

his brethren an edifying, warning, reasonable, and affectionate gospel sermon. Even the parts alleged to be exceptional, seem to come in naturally, and without the slightest effort. They are so faithful a preaching of Christ, that he has his accusers, who so vehemently objected to them, been humble, zealous ministers, and not, as they seem to have been, actuated by pride, and opposition to evangelists of truth and order, they could never have thought of testing any accusation on grounds so unfeasible. Let us quote only two additional passages from the sermon—

"I am persuaded," says Mr. Erskine, in language which might be applied to many of the successors of his opponents of the present day, "that carnal notions of the Kingdom of Christ, which is not of this world, lie at the bottom of many of the evils and corruptions of the day we live in."

And again—"Let us observe the signs of the times, and whenever we observe the danger approaching, either from open enemies or pretended friends, or our fellow-builders going wrong, let us give the cry, like faithful watchmen. And though they be offended, there is no help for that. It is a heavy charge that is laid by God against some, as above, that they were dumb dogs that could not bark, but preferred their own carnal ease, unto the safety of the Church."

Instead of affording just cause of complaint, these passages, and the others objected to, cannot but be regarded, by every impartial person, as mild, yet manly statements of truth, and warnings for God, against evils, which had not an imaginary, but a real existence; and they appear to have given offence only because they were true.

We have been the more particular in our reference to this sermon, on account of its importance in relation both to the character of its author, and to the events which it occasioned. One sermon has often produced great and glorious results. We refer not to the conversion of sinners, and the progress of believers, which a preached gospel, in solitary instances, has sometimes most signally accomplished, through God's blessing; but we refer to the rise of influential churches, in all the land to myriads of immortal souls which they have become the means of securing, as having been brought about by the bold and faithful testimony of honored individuals on some special occasions. Hence our sermon in modern times, by the Rev. Dr. Marshall, of Kirkcaldy, Scotland, gave the impulse to the voluntary controversy, which will be allowed by impartial posterity to have originated the Free Church of Scotland, as a leading minister of their own, is said to have, with spirited candour, publicly acknowledged—a denomination by which chartered Christianity, although still advocated by many of them, has been materially weakened, and which is still more to their honor, by which the royal prerogatives of Christ, and the Christian rights of the people, have been in some measure vindicated. And hence also, this one sermon of the venerated Mr. Ebenezer Erskine may be regarded as having originated the United Presbyterian Church—the principle and constitution of which we humbly believe to be entirely scriptural, and to be in the highest degree congenial to the spirit, and conducive to the ends of the Protestant Reformation.

When Mr. Erskine's sermon was delivered, it gave offence to the prevailing party, and he was forthwith called to an account. And now the ecclesiastical courts entered on a process with this distinguished minister, and his distinguished coadjutors, which has led to results the most important, and which is still telling, and destined to tell, on the interests of pure Christianity in many parts of the world.

"At the afternoon meeting (10th October,) of the Synod, Mr. Adam Ferguson, minister at Logierath, moved that some things were uttered by Mr. Erskine in his sermon in the forenoon, which had given offence." Mr. Mercer, minister at Aberdein, and Mr. Mackie, then at Forteviot, afterwards at St. Ninians, joined Mr. Ferguson, upon which there was a good deal of reasoning in the Synod, if there was any ground of offence given by any of the expressions condescended upon, as they stood in connexion with the other parts of Mr. Erskine's discourse. The debates and reasonings upon the sermon, begun at this diet of the Synod, continued both on the second and third days of the Synod's meeting, and then, by a plurality of six votes, Mr. Erskine was found censurable, on account of several expressions emitted by him in his sermon before the Synod.

The proceedings of the Synod were published afterwards, together with some remarks on their procedure, in a print entitled, "The true state of the Process." Those who reasoned most warmly for censuring, were Mr. Mercer, a hot, violent man, a plague on the Presbytery of Perth, and most active always in a bad cause; and Mr. Mackie, more smooth, and

more subtle than his brother, but his heart still as deep in a course of deception. He was afterwards transported to St. Ninians, a larger benefice, and a vast charge, and there he was settled by a committee of the communion, the greater part, by far, both of elders and people, reclaiming. He was set in the eminent station, for the good service he did to the party carrying on the present backsliding course, and that he might strengthen their hands in the Presbytery of Stirling. Also Mr. