 9:22

*cf. Ex. 20:24-26;
Deut. 27:5;
Josh. 8:31*

cf. Ex. 25-40

Ex. 33:11

cf. Ex. 27:19

Ex. 25:40

Deut. 12:32

1 Chr. 28:12

Divine appointment as follows :—" All this, said David, the Lord made me understand in writing by His hand upon me; even all the works of this pattern" (1 Chron. xxviii. 19). Every deviation from this, even in the smallest particular, and even when a good motive might have been pleaded, was condemned and resented by God. By and by this system, with all its peculiarities, as having served its purpose, was done away with, and we emerge into the clearer light of the New Testament dispensation as foretold by Christ to the woman of Samaria. But the same principle still continues, and is clearly enforced. Christ commands His apostles to go and teach all nations, but still it is with this solemn injunction, "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever *I have commanded you*;" it is not *whatsoever I have not forbidden*. They were simply ambassadors for Christ, acting under written and limited instructions which were also in the hands of all the people, that all might judge how far they acted in accordance with them. Accordingly, when the Apostle Paul gives instructions in regard to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, he says, "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you." There is no permission to be found in the Word of God to alter, add to, or modify the ordinances of Christ. "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

Now we are not proving this for the sake of the office-bearers of the Presbyterian Church. They have all solemnly vowed that, according to their convictions, these are the principles of Scripture which they will defend to the utmost of their power. To do anything else therefore, to make any other profession, without abandoning the office which they received in connection with their previous avowal, is simply an act of perjury, fitted to bring disgrace on the Christian Church, and to

cf. Heb. 8:13-9f.

cf. John 4:7-26

Matt. 28:20

cf. II Cor. 5:20

I Cor. 11:23

Rev. 22:18,19

give the enemies of the truth cause to blaspheme. Every Presbyterian office-bearer is as much bound as we are to maintain and vindicate these principles, and neither directly nor indirectly to connive at their subversion. We live, however, unfortunately, in a day when "truce breaking" is not uncommon; and when many, instead of following "no divisive courses," according to their solemn vows, seem to make the promotion of innovations in the worship of God one of their favourite employments. Religion is wounded in the house of her professed friends. We can imagine nothing more fitted to eat like a canker into the faith and morals of the community. For the sake of others, therefore, and especially of the Christian people at large, we feel bound to speak.

Starting from the general principle of Scripture thus explained in regard to worship, its application is simple. What worship has God "prescribed" under the New Testament dispensation, the temple and all its services being done away? This is set forth with equal plainness in the Westminster Confession of Faith, c. 21, s. 5, "The reading of the Scriptures with godly fear, the sound preaching and conscionable hearing of the word in obedience unto God, with understanding, faith, and reverence, singing of psalms with grace in the heart, as also the due administration and worthy receiving of the sacraments instituted by Christ, are all parts of the ordinary religious worship of God; besides religious oaths and vows, solemn fastings and thanksgivings upon special occasions, which are in their several times and seasons to be used in a holy and religious manner." Anything else or different from this, and especially anything borrowed from heathenism or the abolished temple-service—as pretended priests, altars, altar-cloths, incense, symbolical vestments, or instrumental music—are entirely without divine warrant, and therefore unlawful. The same thing may be said of all man-pleasing, sensationalism, solo-singing, with any of the peculiarities of the theatre transferred without divine warrant into the worship of

cf. L.C. 145

cf. Zech. 13:6

cf. II Tim. 2:16,17

cf. Heb. 9

the Christian Church. The worship of the New Testament Church, unlike that of the temple, is based on the worship of the synagogue. That worship consisted of singing, prayer, with reading and expounding the Scriptures. All priests, incense, instruments of music, and sacrifices were discarded; and our worship, now that the temple is completely destroyed, must be the simple worship of the synagogue under the clearer light of the New Testament, conducted in the name and by the authority of Christ, and under the solemn impression that "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

John 4:24

It is worthy of observation not only that this is the only appointed worship under the New Testament, but that it was undoubtedly the worship practised by the Apostles and early Christians. The very meaning of our being Presbyterians, moreover, as distinguished from Congregationalists, is that the details of worship shall be uniform, and settled by a central authority, so that in going from church to church, as from room to room in one great house, we shall not be distracted in our devotions by diversity and individual crotchets, as when "there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes." To this "uniformity," as well as purity of worship, all the office-bearers of the Presbyterian Church are solemnly pledged. They are bound to follow "no divisive courses;" although it is notable and painful at present to find that many are setting this solemn obligation at defiance. Still we need not wonder, for it is equally remarkable that a parallel may be found to all classes of modern innovators in worship in the history of the Church as given in the Word of God, and especially under the Old Testament. Take a few illustrations of this. We have

1. *The Presumptuous and Blasphemous Innovator.*

We have in Scripture some striking illustrations of the extent to which impious man in the spirit of the first temptation, "ye shall be as gods," will exalt himself

Gen. 3:5

against the authority of God. Nebuchadnezzar, the king, sets up an image of gold in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. Then a herald cried aloud, "To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up; and whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace." Darius virtually claimed to be a god himself, nay, greater than God, making "a firm decree that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of himself, should be cast into the den of lions." We are not to suppose, however, that this is peculiar to heathenism. Aaron, who took part in the old idolatry, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, whose wicked and presumptuous proceedings are recorded in the 16th chapter of Numbers, and Jeroboam who erected the golden calves at Dan and Bethel, acted in a precisely similar spirit. It was the predicted peculiarity of the Man of Sin and Son of Perdition that he was to sit in the temple of God and show himself to be God. He was to oppose and exalt himself above all that is called God, and worshipped. The very essence of false worship, even under a profession of Protestantism, consists in setting aside the divine arrangements in the house of God and substituting our own. This is Popery in the germ; no matter under what name. The great Andrew Melville, addressing the Parliament of Scotland in 1606, proclaims the principle of our Church to this effect:—

cf. Dan. 3:1-12

Dan. 3:4-6

Dan. 6:7

cf. Ex. 32

cf. Num. 16

cf. I Kgs.

12:25-33;

II Chr.

13:4-12

cf. II Thess.

2:3,4

cf. Ps. 127:1;

Heb. 3:4

cf. Isa. 42:8

cf. Heb. 8:5

"Now, therefore (my lords convened in this present Parliament under the most high and excellent majesty of our dread Sovereign), to your honours is our exhortation that ye would endeavour with all simpleness of heart, love, and zeal to advance the building of the house of God, reserving always to the Lord's own hands that glory which He will communicate neither to man nor angel, viz., to prescribe from His holy mountain a lively pattern according to which His own tabernacle should be formed, remembering always that there is no absolute and undoubted authority in this world except the

cf. Eph. 5:23;
Matt. 28:18
cf. I Cor. 15:27;
Acts 17:3

sovereign authority of Christ the King, to whom it belongeth as properly to rule the Kirk according to the good pleasure of His own will, as it belongeth to Him to save his Kirk by the merit of His sufferings. All other authority is so entrenched within the marches of divine commandment that the least overpassing of the bounds set by God himself bringeth men under the fearful expectation of temporal and eternal judgments."

cf. Rev. 22:18, 19

In reference to the special innovation against which he was protesting, he says—

"This is that pattern of an altar brought from Damascus, but not showed to Moses in the mountain, and therefore it shall fare with it as it did with that altar of Damascus: it came last into the temple and went first out.

"Remember, my lords, that in times past your authority was for Christ and not against Him; ye followed the light of God and strived not against it; and like a child in the mother's hand ye said to Christ, Draw us and we will run after thee. God forbid that ye should now leave off and fall away from your former reverence born to Christ, in presuming to lead Him whom the Father hath appointed to be a leader of you. And far less to trail the holy ordinances of Christ by the cords of your authority at the heels of the ordinances of men."

Speaking to ministers and others, he says:—

"We would humbly and most earnestly beseech all such to consider first that the kingdom of Jesus Christ, the office-bearers, and laws thereof, neither should nor can suffer any derogation, addition, diminution, or alteration, besides the prescript of His holy word, by any inventions or doings of men, civil or ecclesiastical."

(Protest of Andrew Melville and others, 1606. See appendix to first volume of "Stevenson's History of the Church and State of Scotland," pp. 216-221.)

2. The Popularity Hunting Innovator.

When vital religion is low, men attempt to make up for the want of spiritual life by external and carnal appliances, whilst ministers destitute of moral courage are ready to humour the wishes of the people, instead of standing up boldly for the authority of God. "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means, and my people love to have it so, and what will ye do in the end thereof?" (Jer. v. 31.) In Aaron we have a type of this class of cowardly innovators. In the

cf. Ex. 32

absence of Moses he became the instrument of a corrupt people. When Moses came down from the mount he saw with indignation the idolatry of the Jews and the golden calf which Aaron had made, and he said to Aaron, "What did this people unto thee that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?" And Aaron said, speaking still in as craven a way as Adam did after his fall, "Let not the anger of my lord wax hot; thou knowest the people that they are set on mischief, for they said unto me, Make us gods which shall go before us, for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold let them break it off. So they gave it me; then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf" (Exod. xxxii. 21-25). How many cowardly Aarons have we in the present day courting popularity of a very unworthy kind, by sacrificing alike the honour of God and their own ordination vows. What noble examples on the other side have we in Elijah, David, and the three children, as well as in the great Apostle Paul, who withstood Peter to the face when carried away by the fear of man which bringeth a snare, and elsewhere said, "To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour." In the case of Uzziah of old we have an illustration at once of human presumption, ministerial faithfulness, and divine judgment following the disregard of God's appointment in worship (2 Chron. xxvi. 16-22):—

Ex. 32:21

cf. 1Kgs. 18:17-40;
1 Chr. 15:2;
Dan. 3:8-30;
Gal. 2:11

Gal. 2:5

"But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the Lord his God, and went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense. And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the Lord, that were valiant men: And they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the Lord, but to the priests the sons of Aaron that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honour from the Lord God. Then Uzziah was wroth, and had a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the Lord, from beside the incense altar.

And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because the Lord had smitten him. And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the Lord."

In speaking recently to one of our modern innovators he said, "The people desired the change." A most unworthy reason, even if true. In most cases the minister himself is the chief ringleader in change, but when he acts from the unworthy motive of courting popularity, we can scarcely imagine anything more base in a servant of Christ. "One is your Master," says our blessed Lord, "and no man can serve two." We are far from saying that anything should be done for the purpose of giving unnecessary offence, but we have a higher object at which to aim. We dare not act in the Church of God without a divine prescription, and a minister especially must add to his faith courage. "Be not afraid of their faces," said God, "lest I confound thee before them." "If any man is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of man be ashamed when He cometh in His own glory, and in his Father's glory, and with all the holy angels."

At all times in the world, but especially in the Church at the present day, there is nothing so lacking as moral courage. Few men comparatively think for themselves, and still fewer dare to say what they think, or to act independently. They go in crowds, and simply float with the tide. They are most unwilling to hold their faces to any wind of opposition. As the tide brings in bits of cork and drift-wood, and carries them out again, or leaves them high and dry, so it is with many modern Christians, and even with not a few Christian ministers. They quail before obloquy—cry for "open questions," are terrified by the idea of fashion, fear every thing and every body except Him whom they should fear. The old Scotch worthy is alleged to have said: "My friends, the dead fish gang a' doon the water; it taks a eevin' fish to gang up the water"—an apt image and an

Matt. 23:8,10

Matt. 6:24

cf. I Cor. 10:32;

II Cor. 6:3

cf. Jer. 1:17

cf. Mark 8:38;

Luke 9:26

exact description of many whom we see around us. We have often admired the unflinching tenacity with which Romish priests cling to very unpalatable dogmas—a wonderful contrast to many Protestants. It reminds one of the saying of the great actor to the minister: "We speak fiction as if it were truth; and you speak truth as if it were fiction." It is this self-seeking, soft, and molluscous nature, this feeble and compromising spirit, this lack of stern principle, proceeding both from ignorance and the want of faith, that is the opprobrium and disgrace of many in the Protestant ministry. Young ministers especially go down to their congregations often with a sad sense of dependence, and, forgetting their ordination vows whilst sometimes making high professions, they allow themselves to be guided and overborne by fussy and pretentious people into introducing or sanctioning innovations. They would never have been martyrs. They mainly aim at man-pleasing, with a view to an easy life, or the gratification of human ambition. It is in reference to this that the apostle introduces his earnest repudiation: "If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."

cf. I Thess. 4:1

Gal. 1:10

Next comes

3. *The Politic and Scheming Innovator.*

He acts from a desire to make the worship of God subservient to his own wicked or worldly ends. He is represented by Balaam who loved the wages of unrighteousness, and yet carried forward all his schemes in connection with offering sacrifices to God, and high professions: by Jezebel who overturned the true worship of God and persecuted Elijah; and yet to cloak her foul proceedings in the case of Naboth, said, "Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth aloft amongst the people;" by Jehu who "departed not from the sins of Joroboam," and yet professed to be a great Church reformer, crying, "Come, see my zeal for the Lord." But this class of innovators is represented in great fulness by Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. He had seized on the

*cf. Num. 22:24;
II Pet. 2:15;
Rev. 2:14*

*cf. I Kgs. 18:19;
19:1-3*

I Kgs. 21:9

II Kgs. 10:31

II Kgs. 10:16

cf. I Kgs. 14:16

*cf. 1 Kgs.
12:25-33*

1 Kgs. 12:33

throne, and it occurred to him that if the people continued to worship at Jerusalem his political influence would be weakened, and therefore he boldly proceeded to overturn all the arrangements which God had made ; to change the place, the time, and the mode of worship ; to set up the most degrading idolatry to be conducted by his appointed priests, and at periods "devised of his own heart." When God interposed in judgment he boldly attempted to arrest the power of omnipotence, and to punish the divine messenger. The whole narrative is most worthy of being carefully studied. It is as follows :—

1 KINGS XII.

25 Then Jeroboam built Shechem, in Mount Ephraim, and dwelt therein, and went out from thence and built Penuel.

26 And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David.

27 If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of God at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam, king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam, king of Judah.

28 Whereupon, the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them : It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem, behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

29 And he set the one in Bethel and the other put he in Dan.

30 And this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan.

31 And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi.

32 And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah. So did he in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made, and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made.

33 So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel, the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart, and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel, and offered upon the altar, and burnt incense.

CHAP. XIII.

1 And behold there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the Lord unto Bethel, and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense.

2 And he cried against the altar in the word of the Lord, and said, O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord, Behold a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name, and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall he burn upon thee.

3 And he gave a sign the same day, saying, This is the sign which the Lord hath spoken : Behold the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out.

4 And it came to pass when King Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God which he cried against the altar in Bethel, that he put forth his hand from the altar, saying, Lay hold on him. And his hand which he put forth against him dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him.

5 The altar also was rent, and the ashes poured out from the altar according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the Lord.

