

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

REPLY

To an Address Presented by a Committee of the Presbytery of Lanark and Renfrew, on the occasion of his Jubilee.

BY REV WM. LOCHHEAD, ALMONTE.

DEAR BRETHREN,—It is with no ordinary emotions that I receive you at my home, as a deputation from the Presbytery of Lanark and Renfrew. I take it as a token of respect from the members of Presbytery, which was altogether unexpected by me. Had I still been in charge of a congregation, it would have been otherwise. Though situated as I am, retired for several years from the active work of the ministry, it may still be well for Presbytery to note the rather uncommon occurrence of one of their members not only attaining the extreme age of fourscore years, but to outlive the jubilee, or fifty years of ordained life as a minister of the Gospel. The period of my life, extending over four-fifths of the nineteenth century, is perhaps the most eventful period of any similar duration, since the commencement of the Christian era. What advancements in the arts and sciences! What progress in political, social, moral and religious reforms! How steadily onward has been the march of the British empire in all the elements of greatness, intelligence, moral and religious principle, wealth, territory and population, until she has become the mightiest empire that now exists, or ever has existed since the world began! Amid all this bustle and excitement, this steady onward march of the world, especially the English speaking world, to a higher stage of civilization and refinement, elevating the working or lower class to a plane occupied some hundred years ago, by the mercantile or middle class, and this again pressing hard on the heels of the aristocracy—we say, amid all this progress in the world, the Church has not been stationary or retrograde.

Moderatism had reigned triumphantly in the mother Church, during the most of the eighteenth, and the first quarter of the nineteenth century. This, together with the irreligious, if not infidel, tendencies of the American and French revolutions, had a most malignant influence on the Church, throughout Britain and the United States of America, if not throughout Christendom. Hence, evangelical religion was at a very low ebb at the commencement of the nineteenth century. The Church seemed to have forgotten the commission given her by her Lord, just as He was about to ascend to His seat at the right hand of His Father's throne—to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, to go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. The Presbyterians and Puritans of Britain, and of the United States of America, with the exception of the London Missionary Society lately organized, had not a single missionary preaching the Gospel to the heathen. The British and Foreign Bible Society had not yet been founded. But shortly after the establishment of that noble institution, there seems to have been a movement among the dry bones. During the first quarter of the century, the Lord raised up, richly endowed, and inspired with a burning zeal for His glory, such noble champions as Thos. Chalmers, Andrew Thompson, Henry Grey, Thos. Guthrie, and a host of men of a similar stamp, in all branches of the Church. The immediate consequence of this revival of religion was, that the Church in every land, but more especially in Britain and America, awoke as from a long sleep, and stood amazed at her unfaithfulness to her Lord, and to the heathen world. It was the very year of my ordination, 1830, that the Church of Scotland sent forth her first missionary, the immortal Dr. Duff. From the date of my ordination, during the past fifty years, what a change has taken place in the policy and practice of the Church, and in her bearing towards those who are *without* at home, but especially towards the heathen nations. From 1830 to 1880 what a change! What a glorious change! In 1830 the Church was just opening her eyes, and taking a survey of the vast field that lay before her—the *whole world*—and lifting up her voice she cried, Whom shall we send and who will go for us, to proclaim to the world, but especially to the heathen nations, the glad tidings of the great salvation? Duff and Carey in Britain, Judson and Winslow in the United States, and others of a similar spirit, promptly replied, Here are we, send us. These went, others in rapid

succession followed. The Church, now in some measure awake to the magnitude and grandeur of the work on which she had entered, called *aloud* and *continuously* for men and means to promote it. Concerts of prayer for missions were generally established. These prayers were heard and answered, when the Lord touched the hearts of young men and young women, and made them willing to offer themselves as missionaries, to go forth in His name to teach and to disciple the nations, and to baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. And great has been their success. Great too, has been the cheerfulness with which the people have come up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty, in furnishing the means of supporting their noble and self-denying representatives among the heathen. And how glorious have been the results! Perhaps more has been done to evangelize the heathen world during the last fifty years than during any fifty years since the Apostolic age. How eventful, and how hopeful for the future, has been the fifty years of my ordained life, both for the world and for the Church!

