

Ministers and Churches.

IMPORTANT NOTICE.

A title urgent solicitation of agents and subscribers we have decided to extend the time, during which parties may take advantage of our Premium offer, up to the 1st of FEBRUARY NEXT. All parties, therefore, who remit \$2.50 within the next four weeks will be entitled to the \$4.00 Photograph of the Union General Assembly. Our friends, in remitting, will do well to bear in mind that in order to comply with our rules, arrears, if any, should be PAID UP, and the subscription for 1876 MUST BE RECEIVED IN FULL. We find that many who subscribed within the past five months send us \$3.50, and expect a premium, necessitating a great deal of unnecessary correspondence. All who subscribed during the year, if they want the premium, must settle up to 31st Decr. 1875, and remit \$3.50 for 1876.

May we ask our agents and friends to put forth a special effort during the month of January? Our receipts of subscriptions and new names in December far exceeded those of the same month in any previous year. Keep the ball rolling; and let January be even in advance of December.

Subscribers would do well to let their neighbors who do not take the PRESBYTERIAN know that the Premium offer is good for another month.

British American Presbyterian. FRIDAY, JANUARY 14, 1876.

SEVERAL letters, items of Ministers and Churches, as well as a quantity of general matter, crowded out of this issue will appear next week.

CASE OF THE REV. MR. McIVER AND THE FREE CHURCH PRESBYTERY OF GLASGOW, SCOTLAND.

Many of our readers will have seen the statement which appeared some time ago of the Rev. Mr. McIvor, of the Macdonald Free Church in the Presbytery of Glasgow, having left that body to enter the Established Church as minister of a congregation between 500 and 600 members, who also left the Free Church in the island of Uig to join the Kirk. On the 14th of Dec. ult., a pro re nata meeting of the Glasgow Free Church Presbytery was held to deal with this case. Mr. McIvor had sent to a previous meeting the resignation of his charge of the Macdonald Free Church. Before accepting his resignation, a committee was appointed—Dr. Adam, convener—to deal with Mr. McIvor, as to the step he proposed taking. On being invited by the convener to meet with this committee, he declined doing so, and it would appear was almost immediately received into the Established Church before the Presbytery had dealt with his resignation.

It will be remembered that the abolition of the law of Patronage, a year or so ago, was expected to act powerfully on the minds of many who left the Kirk at the disruption, as it was hoped that it would remove what was declared to be one, if not the principal of the grievances, which led to that great secession. If that was the expectation of the Government and of those who supported the abolition of patronage, it has not thus far been realized, although it must be admitted that it has no doubt produced considerable effect on the minds of many, both within the Established and Free Churches. In the latter it has led one party, which Dr. Begg may be said to represent, to look with some degree of hope to reconciliation and ultimate re-union with the Kirk; in another it has led to wider alienation, and the determination to seek the entire overthrow of all religious establishments.

As the case of Mr. McIvor and the people of Uig is the first which has occurred under the new arrangement, it has attracted a good deal of attention, and led to a very animated debate in the Presbytery. The grounds on which Mr. McIvor justifies his conduct in his letter to the Presbytery of the Free and Established Churches respectively, were to the former, "My being thoroughly satisfied that the recent legislation in regard to patronage, has restored to this church her ancient constitution as contained in the statutes which she always regarded as fully securing her liberties, and upon which the claim of rights and protest of the Free Church are based; and that, therefore, I can, without the surrender of any Free Church principles, and the communion of the Established Church. To the latter, the Established Church Presbytery, he says in applying for admission, and as a reason for doing so, "I have witnessed with sorrow ever since the deliverance of the Assembly of 1867, with respect to union with the non Established Churches, a gradual departure from the Headship of Christ over the nations by a majority of the Free Church courts, and the development of a voluntarism, which she repudiated in many ways for some time after 1843. Dr. Adam, in a long and able speech, repudiated both these positions in the strongest manner, the first especially as calculated to mislead, and based upon a misunderstanding altogether of the meaning and scope of the recent act, as well as of the action of the civil courts: at the time of the disruption,