The ancient struggles in regard to worship in Scotland originated chiefly in political considerations, whilst recent changes by which the Protestant Churches have been tormented, seem to have originated also mainly in political craft on the part of the leading innovators. The Romanising clergy of England are aiming at the restoration of superstitious worship, with a view to abandoning Protestantism, and an ultimate union with the Romish and Greek Churches, all terminating as they anticipate in a reunion of Christendom, and in a greatly augmented sacerdotal power. The innovators in the Established Church of Scotland, as represented by their chief leader, hope to strengthen their position by drawing nearer to the powerful Church of England. They have been carrying forward an underhand system of revolution with a view to this result. The movement "points direct southward," said an able minister. At last Assembly the innovators gave a rehearsal in Edinburgh of the new and ritualistic worship, by which many eyes were opened. One of them has lately been advocating the keeping of Pasch and Yule. Others who don't look so far before or around them, pretend that by making the churches "attractive," although by means of Romish and heathen observances, their ignorant flocks may perhaps be pleased, and the position of the clergy strengthened. One rather distinguished minister lately

cf. Jer. 10:3

avowed, that by having an organ he saved himself much effort in the preparation of sermons; although preaching the gospel is a minister's grandest and most distinctive work. Some who hate the truth have taken advantage of this idea to suggest that sermons should be done away with altogether, or at least entirely separated from the new so-called devotions. Thus we should be hurried back to the darkness of the Middle Ages, and fully realise the old idea of "dumb dogs that could not bark, sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber." To do the whole class justice, they do not rise above the level of Jeroboam in their reasons; they seldom pretend to plead a divine warrant for their new-fangled innovations. The whole movement is, by this class not obscurely manifested to be, of "the earth earthy." It appeals to human expediency, worldly wisdom, and not to the Word of God.

cf. I Cor. 1:18
Isa. 56:10
cf. I Cor. 15:47,48
cf. I Cor. 1:19-25

4. *The Æsthetic Innovator.*

He also is a lover of expediency, and "a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God." He professes to imagine that you can charm a sinner as you can charm a serpent, by the power of music. He mistakes an effect on the nerves for an impression on the soul, and disregarding the Divine authority, would make religion to consist, to a large extent, in man-pleasing, and in an appeal to the senses of men—to their sight, hearing, and smell. He turns the Church into a theatre for human gratification, irrespective altogether of any pretence of divine appointment. Here, however, an explanation may be necessary. We are no advocates for uncomfortable churches, slovenly worship, or dull preaching. We feel the full force of the appeal of David, "Shall I dwell in a house of cedar, whilst the ark of God abides in curtains." Every enlightened conscience must be alive to the Divine remonstrance. "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?" Nor are we advocates for poor singing and slovenly services. The whole congregation should sing with heart and soul, the whole children should

cf. II Tim. 3:4
cf. II Sam. 7:2;
I Chr. 17:1
Hag. 1:4

be thoroughly taught to sing, and the entire services, including the preaching, should be instinct with power and spiritual life. It is the want of all this which often furnishes the pretext for unscriptural changes. What we object to is every departure from Scriptural simplicity and uniformity of worship, and every notion that the soul of man can be savingly or permanently benefited by an appeal to the senses. Above all, we object to symbolism. "Take heed to yourselves, lest ye corrupt yourselves, for ye saw no manner of similitude in the day when God spake unto you out of Horeb, only ye heard a voice." At a soldier's funeral you see the effect of sombre strains, and afterwards and suddenly of more sprightly music. The prophet Ezekiel tells us that he was to those amongst whom he laboured as "the lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, or that playeth well upon an instrument," but no permanent good result was produced. They heard his words but they did them not.

cf. Deut. 4:15,16
Ezek. 33:32

So far from imagining that mere outward splendour of worship is fitted to produce a permanently beneficial effect, the experience of the world demonstrates that the very reverse is the case, and that if you wish to see men and women "twice dead" to any serious impression, you will find it amongst the votaries of sumptuous worship—those, both performers and listeners, who alternate between the church and the theatre. Those of old who "chanted to the sound of the viol, and invented to themselves instruments of music like David," were the same persons who "drank wine in bowls" and "were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph" (Amos vi. 6), and those who took "the timbrel and harp, and rejoiced at the sound of the organ," were the same who said unto God, "Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways" (Job xxi. 14). Ruskin, speaking of the high refinement of the Hindoos, of the horrors of the Indian mutiny, and of the noble part acted by the Highlanders, who have an utter abhorrence of æsthetic worship, says: "Out of the peat cottage come faith,

Amos 6:5
Job 21:12

courage, self-sacrifice, purity, and piety, and whatever else is fruitful in the work of heaven; out of the ivory palaces came treachery, cruelty, cowardice, idolatry, bestiality—whatever else is fruitful in the work of hell." This, however, is not peculiar to heathenism. Italy is the grand headquarters of gorgeous worship; and Rome, the chief centre in the world of ecclesiastical spectacles and sumptuous music, has been described as the most wicked of modern cities. Dean Alford, after a residence in the imperial city, bears the following testimony:—"It is not too much to say that the present moral and religious state of Rome is a foul blot on modern Christendom, and hardly to be paralleled even amongst the darkest passages in the history of our race." The poet has said—

"Far to the right where Appenine ascends
Bright as the summer Italy extends.

* * * * *

But small the bliss that sense alone bestows
And sensual bliss is all the nation knows;
In florid beauty groves and fields appear,
Man is the only growth that dwindles here,
Though grave, yet trifling; zealous, yet untrue,
And even in penance, planning sins anew.

* * * * *

While low delights succeeding fast behind
In hateful meanness occupy the mind.
My soul! turn from them, turn thee to survey,
Where rougher climes a nobler race display."

It is not the clime, however, but the Christian principle and the spiritual worship that have made the difference. The simple worship of Scotland, coupled with a full exposition of the word of the living God, has been the means under God of elevating the common people of our land with its barren soil and inhospitable climate to a moral and intellectual elevation which has left effeminate and sensuous nations far behind; and it will be the greatest crime if this is exchanged for what is called æsthetic worship, appealing to the senses but not improving the soul. In the Cottar's Saturday Night,

speaking of the simple heart-worship of Scotland, it is justly said,

"Compared with this how poor religious pride,
In all the pomp of method and of art;
When men display to congregations wide,
Religion's every grace except the heart.
The power incensed, the pageant will desert,
The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole;
But hap'ly, in some cottage far apart,
Will hear well pleased the language of the soul,
And in his book of life the inmates poor enrol."

Two things besides are forgotten when men speak of making the worship of Scotland "attractive," even if it were lawful. The one is, that we cannot, without a total change of system, gratify all æsthetic tastes, and that otherwise we are merely preparing men for Prelacy or Popery. The old enemies of Presbyterianism see this, and are naturally jubilant as if their baleful reign might possibly soon be renewed. The words of the late Bishop Forbes in a recent charge are significant, although far from accurate, in matters of fact. The Scottish landowner pays nothing to the Church that is his own, and Presbyterianism has no necessary connection with mean buildings, although it rejects all symbolism and Romish peculiarities. Here is the extract from this recent charge to which we refer:—

"We must hope that the day will soon come when, as has been pointedly said, the Scottish landowner shall cease to support a Church he does not attend, and attend a Church that he does not support. Another hopeful sign in Scotland is the increased attention to outward propriety in religious worship, and the death of that mode of thought which maintained that the greatest devotion was maintained by the greatest simplicity—the practical result of which was that churches were built like barns, and Divine service was conducted in a very slovenly fashion. The change is remarkable. Everywhere around us, even in systems with which we have no theological affinity, we see the aid of architecture being invoked in the construction of churches, and the unattractive forms of Presbyterian worship are being modified by the introduction of chanted psalms, organs, and other accessories of Divine worship, which would have horrified the last generation. All this must surely be in the right direction. It will develop that æsthetic taste in religion which can only be gratified in the Church."

Bishop Suther of Aberdeen indulges in a similar line of remark.

