

vation of the character he had described was very greatly to be desired indeed, and he repeated that he hoped to see the day when all prejudices on this head should vanish. There was no individual who would be more loth than himself to see innovations needlessly introduced into the Church of Scotland, but he held that there was no part of their worship that was so stereotyped as to preclude men from thinking and suggesting what they believed would be an improvement; and if the mind and feeling of a great majority of a congregation pointed in the direction which he had indicated, then he took his stand upon what was a cardinal point, upon which every Reformed Church in the world must rest—that is, the liberty of private judgment. They all bound themselves to submit to the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the church, but if the innovations pointed at by Mr. Fairweather were merely those to which he (Dr. B.) now alluded, Mr. F. and his two supporters might as well think of putting their shoulders to stop an earthquake as to prevent those gentlemen, in different parts of Scotland, who had taken this as a matter of conscience and duty, carrying forward those changes. After alluding to the greatly increased intercourse between this country and England, he said he should rejoice if the two Churches should re-consider some of those non-essential characteristics by which they were now distinguished, when, perhaps prejudices might be rubbed off which had divided them. After some further observations on the satisfaction which changes such as he had indicated had given in the congregations of Dr. R. Lee, and St. Andrew's, Edinburgh, &c., the Rev. Doctor concluded by saying that he thought the overture unnecessary and inexpedient. He, therefore, moved its rejection.

After some further discussion,

Mr. Fairweather, on the recommendation of several members of Synod, withdrew his overture at present.

### Plain Speaking in a Free Church Pulpit.

ON Sunday, the Rev. Walter Smith, of Roxburgh Free Church, who has accepted a call to the Free Tron Church, Glasgow, delivered a farewell discourse to his congregation, from the text "I believed, therefore have I spoken." In the course of his sermon, Mr. Smith said he believed there were many whose faith was perfectly real, but so hampered by the tyranny of antiquated forms and customs that it hardly ever got itself effectually uttered. Their teaching bore the stamp of a traditional creed rather than of a living, personal faith; and sometimes one even felt almost as if they were more anxious to save their orthodoxy than to save souls. How else

explain the fact that the pulpit was in these days comparatively powerless? Why was it come to be almost a proverb among men that a thing is as dull as a sermon? Why is it a standing jest that when other soporifics fail this is pretty sure to send a man asleep? Why does the commonest and crudest article in the daily press tell more effectually on the wheels of practical life than all the solid teaching of our pulpits? It is not that Christian ministers are without faith, for that is not true. Nor is it that men are indifferent to the truth, for nothing, he believed, would be more heartily welcome to men than a little earnest, effective speech about religion. He was thoroughly convinced that what was amiss—with himself as well as others—arose from the cramping restriction of mere traditional forms, nowise essential to the old, very old truth of the Gospel—traditional forms which no more served the purpose of this present time than if they were to take from the modern soldier his rifle and bayonet, cover him with a leathern shield and an iron helmet, and send him to war with a bow and a quiver of arrows. He had the most fearless confidence in Christianity; it was God's truth, and would abide for ever; but if anything could really injure it, it was just those mistaken friends who would identify it with the forms of an old and obsolete life—those friends whose faith was not strong enough to trust to God's truth by itself, without the armour which now is less a defence than an encumbrance. It is not a mere tradition of truth that will now serve us, but an utterance of the Gospel, taking its shape from our own very faith in Christ, and basing itself with the facts, the ideas, the errors and snares of that living world in which we move. His own people now knew him well enough not to suspect him of any paltry craving for mere novelties. To be more specific, he would remark that there was a tradition of controversy which he reckoned to be perhaps the barrenest of all kinds of preaching, and against which he would put them on their guard. Many a young and hopeful preacher was miserably ruined by getting into this vein, and many congregations learned from it, not to deplore their own sins, but to hate the mistakes of other people. Controversy had its place; but the breaches of Zion would never have been healed if God's people had only flourished sword and spear, instead of handling the trowel and the hammer. Then, there was a kind of high speculative tradition, about fate and free will, the origin of evil, election, and reprobation, which good men once preached about, and which therefore good men thought they still ought to preach about. The pulpit was not the place for speculations. Let them not exalt the peculiarities of Calvinism, or any other *ism*, above the common faith of our common Lord. If souls were to be saved, it was not by any speculation, but by the solid facts of Gospel faith. There was further