and the position then taken by the Free Church. This speech called forth rejoinders from others who evidently did not look at Mr. McIvor's conduct in so grave a light, and did not take the same view as Dr. Adam of the effect of the law abolishing patronage. While not prepared wholly to vindicate Mr. McIvor or follow his example, it is yet clearly evident that they look with much more favour now toward the Old Church than before, and that it would not require any great additional concession to induce them to retrace their steps. On account of these different views of the grounds on which Mr. McIvor based his conduct, and of the effect it might have on other churches and ministers, great importance was attached to the nature of the deliverance, which should be given by the Presbytery upon the case, whether it should contain a denial of the position of Mr. McIvor, and a declaration of the continued adherence of the Free Church to its original grounds of secession, or whether it should contain the acceptance simply of Mr. McIvor's resignation. A motion to this effect was made by the Rev. Mr. Gault. Upon the vote being taken, but fifteen voted for this motion, against sixty-one for that of Dr. Adam to the effect that the Presbytery regards the action of Mr. McIvor as an abandonment of the distinctive principles of the Free Church, to which he solemnly avowed adherence upon receiving license and ordination; and that this second act does not profess to remove or modify the Erastian supremacy which led to the disruption in 1843, and which is expressly disowned in the questions put to all candidates for the holy ministry. Secondly, declaring it to be an aggravation of Mr. McIvor's conduct that he should still profess to hold Free Church principles and become a minister of the Established Church, and that such a profession is calculated to encourage divisive courses. Thirdly, censuring Mr. McIvor for declining to meet with the committee appointed to deal with him, as a violation of his ordination vows in which he promised to submit himself willingly to the admonition of his brethren of the Presbytery, and, lastly, declaring him no longer a minister or member of the Free Church.

THE CONFESSION OF FAITH.

In last week's issue we published another lengthy communication upon the above subject from a "Lay Presbyterian." We are glad to have our columns open for the discussion of subjects of general interest to our Church, the more especially as there is no other organ in connection with it in which they can be discussed. We trust that the interchange of opinions which has taken place will be of some service. It is very easy, however, for controversy upon such a subject to be prolonged beyond the point that is either interesting or profitable to the generality of our readers. Whenever this comes to be the case it can serve no good purpose to have it longer continued. "Lay Presbyterian" cannot complain that we have not given the fullest opportunity for the statement of difficulties and objections for which expression has been sought, neither can complaint be made that these have been treated with indifference, inasmuch as not a few have taken in hand to reply. As the subject for the present has been discussed with considerable fullness, we fancy that it will be better that what has been said should now be digested, and the matter rest for a time.

Admitting the force of much that has been said on both sides, and the ability with which it has been said, and without in the smallest degree undertaking to settle the question, or to discuss or vindicate the Confession of Faith, we may venture a few remarks in dismissing this subject more with reference to the character of the discussion which has taken place than to the circumstances which led to it or to the doctrines passed under review. And first with respect to the Confession of Faith we would say that, whatever place to our admirers amongst either our ministers or our people may claim for it, we do not suppose there are any who would for a moment aver that it is "perfect," "infallible," "a finality," or the "ultimate authority" for the doctrines taught in our Church. Its place in it is simply and only that which by her formal deliverances in her corporate capacity the Church has given it, namely that of a subordinate standard. And this is all the Church is responsible for despite all insinuations and bold assumptions to the contrary. The charge, or perhaps we should rather say the assumption has been persistently made, the impression sought to be conveyed that the Confession is regarded as "perfect, infallible," the ultimate authority. We know not who may consider it as such, but the fact that it is called subordinate by the Church in official documents clearly defines her position with respect to it.