But besides this, to adopt the course indicated implies a total revolution in that system of enlightened and intellectual worship, out of which a main glory of Scotland has hitherto sprung. In a recent number of the *Pall Mall Gazette* the following sensible observations occur, having a direct bearing on the high common education and manly intellectual worship by which our land has been distinguished, as compared with the æsthetic and barren mummeries of other lands:—

“Mental indolence is a bad thing, and people would be a great deal happier and probably better if they would avoid it. A sound and effective popular education is the only remedy which Mr Gladstone can suggest for the indolence he deplures, and he hopes great things from it. We are not so sanguine, remembering that school training is only the first step in education. It does what Sir Walter Scott said a knowledge of languages did—it puts tools in men's hands. There is little good done in teaching a man to read unless he forms a habit of reading. The Scotch have been made an educated people, not because the habit was general of teaching children the three R's—that was all very well—but it was only preliminary. The Scotchman, even in humble life, found himself in an atmosphere of theory which compelled him to exercise his reasoning faculties. Sir Walter Scott's pictures of ploughmen and humble dependents who were expert theologians are no fancy sketches. Whatever be said of Calvinism, it was at least a theory of human life and destiny, which was wrought into the very bone and muscle of their Scottish natures. Its tenets brought the meanest peasant into direct contact with the most recondite problems. When this was the case there was no place for mental indolence; and the example of Robert Burns, stored with the mythology of Christianity peculiar to Scotland, shows how real was the process of training. Burns had no particular aptitude for theology, but he could not help his mind being furnished through the influences that surrounded him, and which invigorated intellect even where the dogmas they represented were disbelieved. It is of little use telling English peasants and ploughmen to go and be like their Scotch fellows, now that they have the means of education provided for them, for that is only half the work. You must give them habits of thought and introspection; you must bring them to take a living interest in some reality, or what will represent reality to them. When once their energies are stimulated by exercise in this way, you may hope that they will shake off mental indolence, and find in thinking and reading a better attraction than in lolling, loitering, whistling, playing marbles, and other trifling occupations. But where is the prospect of any such

provision, far less any appetite for it? The great mass of the clergy either teach the Christian myths as something too sacred, too good for human nature's daily food, or excite interest by ecclesiastical costumery, which is not even made to seem alive or to represent any living idea. Anything more hardening and deadening than such a mode of dealing with religion, the strong feelings connected with which must always make it the most powerful medium through which the feelings of the mass of the community are excited, could not be invented.”

The recent introduction of sensuous and sensational worship instead of tending to elevate the Scotch character, is only training men for frivolity, apostacy, and Rome.

Many are ready to imagine, however, that alterations in the worship of God must be excusable, if not laudable, if done from a good motive. Even this last proof of ignorance is knocked away by the clear evidence of Scripture. This is therefore our last character.

5. *The Well-meaning Innovator.*

We are not sure that a numerous class are to be ranked under this head, and especially we deny that ministers and others who have avowed the Presbyterian principles of worship, and undertaken solemn obligations in connection therewith, are entitled when they break their vows to take shelter under the plea of good intentions. But what is greatly important, is that even when we have reason to believe that men have a good motive, this will not excuse the slightest deviation from the will of God in the matter of worship. We presume that Uzzah, whose case is recorded in 2 Samuel vi, 6, 7, may be said to afford as good an illustration of a well-meaning innovator as any we read of or can well imagine. It is said, “When they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died, by the ark of God.” This is most solemn and instructive. We can also imagine a good motive pled on behalf of the

buyers, sellers, and money-changers at the gate of the temple. They might have alleged that by supplying current money and sacrifices to those who had come from a distance to the temple, they were actually and zealously promoting the worship of God. But they had no divine warrant. God himself had made no such arrangement, and the tables of the money-changers were overturned; whilst those men, whatever were their motives or intentions, were scourged and driven from the temple by an indignant Saviour—"Take these things hence, make not my father's house an house of merchandise." Saul pleaded a good motive when he said he had spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen to sacrifice unto the Lord. But Samuel in the name of the Lord immediately retorted, "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken, than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king."

The sum and substance, therefore, of the whole argument from Scripture is, that no worship should be offered to God, except such as He himself has "appointed." There must be simple, absolute, unquestioning obedience to God. This cannot be too strongly pressed in the present day, when men in defiance of Scripture and their own solemn engagements are attempting to "improve" the worship of God by their own inventions. "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination" (Prov. xxviii. 9). On the other hand, God says of those that "choose the things that please Him, and take hold of His covenant, Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off." "Also the sons of the stranger that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him and to

*Matt. 21:12-14;
Mark 11:15-17*

John 2:13-17

John 2:16

1 Sam. 15:22,23

cf. Isa. 56:4,5

cf. Isa. 56:6,7

love the name of the Lord . . . Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer." But as a complete contrast to this. "Go ye now," says God, "unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel." The wickedness specially referred to was all connected with false worship, concerning the introduction of which, God says, "I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart." Hence their fearful punishment. "Under the whole heaven was not done as was done upon Jerusalem." For the same reason those who have enjoyed the full light of the New Testament dispensation, and in such a land as Scotland, should hear, and fear, and learn not to act presumptuously. "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. xii. 28, 29).

The only plausible thing said in answer to all this is, that David, in the 150th Psalm, commands us to praise the Lord with psaltery, harp, stringed instruments, and organs. Without entering fully into the question, two answers to this seem obvious,—1, That if this argument is good, and if the language means more than a figurative and earnest exhortation to praise the Lord with heart and soul, it proves too much. We should like to know how these objectors, for example, interpret the following verses in Psalm lxvi. 13-16, as read or sung in the Christian Church:—"I will go into thy house with burnt offerings: I will pay thee my vows, which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble. I will offer unto thee burnt sacrifices of fatlings, with the incense of rams; I will offer bullocks with goats." Is all this to be interpreted literally? If not, why not? and why is the 150th Psalm to be literally interpreted? And if all are to be interpreted literally, why are not all these things observed? If men will only apply their minds to the solution of this problem, they

Jer. 7:12

Jer. 7:31

Dan. 9:12

will find a key to the right interpretation of the 150th Psalm. But even in that psalm itself they may find a key to solve the difficulty. David, in the same psalm, commands us to "dance," as well as to use instruments of music: "Praise him with timbrel and dance." We know that "David himself danced before the Lord with all his might." But we presume that the obligation to dance in worship is not insisted on by these objectors in the Christian Church, although if their argument be good for anything, it goes all this length. Moreover, if it be an argument at all, it leaves no discretion. If it is an injunction, it is an imperative injunction, leaving no discretion either as to the duty enjoined, or as to the instruments to be employed. If this view is to be taken, the Presbyterian Church has been for centuries neglecting a solemn and imperative duty. All this, however, will not be seriously maintained. But, 2, This cannot possibly be the meaning of the passage; for Christ, whose word it is, and his apostles, by universal admission, used no instruments of music in New Testament worship. They "sang" and enjoined "singing," and their authority must be held to be conclusive. No instruments, moreover, were used in the worship of the Christian Church for at least eight centuries. Every minister and office-bearer of the Presbyterian Church is excluded from consistently using such an argument by his solemn vow, that he will "assert, maintain, and defend to the utmost of his power," a purity of worship from which, as he perfectly well knows, all instruments have ever been absolutely excluded.

II. This brings us in the second place to consider the question of worship in the light of the history and constitution of the Scottish Church.

We have already proved that John Knox, the great Reformer of Scotland, not only held that true and acceptable worship must be in strict accordance with an express and clear appointment by God,—but that all other worship was idolatrous, as implying a worshipping by men

of their own wills and inventions rather than of God. Andrew Melville also, as we have proved, held the same view. Craig's Catechism, first printed at Edinburgh in 1581, proves the same thing. An abridged edition was published for general use, and in this form it was used in the Church of Scotland till superseded by the Westminster Catechisms. Under the second commandment Craig's Catechism says:—

- Q. "What thing is forbidden here in general?
- A. All corrupting of God's service by the inventions of men.
- Q. What thing is craved here?
- A. That we worship God according to His word.
- Q. What kind of service craveth He of us?
- A. Both inward and outward service.
- Q. May we not serve Him externally as we please?
- A. No; for that kind of service is cursed idolatry."