No less eventful and interesting has been the history of the various branches of the Presbyterian Church during the past fifty years, more especially of the branches in connection with which I have exercised my ministry. The earlier portion of my ministry was spent in connection with the Presbyterian Church in the United States. Between the years 1820 and 1835 that Church, in common with all evangelical denominations, was favoured with a succession of powerful and extensive revivals of religion. While the great majority of these revivals were the undoubted result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in answer to prayer, and rendering the faithful preaching of the Gospel effectual in gathering many thousands into the Church, it began to be feared by many of the most eminently pious and devoted ministers of the Presbyterian Church, that *some*, if not *many* of these so-called revivals were *spurious*, and were hurrying into the Church multitudes *ignorant* and *uninstructed* in the doctrines and usages of the Presbyterian Church. In the midst of these great religious excitements there had sprung up a class of men called *revivalists*. These men traversed the country, holding what was known as *four days' meetings*, which occasionally extended to four weeks. And wherever they went, a religious excitement was produced, and many were professedly converted and added to the churches. Many of these revivalists were *Congregationalists* from New England, and were believed, in their addresses, to have uttered sentiments more akin to Pelagian and Arminian heresy, than to Calvinistic doctrine. Their influence was supreme over the churches established in the *newer* or more lately settled portions of the country, viz., western New York, Ohio, and other western States, while throughout the *older* portions of the Church, many men hitherto regarded as sound Calvinists, declared their *confidence* in these revivalists. And when questions arose in the Church courts which tested the sympathies of ministers and elders in favour of, or in opposition to what was styled *new measures*, it was found that what were now called *New School men* had become the majority in some of the older Presbyteries, and hitherto regarded as sound and orthodox Presbyterians. From 1830 till 1835 the Presbyterian Church in the United States was becoming, year after year, more markedly a Church divided into two opposing parties, called New and Old School, each eyeing the other with distrust and suspicion; and upon every question coming before the General Assembly, the votes of the New School party making steady progress. This state of matters culminated in the General Assembly of 1836. In that year, the Synod of Pittsburgh, that had for several years been prosecuting Foreign Missions as a Synod, brought in an overture, offering to hand over their Board of Foreign Missions to the General Assembly. The question—the great question was now to be decided whether the Presbyterian Church in the United States was to be permitted to prosecute Foreign Missions as a Church, or only as aiding, and co-operating with a voluntary society seated at Boston, and strongly Congregational in its constituency and management. For six days in succession the question was debated with all the ability and earnestness of the ablest men on both sides, and was finally decided in favour of the New School, by a majority of six; and it was proclaimed to the world, that the Presbyterian Church in the United States should not have a Board of Foreign

Missions, but should be subsidiary to a New England society. The decision struck the Old School portion of the Church with alarm and dismay. Was this New School party, strongly Congregational in its origin and sympathies, and believed to be deeply tinged with Pelagian heresy, to swamp their old orthodox Presbyterian Church—the sons of Knox and Melville, of McCrie and Chalmers—and to say to them, you shall *not* as a Church preach the Gospel to the heathen? The central and southern portion of the Church were most *decidedly* and overwhelmingly orthodox, and many of the Presbyteries in the eastern border, who had sympathized with the New School men among them, were now startled at the unexpected result. The champions of orthodoxy now sounded the tocsin of alarm. Conventions were held to consider the state of the Church, and correspondence entered into with men in every Presbytery believed to be true blue Presbyterians. The result was that the Presbyteries returned Old School men as commissioners to the General Assembly of 1837, in an overwhelming majority. A Convention was called, to be held in Philadelphia on the second Thursday in May, and all commissioners and others who believed the Church was in danger, entreated to attend, and assist in preparing the measures which should be carried out in the approaching Assembly. The Convention drew up, and laid on the table of the Assembly a list of errors taught, and departures in government from the usages of the Presbyterian Church. These were charged upon the New School party, but more especially on the five northern and western Synods, beginning with the Synod of Utica. The champions of orthodoxy, Robert J. Breckenridge, Wm. S. Plumer, W. L. McAlla, Gardiner Spring, and others, charged the New School party with conspiring to undermine the Presbyterian Church, by preaching doctrines and introducing usages condemned by the Confession of Faith. The leaders of the New School party boldly denied the charge of heresy. Dr. Beman, of Troy, W. Wisner, of Ithaca, and other upholders of new measures, held up the Confession in their hands, solemnly declaring that to be the confession of *their* faith; but they were not believed. And after a whole week spent in charges and recriminations, a painful manifestation of even Christian human nature which I can never forget, the vote was taken to cut off the five Synods charged with the disorders named. It was un Presbyterian. It was revolutionary. But I, in common with the large majority of commissioners, believing that when evils threaten the *very existence* of the corporate body, political or religious, irremediable by the ordinary forms of law known to the constitution, then *revolution* or *ruin* is the *alternative*. It is then right to choose revolution. *It was done*. The General Assembly was divided. The New School claimed to be the General Assembly, and met in a separate church on the third Thursday in May, 1838. On the same day the Old School met, according to their own appointment. The New School appealed to law courts for material interests. These courts pronounced the Old School the true General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. For thirty-three years they lived and acted *separately*, and I have never repented of the vote I gave on that occasion. I, and I believe nineteen-twentieths of all who voted for the excision of the five Synods, *honestly believed* that it was the *only means* possible of saving the Presbyterian Church from ceasing to be *Calvinistic* in doctrine and *Presbyterian* in government; but the Great Head of the Church overruled the separation, for great good to the Presbyterian Church. The separation seemed to infuse new vigour into *both* parties. The Old School were now a *united* Church. They prosecuted Foreign Missions and Home Missions, and the education of young men for the ministry, with a *zeal* and a *success* unknown before. They rapidly increased. On the other hand, the New School leaders had committed themselves in the debate, and in asserting their right to be recognized as the true General Assembly, *claimed* to be *defenders* of the Confession of Faith, both in doctrine and practice. The consequence was that for a number of years they did not increase in numbers, but were constantly engaged in disciplining, and cutting off ministers and congregations, for the *very irregularities* which they had defended before the separation. But what they lost, the Congregationalists gained; and long before 1870, the best men of both parties felt that all causes of alienation had been removed, and they were now anxious to meet together