Let it also be distinctly understood in the next place that the acceptance of the Confession required by the Church and given by her ministers and elders is not to its

very words, and to every proposition just as it is there set down. An opposite impression to this we imagine would be conveyed if we look at one side of the discussion which has taken place. That however which is intended by the Church is, the honest conscientious assent to the system of doctrine as a whole taught in the Confession. To demand or expect more than this would be evidently absurd, and to claim for the Confession a place to which it is not entitled. Taking acceptance in this sense it is quite out of place and unreasonable to denounce, as is done, the rigidity with which the Church exacts the acceptance of her standards. The only other kind of subscription possible is either to then *ipseismo verba*, or of so lax a description as to be worth nothing at all. So long also as our Church makes fully and clearly known beforehand by the Confession or catechisms the doctrines she holds, so long as subscription is perfectly voluntary, made because the subscriber believes and accepts them, and is at liberty at any time to change his opinion, renounce her doctrines, and withdraw from her communion; it is an utterly mistaken or false use of words to describe her standards as "settlers." And we cannot but think that by persistently so describing them it has been sought to create a prejudice against our Church, and to convey the impression that her tenets are narrow and her conduct tyrannical. Whatever the intention may be, this must be the effect upon those unacquainted with the history or doctrines of our church.

Neither can we feel that there is harshness, or at least any that it is possible to avoid, in requiring persons to withdraw from office, from positions in which they stand forth as representing the church when they can no longer believe or uphold her doctrines. There is surely no harshness in asking and expecting a man to be faithful to his views of truth, and willing to accept the consequences which fidelity to truth may involve. Especially is this reasonable when it is religious truth that is in question. This is all that the church does when she excludes from official position those who can no longer teach what she holds to be truth, and which it is one great purpose of her existence to inculcate and depend. If there is to be any unity of doctrine or action, or a common religious life in the church, there must be some line drawn where divergence in matters of doctrine on the part of a member shall involve expulsion. Consistency both on the part of the church and of the individual requires this. Every organization or association acts upon this principle. If it be harsh to draw this line at the point of denial of what the church regards as fundamental or Scriptural doctrine, where else can it be drawn without seeming to be still more harsh? Individuals will differ in opinion as to what constitutes fundamental doctrine, what should be included and what left out in any creed or confession. The church must decide that question for itself, and as the Presbyterian or any other branch of the church is a voluntary association, it has a perfect right to say what shall or what shall not be regarded as fundamental. It is quite beside the mark, therefore, to condemn the Confession or any other creed because it contains statements upon doctrine which this or that objector may happen to think should not be there.

Much stress is laid upon the tendency of creeds in general, and the Westminster Confession in particular, to check or repress the free exercise of independent thought. We appeal to those who know, if the history of the Presbyterian Church does not furnish a refutation of this objection. Has there ever been a branch of the church, is there any one to-day more marked by mental activity, by the spirit of research, than she is? Whether this shall be the effect of creeds or not depends entirely upon their correspondence with truth or the reverse. Christ Himself said, "The truth shall make you free." Again, a great deal has been sought to be made of the effect of enlarged knowledge in various directions, upon the doctrines or the statement of doctrines taught in the Confession, and based upon the Bible. This is made an argument for reinstating or expunging from it certain doctrines altogether. This objection is much more plausible than sound. It has again and again been asserted that, if all the changes in the language of our received version of the Scriptures were made, which would be required by the recent discovery and now more complete collation of sacred manuscripts, no vital doctrine of the Bible would be materially affected thereby. If this is the case after all the progress that has been made in this most important department of biblical science, we can scarcely understand how progress in any other branch of sacred learning, and much less how the progress made in other sciences can be pleaded as a reason why the doctrinal teaching of the Confession of Faith should be altered. We are here tempted to quote as most apt the language of Prof. Caven, who it will be admitted is probably as competent to pronounce an opinion as

any who have discussed the question in our columns. He says, "Every biblical scholar knows that the results achieved by textual criticism and exegesis, interesting and valuable as they are, do not render necessary any modification of the great doctrines of the Bible; these results, indeed, have but little approval, bearing upon the theology of the Church, unless it be to confirm conclusions already reached, but which could hardly be said to require confirmation."