When we come down to the Westminster Assembly, by which our present Standards were framed, it is unnecessary to repeat how clearly these Standards embody the same principle, viz., that pure and acceptable worship must be "prescribed," or "appointed" by God himself. But it may be important to bring out the clear evidence which we have, that during the second Reformation our ancestors insisted on uniformity of worship, and that our Commissioners at Westminster and the Assembly in Scotland, regarded their principle of worship as clearly excluding instrumental music, and all other things abolished, along with the peculiarities of the temple service. By an Act of the Assembly of Scotland, 1643, a directory for worship was appointed to be prepared and reported to next Assembly, to the intent "that unity and uniformity might be observed throughout the kingdom in all parts of the public worship of God." Our Commissioners to the Westminster Assembly, including the most eminent ecclesiastics then in Scotland, reported on May 20, 1644, that "plain and powerful preaching" had been set up, and "THE GREAT ORGANS AT PAUL'S AND PETER'S IN WESTMINSTER TAKEN DOWN," and "all by authority in a quiet manner, at noon

*cf. WCF XXI.1;
L.C. 108, 109;
S.C. 50, 51*

day, without tumult." In answer, the General Assembly here, June 4, 1644, writes to the Assembly at Westminster: "We were greatly refreshed to hear by letters from our Commissioners there with you, of your praiseworthy proceedings, and of the great good things the Lord hath wrought among you and for you. Shall it seem a small thing in our eyes that . . . the door of a right entry unto faithful shepherds is opened; many corruptions, as altars, images, and other monuments of idolatry and superstition, removed, defaced, and abolished; the service-book in many places forsaken, and plain and powerful preaching set up; THE GREAT ORGANS AT PAUL'S AND PETER'S TAKEN DOWN; that the royal chapel is purged and reformed; sacraments sincerely administered, and according to the pattern in the mount?" From this it is clear that the Westminster Divines, and our own Church in those days, would have made short work with the Dunse case, and with all questions of instrumental music in worship. This was certainly regarded as one of the corruptions of Popery. It was one of the last corruptions introduced, dating only from about the eighth century, and never having found admission into the Greek Church at all. It seems to have had a very short existence in Scotland during the reign of Romish superstition which preceded the Reformation. Calderwood says of James I. of Scotland (about 1420), "He brought into divine service a new kind of chanting and music, wherein he was expert himself. They placed a great deal of religion in curious singing in those days. The organs were not known in Scotland before his time." It may, moreover, also be stated that the Homilies of the Church of England condemn the use of organs in worship, and that instruments were so completely removed during the period which succeeded the Westminster Assembly, that at the Restoration there could scarcely be found in England either organists or organ builders.

It is also an important fact that, alarmed by the stool of Jenny Geddes, no change took place in the worship

of the Church of Scotland, even during the persecution and reign of Prelacy from 1661 till 1688. The noble version of the psalms which we still sing was in use, to the exclusion of human hymns, during all that time, whilst instruments of music were utterly unknown. When the glorious Revolution took place in 1688, not only were the Prelatical system and the royal supremacy in matters ecclesiastical formally abolished, but the Act 1690, c. 5, ratifies and incorporates the whole Westminster Confession of Faith, as part of the law of the land, as well as the Standard of the Church. The Act 1693, c. 22, entitled "Act for settling the quiet and peace of the Church," enacts as follows, *inter alia*, "Their Majesties, with advice and consent foresaid, statute and ordain that *uniformity of worship*, and of the administration of all public ordinances within this Church, be observed by all the said ministers and preachers, as the same are at present performed and allowed therein, or shall be hereafter declared by the authority of the same, and that no minister or preacher *be admitted or continued for hereafter, unless that he subscribe to observe, and do actually observe, the foresaid uniformity.*"

There cannot be the smallest doubt what the worship was that is here referred to, and this obviously implies that all the modern clerical innovators in worship in the Established Church have forfeited their civil rights, and that by the enforcement of this law they might be expelled from their benefices. We are aware that a quibble is attempted to be made in connection with the phrase: "Or shall hereafter be declared by the authority of the same." It is clear, however, that this can in no way help the innovators, because—1. It cannot refer to changes introduced by ministers and kirk-sessions alone. 2. No new law of the Assembly has been made in the sense of this Act. 3. Anything done or said recently in the Assembly has never passed the Barrier Act, and is therefore not law. 4. The change implied to be effectual must have been made by the joint consent of Church and State, otherwise the Church may go back

to Popery, and still claim endowment. 5. Any change in the sense of this Act must have also been made before the Act of Security and Treaty of Union were passed, for these settled the forms of worship, then existing, as to continue in all time coming. This is a point of much importance. In 1707 it is said in the public statutes: "Follows the exemplification under the Great Seal of England of the Act of Parliament of that kingdom, intituled, An Act for an Union of the two Kingdoms of England and Scotland, as the same was transmitted to the Parliament of Scotland, and ordered to be recorded."

Amongst other things, "It is provided that the Commissioners for that treaty should not treat of or concerning any alteration of the worship, discipline, and government of the Church of this kingdom, as now by law established; which treaty being now reported to the Parliament, and it being reasonable and necessary that the true Protestant religion, *as presently professed within this kingdom, with the worship, discipline, and government of the Church, should be effectually and unalterably secured*: Therefore Her Majesty, with advice and consent of the estates of Parliament, doth hereby establish and confirm the said Protestant religion, and the worship, discipline, and government of this Church to continue, without any alteration, to the people of this land in all succeeding generations." The Act of Security, January 16, 1707, repeats all this, and declares it to be a "fundamental and essential condition of any treaty or union to be concluded betwixt the two kingdoms, without any alteration thereof or derogation thereto in any sort for ever." The whole Revolution Settlement, therefore, must be overturned before the worship of the Established Presbyterian Church can be legally altered.

Having thus taken such pains to guard the simple and scriptural worship of the Presbyterian Church from foes without, equal earnestness and care were manifested in securing it against traitors within. Amongst the questions put to all ministers (analogous ones being put to elders and deacons) were and are the following:—

"Do you sincerely own and believe the whole doctrine contained in the Confession of Faith, approved by the General Assemblies of this Church, and ratified by law in the year 1690, to be founded upon the Word of God; and do you acknowledge the same as the confession of your faith; and will you firmly and constantly adhere thereto, and, to the utmost of your power, assert, maintain, and defend the same, and *the purity of the worship as presently practised in this national church, and asserted in the Act 15, Assembly 1707, entitled, Act against Innovations in the Worship of God?*"

Again—

"And that, according to your power, you shall maintain the unity and peace of this Church against error and schism, notwithstanding of whatever trouble or persecution may arise; and that *you shall follow no divisive courses from the present established doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of this Church?*"—Hill's Practice of the Church Courts, pp. 61–2.

The questions put to Free Church ministers and other office-bearers are almost identical—the reference to the ratification by law, and to the Act against innovations being omitted, for reasons connected with the Disruption, but certainly not with the remotest intention to weaken the obligations undertaken by all our ministers, elders, and deacons to maintain entire purity of worship, according to the Standards. The Act 1707, however, we fear is too little known. The fact that it was made by the Church at the time of the Union proves the extreme jealousy which existed in securing purity of worship, even in regard to the Church herself. The fact that all ministers of the Established Church are at present solemnly pledged to that Act, is a clear evidence of their true position and duty, whilst the presumptuous disregard of its terms and obligations on the part of some ministers proves how hardened and shameless men may become in transgression. It is almost incredible that innovating ministers should not only still accept of this Act, but impose it on others, except on the painful allegation of the *Times* in regard to the Ritualists, that "the clergy are the only class of men that can contrive to get on comfortably without a conscience." "If the light Matt. 6:23

that is in thee be darkness how great is that darkness !” Here is the ACT AGAINST INNOVATIONS IN THE WORSHIP OF GOD, and keep in view that every individual minister of the Established Church has solemnly vowed to observe it as a condition of obtaining his present rights and privileges, whilst every Free Church minister is similarly bound, and has given a pledge as strong and binding :—

ACT XV. 1707.

“ The General Assembly taking to their serious consideration that the purity of religion, and particularly of Divine worship and uniformity therein, is a signal blessing to the Church of God, and that it hath been the great happiness of this Church, ever since her reformation from Popery, to have enjoyed and maintained the same in a great measure, and that any attempts made for the introduction of innovations in the worship of God therein have been of fatal and dangerous consequence: Likeas, by the 5th Act of the Parliament anno 1690 and 23d Act of Parliament 1693, and the Act lately past for security of the present Church Establishment, *the foresaid purity and uniformity of worship are expressly provided for*, and being well informed by representatives sent from several presbyteries of this Church that innovations, particularly in the public worship of God, are of late set up in some places in public assemblies within their respective bounds, and that endeavours are used to promote the same by persons of known disaffection to the present establishment both of Church and State; *the introduction whereof was not so much as attempted during the late Prelacy.* And considering also that such innovations are dangerous to this Church, and manifestly contrary to *our known principle (which is, that nothing is to be admitted in the worship of God but what is prescribed in the Holy Scriptures)*, to the constant practice of this Church, and against the good and laudable laws made since the late happy Revolution for establishing and securing the same in her doctrine, worship, discipline and government, and that they tend to the fomenting of schism and division, to the disturbance of the peace and quiet both of Church and State. Therefore the General Assembly, moved with zeal for the glory of God, and the purity and uniformity of His worship, *doth hereby discharge the practice of all such innovations in Divine worship within this Church*, and does require and obtest all the ministers of this Church, especially those in whose bounds any such innovations are, or may happen to be, to represent to their people the evil thereof, and seriously to exhort them to beware of them, and to deal with all such as do practise the same in order to their recovery and reformation, and do instruct and empower the commission of this Assembly to use all proper

means, by applying to the Government or otherwise, for suppressing or removing all such innovations, and preventing the evils and dangers that may ensue thereupon to this Church.”

It will be seen that their vow in the strongest way pledges the ministers of the Church to all the Acts connected with the Revolution Settlement and the Treaty of Union, especially in regard to purity and uniformity of worship.

Professor Dunlop, writing immediately after the period at which this Act was passed, pays the following tribute to the Scottish clergy of that time which, unfortunately, with all our boasting, no man will venture now to repeat: “ So far,” says he, “ as we know, there is not one Churchman in Scotland (and we are pretty sure that none will adventure to own the contrary), who does not mean by subscribing her Confession to acknowledge his sincere belief of all the doctrines contained in it, as all the world must understand the words in the plainest and easiest sense” (Dunlop’s Preface to Confessions, p. 16).

This same eminent man writing, as we have said, immediately after the Act 1707, viz., in 1717, or only ten years after the Act against innovations and the Treaty of Union, pronounces an eloquent eulogium on the simple and Scriptural worship of the Church of Scotland; and, even if the matter were not plain otherwise beyond the possibility of doubt, he affords clear incidental evidence of what the worship was to which the ministers were and are still solemnly pledged, and that no instruments of music were allowed in that worship. Here is the passage to which we refer :—

“ We in the same manner celebrate the goodness of God, who carried our Reformation to such a high pitch of perfection with respect to our government and worship, and delivered them from all that vain pomp which darkened the glory of the gospel service, and the whole of those superstitions and insignificant inventions of an imaginary decency and order which sullied the Divine beauty and lustre of that noble simplicity that distinguished the devotions of apostolical times. And our Church glories in the primitive plainness of her worship more than in all the foreign ornaments borrowed from this world, though these appear indeed incomparably more charming to earthly minds.

"We are sensible that it is a necessary consequence of the nature of our Reformation in these particulars that there is nothing left in our worship which is proper to captivate the senses of mankind, or amuse their imaginations. We have no magnificence and splendour of devotion to dazzle the eye, NOR HARMONY OF INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC TO ENLIVEN OUR WORSHIP AND SOOTHE THE EARS OF THE ASSEMBLY. Pomp, and show, and ceremony are entirely strangers in our churches, and we have little in common with that apostate Church whose yoke we threw off at the Reformation, or with the exterior greatness and magnificence of the Jewish Temple and its service.

"For which reason we know we must lay our account to be despised by the men of this world who value nothing that is stripped of the allurements of sense, and fancy that a rich and gaudy dress contributes to the majesty and raises the excellency of religious service,—who seek for the same dazzling pomp and splendid appearances to recommend their worship, which they are so fond of in their equipage and tables, and think that a veneration and respect for the service of the Church is to be raised by the same methods that procure esteem and fondness for a court. We have nothing to tempt persons of such inclinations; we know they'll entertain the meanest thoughts and most disdainful notions of a worship too plain and homely for them, and fit only for the rude and unmannerly multitude who have not a delicate enough taste for what is truly great and noble.

"But how much soever upon this account we may be despised by the great and the learned, the Church of Scotland, we hope, will always publicly own the simplicity and plainness of her worship as her peculiar glory, and believe that these to a spiritual eye are beautified with a lustre which external objects are incapable of, and of too elevated a nature for the senses to look at. She is not ashamed to acknowledge her sentiments—that the devotions of Christians stand in no need of the outward helps afforded to the Jews, and that the triumphs of all-conquering love, the mighty acts of a Redeemer, all the powers and glories of an immortal life that are represented to our wonder and meditation under the gospel, are far nobler springs of devotion, and fitter to animate with a cheerful zeal and inspire the most fervent affections than the meaner helps afforded under the law, the costliness of Pontifical garments, the glory of a magnificent temple, the ceremony of worship, and the power of music.

"Our Church believes it to be one design of the better reformation of things to raise the Christian worshippers above the airy grandeur of sense, and instead of a laborious service, to introduce a worship worthy of the Father of spirits, that should be truly great and manly, the beauty and the power whereof should be spirit and life, and which, instead of a servile imitation of the temple, should be all purified reason and religion, and make the nearest approaches to the heavenly state where there is no temple. And how despicable soever this may appear to earthly minds and

distasteful to the senses that are pleased with show and appearance, we are not afraid to own that an imitation of our blessed Lord and His apostles in the plainness and spirituality of their devotions, and an endeavour to copy after the example of these truly primitive times, will even bear us up to all the just decency and order of the gospel Church, and that in a conformity thereto the naked simplicity of our worship is beautified with a superior lustre, and shines with a brightness that is more worthy of it, than when dressed in the gayest colours and busked up with the richest and most artful ornaments of human fancy and contrivance."

"What mighty things hath God done to preserve our Reformation to us in its primitive extent and vigour! and what a delightful mixture of love and power hath adorned the working of His uncontrolled providence in our behalf! How many schemes of politicians hath He blown up! What contrivances of ambitious and tyrannical princes, who hated the simplicity of our worship and the liberty of our principles, hath He defeated! What storms of persecution and division, too, hath He calmed! He supported this Church while tossed by those furious tempests, and pursued with the unrelenting malice and perfidy of apostates and deserters, and at length when on the brink of ruin He brought us to the desired haven.

"If it had not been the Lord who was on our side when men rose up against us; then they had swallowed us up quick when their wrath was kindled against us. Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul: Blessed be the Lord who hath not given us a prey to their teeth.' Now what can we render to the Lord for all His benefits that will prove so acceptable a sacrifice to Him as a high value, zealous love, and steadfast adherence to those precious truths of our Reformation, together with a constant care to adorn our profession of them by the beauties of holiness?"