There seems to be no fear on the part of some who compare or contrast the discoveries and progress of science and knowledge in general, with that of revealed truth, to the disparagement of the latter, a mistake as to the purpose which the Bible and the Church were intended by God to answer. The Bible is spoken of as a means great purpose had been to serve as a basis for the investigation and development of speculative religious truth or opinions, and the Church and her ministry to serve as the instruments by means of which investigation, discovery, and development should be made. But this is clearly not the primary, or by any means the most important purposes when they were intended to serve. We must content ourselves with stating this fact without pursuing it farther.

The words *dogma*, *dogmatise*, and *dogmatic*, play a very important part in such discussions as we have been speaking of, and they are supposed to be very formidable indeed, to act upon common and unsophisticated minds very much as a red rag upon a bull. But thinking people are not to be frightened by the terrible brandishing of such terms. The fact is, the Bible itself is a very dogmatic kind of book, and enunciates dogmas which to many people are very unpleasant. Men who believe, however mistaken they may be, that they can appeal to "Thus saith the Lord," for what they say, have no option but to be dogmatic. It is only this so called and scouted degenerate teaching that has ever produced much effect either for good or evil upon the world. When the thing at stake is the well-being of the immortal soul, may-be-yes and may-be-no do not satisfy; it is imperative that the trumpet give a certain sound.

We can not suppress a feeling of surprise and pain at the flippant, almost contemptuous way in which those who draw up our standards are spoken of. One would be led to fancy that they were a parcel of the most addle-headed old men, or narrow minded bigots, instead of having been among the most learned and pious men of their day. One would imagine by the way they speak of them who never in their life spent perhaps as much as even one hour continuously upon the study of these doctrines, and those who have but little knowledge of their bibles, (we speak more particularly of the secular press) that the Westminster divines had hurriedly and without due thought drawn up these admirable compends of doctrine, instead of their being the result of years of careful study and prayer for divine direction, by men who had a profound acquaintance with the Scriptures. Such a style of writing displays equally a want of good taste and of reverent feeling, which of themselves prove the incompetency of those who sit in judgment and with the utmost levity condemn productions which thousands of the wisest and best of men in past generations as well as of our own day, not only in this country but wherever the English language is spoken, have held in the highest esteem, both for their intellectual grasp and for the deep insight they show into the meaning and teaching of the word of God. It may at once be taken for granted that they were neither dotards nor fools who produced works which have lasted as a living power for more than two hundred years, which have exercised such an immense influence over multitudes of the best minds, and whose influence is more widespread to-day than it has ever been before. It is quite possible that they knew more of the matter they had in hand than some of those who now sit in judgment upon their work, and condemn it with such an air of supercilious and self-satisfied superiority. The time, we doubt not, will come when our standards will be revised, but whenever it shall come it will not be at the demand of those who too plainly show that the degree of liberty which would satisfy them, is such as would not only impair the unity, the purity, and stability of our Church, but would reduce the plainest teachings of the Word of God which liveth and abideth forever to the level of human reasonings and opinions, which men may accept or reject according to the popular fashion or belief of the passing hour.

THE Pope is to be an exhibitor at the Centennial.  
TORONTO Bay was again frozen over on the night of the 8th inst.  
FRANCE has sent a special mission to Egypt, the purpose of which is not known.  
MEXICO has been shipped from New York to London, to the extent of forty-two tons.

On Wednesday of last week two ladies belonging to the congregation of Tilsenburgh Mrs. David Kelce, and Mrs. William Forbes, called at the manse, and requested the pastor's wife, Mrs. Caven, to accept as a Christmas present, a very handsome tapestry carpet for the parlor. Mrs. Caven thanked the ladies warmly for this proof of their affection and esteem.—CON.