Ps. 124:2-6

The question being thus settled in the most definite way, it remained undisturbed for upwards of a hundred years. Amidst the debates and divisions which arose in Scotland during an eventful period, no one attempted to interfere with the worship of the Church till early in the present century. About the year 1808 an attempt was made by the minister of St. Andrew's Church, Glasgow, to introduce an organ into his church, to be used in public worship. This immediately gave rise to the interference of the Presbytery, and to a short and sharp public debate. The principles of the Church in regard to worship were then ably vindicated and enforced.

The magistrates also were told by Mr Reddie, their able town-clerk, that the introduction of an organ into the Church was illegal. The organ was accordingly interdicted and removed. The minister was soon after translated to the east, and a caricature, which excited considerable amusement at the time, represented this innovating and luckless divine as going over the hills of Shotts towards Edinburgh, playing on a barrel organ, "I'll gang nae mair to yon toon." The matter again went to rest, and so continued until the controversy was revived about twenty years ago.

It was revived in a variety of quarters, and has gradually been making progress, until now it must be settled in some definite way. In the language of the new Association for defending the purity of worship:—

"Of late a restless and innovating spirit has appeared in certain quarters, to the sorrow of enlightened Presbyterians, and the great disturbance of the peace of congregations. The ministers and other office-bearers of the Church, forgetting their ordination vows, have sometimes been the ringleaders in this defection. The new spirit has generally manifested itself first in a desire to change the old and well-considered attitudes observed in our public worship, resulting in a subversion of the old forms, and in the most unseemly attitude of sitting whilst solemn prayer is offered to God. The next innovation is generally the introduction of instrumental music in praise, which implies a still wider departure from scriptural purity of worship. We have seen, more recently, altars, altar-cloths, and crosses introduced, heralding, as we may anticipate, more sweeping and fatal changes in our system if matters are allowed to proceed in their present course. In a word, we may say of such changes, in the language of Scripture, that their beginning is 'as when one letteth out water,' and that if the authority of Scripture in worship, and the obligation of solemn oaths taken at ordination, are to be set aside, no one can tell to what extremes men may ultimately proceed."

cf. Prov. 17:14

All the Presbyterian Churches of the United Kingdom have been more or less troubled with these unwarranted attempts to alter the public worship of God. Some of the Nonconformist Churches, in particular one of the Presbyterian Churches in England, and the United Presbyterian Church, although we trust

the question will yet be raised, have succumbed to the innovation in the matter of instrumental music, without altering their professed creed, and yet in such a way as to introduce a practical independency into the Church. The Irish Presbyterian Church has offered a stout and, so far, successful resistance. The question has not yet been formally raised in the Free Church of Scotland, although symptoms of its approach are only too apparent; but the eyes of the whole country are now turned to the Established Church, and multitudes are anxious to know what the result of the struggle in that Church is to be.

The struggle in the Established Church was first formally inaugurated by the late Dr Robert Lee and a few allies. He published a volume entitled "THE REFORM OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND IN WORSHIP, GOVERNMENT, AND DOCTRINE. PART I., WORSHIP." This was rather a formidable programme, and seemed to point at a complete ecclesiastical revolution. The first part only, however, was published. We may guess from that what the others would have been. The theory of Dr Lee seemed to be, that as the Established Church of Scotland had been weakened by the Disruption, and must depend now mainly on the Church of England for support, her leaders should shape their course with this consideration in view, and he himself without waiting for any ecclesiastical sanction, proceeded to introduce an organ and a liturgy, as two instalments, we presume, of a necessary adaptation. This naturally gave rise to discussion and opposition. Unfortunately, however, the matter has not yet been dealt with in such a way as effectually to put down innovations, and in practice as well as theory, to conserve the old Presbyterian position. The Established Church of this country has no legislative standing, except under the Revolution Settlement, which expressly and strongly excludes innovations in worship. If that is given up, the claim of the Established Church ceases, and she becomes virtually disestablished by her own act and deed. Hence many of the enemies of the

Church Establishment, and of all Church Establishments, have been looking on with quiet exultation at the recent innovations, in the expectation that the leaders of the Church will ultimately steer her upon the rocks, and save them trouble. The struggle, however, is not yet ended, and a powerful party is springing up in the Church and country, actuated by more patriotic and enlightened views and principles. The question is new, but in proportion as knowledge is diffused, the party of the Constitution will undoubtedly increase.

Meantime it is important to know, that whatever aberrations have been tolerated in practice in the Established Church, no alteration has yet been made in the old constitution in the matter of worship. On the contrary, the old principles have been clearly asserted, although unfortunately not firmly enforced. Matters now are assuming so serious a form, that the Assembly will not be able to shelve the question any longer on technical grounds, and as the liturgy has been condemned, the next Assembly will be called upon to decide whether they are prepared to disallow organs, to exclude altars, altar-cloths, and crosses from the sanctuary, and to check the innovating assumptions of unsound ministers and kirk-sessions. Failing this the matter may ere long assume a serious form in the civil courts.

The state of the case is this:—In 1865, the General Assembly of the Established Church referred to certain innovations introduced “without consulting with, or being authorised by, their respective Presbyteries or other competent judicatories, and under a pretence of a congregational independence of their Presbyteries with respect to such matters.” They add, “And whereas such proceedings are inconsistent with the principles of Presbyterian Church government as at all times maintained by this Church, and recognised and confirmed by law under the Act of Parliament 1592, commonly known as the Charter of the Church, and various other statutes, according to which the power of regulating all such matters is

vested in Presbyteries exclusively ; and such proceedings may therefore not only bring the Church into collision with the civil authorities, but must, unless timeously checked, prove subversive of our Presbyterian constitution by the introduction of a practical system of congregational or sessional Independency.” . . . “The General Assembly strictly prohibit all ministers and office-bearers from assuming independent jurisdiction in such matters, as inconsistent with the vows of submission pledged by them at ordination to the superior courts, under pain of the highest censure,” &c.

Now this was certainly the right tone for the Assembly to assume, and indicated a clear perception of the true spirit of the Presbyterian system, and of the danger, even with reference to the civil government, of the innovations which some were anxious to introduce. And although in the following year another declaration was made, somewhat modified in tone, we are not prepared to say that it was essentially different in principle. Had the Church only consistently maintained its own laws, or were the Church now prepared firmly to maintain them, we do not see that any alteration has been made in the Constitution, especially as no overture on the subject has been passed under the Barrier Act. As a good deal of misunderstanding, however, exists on this subject, we give the Act 1866 as it stands. It is entitled, “Declaratory Act anent Changes on the Forms of Worship and other Ecclesiastical Arrangements sanctioned by the Laws and Established Usages of this Church,” and reads as follows :—

“Whereas it appears from certain overtures from Presbyteries and otherwise, that the Declaratory Act, No. VII. of the Acts of the General Assembly of 1865, anent changes in the forms of worship and other ecclesiastical arrangements, has been misunderstood in various quarters, and that a more full and explicit declaration of the law is called for and necessary, the General Assembly, while adhering to its principle, recall the said Act, and in order to carry out more effectually the purposes truly contemplated in the same, Enact and Declare, That the right and duty of maintaining and enforcing the observance of the existing laws and

usages of the Church in the particular congregations or Kirks within their bounds, in matters connected with the performance of public worship and the administration of ordinances, belong to, and are incumbent upon, the Presbyteries of the Church, subject always to the review of the superior Church courts; and that, while needless interference with the Government of particular Kirks is always to be avoided, it is nevertheless the duty of Presbyteries, when, by any legal and constitutional means, the alleged existence or proposed introduction of any innovation or novel practice in the performance of worship or administration of ordinances in any congregation come to their knowledge, to take cognisance of the same, and after such inquiry as the circumstances of the case seem to call for, or without inquiry, if none appears requisite, either to enjoin the discontinuance, or prohibit the introduction of such innovation as being, in their opinion, inconsistent with the laws and settled usages of the Church, or a cause of division in the particular congregation, or as being unfit from any cause to be used in the worship of God, either in general or in the particular Kirks, or to find that no case has been stated to them, calling for their interference, or to pronounce such other deliverance in the said matter as in their judgment seems warranted by the circumstances of the case and the laws and usages of the Church, it being always competent to submit such deliverance to the review of the superior Church courts in common form. And the General Assembly do again strictly enjoin all ministers and office-bearers in the Church, under pain of censure, to observe and obey the injunctions given by their Presbyteries in all such matters, so long, and in so far as the same remain unreversed or unvaried by the superior Courts."

It is clear that this is not in its substance inconsistent with the previous Act or with the Presbyterian Constitution. It is only considerably watered down, amplified, and apparently somewhat softened; but instead of giving direct countenance to any innovation, it clearly urges the observance of the settled laws and usages of the Church, although not so peremptorily as could have been desired, whilst the mere feeling of congregations, who have voluntarily joined the Church, can have nothing to do with questions of law. The existing innovations therefore, so far as we can see, are totally illegal; and how they have been winked at by Presbyteries and the General Assembly passes our comprehension.

The purity of worship practised in the Presbyterian

Church ever since the Reformation has not been thrust upon her from without. It has been the result of her own view of Scripture, and of her own deliberate choice; nay, it has been maintained by a determined and heroic struggle for ages on the part of her noblest sons. The appointment of all her ministers, besides, is only made conditionally; the condition being that, before their settlement, or acquiring any rights, they shall avow and subscribe their adherence to all her distinctive principles and peculiarities. To allege that they may afterwards set these avowals at defiance, and still retain their offices, is to outrage morality and overthrow the liberty of the Church and her congregations. No man is forced to become one of her ministers. All enter into office and take the necessary vows with the most unconstrained freedom; and if they are afterwards dissatisfied, and wish to introduce novelties, they are at the most perfect liberty to withdraw and join a more congenial fellowship. Honest men, on finding that they cannot fulfil their vows, will surely adopt this alternative,—will withdraw and take the consequences.

It is vain to say that the "innovations" at present in question are small. Even if this were true, it would only form an aggravation of the offence, as proving to how small a temptation men have yielded in their rage for novelty and change. We must not forget that their vow in the sight of God is not merely to avoid great changes. They have solemnly promised to follow "no divisive courses" from the worship which has been authorised and practised in the Church; but, on the contrary, to defend that worship "to the utmost of their power." Still the change in question is not a small matter. It crosses the line betwixt appointed and discarded observances, betwixt simple and æsthetic devotion. It gets into the region of sensuous and sensational worship; it breaks open the flood-gates, and exposes the Church to an inundation of error and change. It is equally vain to plead the example of other Presbyterian Churches, since we should avoid their errors instead of copying their defects. It was the boast of our early reformers that the Constitution of our

Church was taken from no Church on earth, "not even from Geneva," but only from the word of God; and we have no reason, from the history of our country, to regret what they did, but rather to bless God for this noble peculiarity. The vows of our ministers, besides, have not to do with other Churches, but exclusively with our own.

It is surely not too much to expect that the morality of the Church shall not sink below the level of that of the market-place. It is said that the word of our merchants should be "as good as their bond," but if a man's bills are dishonoured he is next found in the *Gazette*. Why should it be otherwise in the Church, and with Ministers of the Gospel? All who wish well to Christianity must desire that the chair of truth should never be degraded by the falsehood and inconsistency of its occupants. Whenever it turns out otherwise, surely the duty of the Church is clear. It is much better, moreover, that she should resolutely maintain her own authority, restrain her unworthy office-bearers, and vindicate the purity of her worship, than that any appeal should become necessary to the courts of law to repel wanton aggression, and force men, even when a majority in individual congregations, to indulge their unwarranted tastes in worship, if at all, in a separate place, and at their own expense.

The present state of things cannot continue. Men speak of liberty, but "liberty" can only exist where it is regulated by law. If every man or every majority in a congregation are to do as they please, Presbyterianism is impossible, and the liberty of some is the bondage of the rest. Every consideration points in the direction therefore of "standing in the old ways." The word and authority of God—our desire to obtain His blessing which "maketh rich and addeth no sorrow"—the consideration that our land has prospered greatly by the blessing of God in connection with the old and time-honoured worship of our fathers—the certainty that if changes under false principles are tolerated, they will gradually diverge into wider extremes—the fact that these

cf. Prov. 10:22

innovations degrade the worship from its grand manly simplicity, and must form a formidable obstruction to reunion amongst the Presbyterians of Scotland—that they are essentially revolutionary in their nature, and throw a complete discredit upon the ordination vows of Church office-bearers and upon those who administer and take them—all these and other considerations combine in demanding that those who administer the affairs of our Churches should act with enlightened and impartial firmness. If not—if the office-bearers of the Churches follow a carnal policy, and impose vows which they allow to be disregarded, and the Church, instead of the citadel of truth, becomes a stronghold of corruption and falsehood, not only must the Church Establishment become indefensible, but such a state of things must eat as doth a canker, and there is a dark prospect before our land and our children.

We may well ask, Is the long struggle of centuries in Scotland to have such a disgraceful end in these days of boasting? Was it for this that Knox and Melville braved the fury of monarchs, and that our noble Covenanters on the hills of Scotland were shot down by a merciless soldiery, professing their unalterable adherence to the worship, doctrine, and government of the Presbyterian Church? Surely it is not come to this, although this may suit the unworthy views of a degenerate few. At all events we know what the ultimate end of the great struggle will be. The truth of God, and the God of truth, must and shall triumph, and "at the evening time there shall be light." Let us say in the language of noble Samuel Rutherford, trusting in Him who has been our dwelling-place in all generations—"The bride shall yet sing as in the days of her youth; Salvation shall be her walls and bulwarks. The dry olive tree shall bud again, and the dead dry bones shall live; for the Lord shall prophecy to the dry bones, and the Spirit shall come upon them and we shall live." "On-waiting," says he again, "had ever a blessed issue; and to keep the word of God's patience keepeth still the

cf. Zech. 14:7

cf. Isa. 26:1

cf. Ezek. 37:1-14

saints dry in the water, cold in the fire, and breathing and blood-hot in the grave."

There may be—there probably will be—again a mighty struggle in Scotland on this vital question of worship. The age is becoming luxurious and irreligious, and the luxury and music of the drawing-room are being transferred to the Church. Some good people foolishly imagine that because vital religion is all-important, divine order is quite immaterial. Family religion is neglected; the holy word of God is impiously decried; anarchy of all kinds is growing; intemperance, Sabbath-breaking, crime and pauperism, impurity, dishonesty, and frivolity, partly as the result of ecclesiastical disorganisation, are only too rife. Designing men are fostering the confusion; whilst all lessons seem lost on some, who, the cause of evil, only plunge the deeper into the vortex of change. To an intelligent Scottish patriot the state of matters is sad, yet hopeful. Whilst multitudes are standing consistently on the old ground, blind Presbyterians are helping forward the defection, and ancient foes are imagining that Presbyterianism is effete, or is about to abdicate. The adherents of Prelacy are not unnaturally looking up again as if their day of triumph were at hand. But the end is not yet. The great mass of the Scotch people are uncontaminated. Upwards of 80 per cent. of them are still avowed Presbyterians. Information will soon lead to resistance. What is wanted is more of the Spirit of God guiding to all truth, purity, Christian firmness and consistency, and at the same time to Christian love. The mist of confusion will pass away, and we may fondly hope to see the time when the scattered children of Knox shall yet be reunited on sound principles, and Scotland again become, as in her better days, a "delightsome land," and a beacon of light to the world around.

cf. Mal. 3:12

To secure this let us earnestly work and pray.