After the opening of the annual meeting of Knox Church, Yagham, on 20th ult., the pastor, F. V. P. Nicol, was pleasantly surprised by one of the elders addressing him in his own name and on behalf of the congregation, and handing him a nicely ornamented purse containing a handsome sum of money in token of their kindly feelings towards him, and of their high appreciation of his labours amongst them.—CON.

At the manse, Harrington, Christmas Eve was pleasantly signalized by the unexpected arrival of a number of the members and friends of Mrs. Gordon's Bible Class. In the course of the evening the special purpose of their visit was explained by the presentation to Mrs. Gordon of a most affectionate and flattering address, accompanied by the gift of a handsome dining-room carpet. Mr. Gordon, on behalf of his wife, replied to the address, expressing in suitable terms the pleasure afforded them by this expression of feeling—the more gratifying, in that it is neither the first nor the second of such expressions of mutual confidence and good will.—CON.

On the evening of Tuesday last, the Ratho manse was taken possession of by a surprise party, who, on behalf of the Sabbath school and Bible Class, presented the Rev. J. Aull with an excellent address and a purse of £50, as a token of friendship and appreciation. Miss J. Martin made the presentation on behalf of the doxors. When the table was spread and a rich repast enjoyed, all the young people present felt themselves at home, and entered with great zest and glee into the innocent amusements and music of the evening. After a portion of Scripture was read, and prayers offered, all the young friends left the manse highly delighted with their experience of a surprise party.—CON.

The ladies of the congregation of St. Mary resolved some time ago to make an effort to liquidate the debt remaining on the manse. Several assumed the responsibility of procuring twenty dollars each, to be paid in at the end of the year. In addition, the ladies formed themselves into a "sowing society," with the object of preparing for a bazaar. On New Year's day the bazaar and a tea meeting were held. A large and varied assortment of goods, useful and ornamental, were displayed for sale. The weather was exceedingly unfavourable, so that the anticipations of a large number of visitors from the country were not realized. Nevertheless the undertaking was reasonably successful, the proceeds of sales of goods and of tickets amounting up to about two hundred dollars. A large number of valuable articles were left on hand, and which may be serviceable if another venture of the same kind be deemed necessary at a future time. On the evening of Thursday, 6th inst., the manse was occupied by the ladies, who provided amply for the friends invited by them to spend the evening there, and a very happy gathering was the result. The ladies presented to the pastor's wife carpeting for one of the rooms of the manse, and a sum of money. Their generosity was wholly unexpected, and indeed could scarcely be desired considering the hard times prevailing everywhere, and the stress put upon the members and friends of the congregation to wipe off the debt from the handsome manse and grounds they have procured for their pastor's accommodation.

ENGLAND has done a sensible thing in securing the contract of the Suez Canal, thus keeping her way open through Egypt to India. And now the Ottoman Empire is going to pieces; in fact that Turkish barque ought to have foundered a long while ago. That empire will not be enlightened and cannot be preserved, and no human agency can avert its doom. As the London Times has it, "She is perishing partly from the corruptions inseparable from her creed and her form of government, and partly from contact with a higher civilization than her own. If Turkey could only be embalmed and buried in one of the pyramids, or in one of the numerous tombs at Thebes or Memphis, it would be well. But as this cannot be, the sum in division had better be done, as soon as possible, Russia getting the Dardanelles and the Sea of Marmora, Austria getting a slice, and Germany its share. The Ottoman Empire is only a mass of effete Oriental corruption, and the sooner the sick man is quietly chloroformed to death the better for the surviving relatives and friends.—Christian at Work.

A FLUTE, dating back to the age of polished stone, has been found imbedded in charcoal and cinders in the bone cave at Gourdan, France.  
THE French government has expressed a desire to act in accord with England's feelings in the question of the Turkish reforms.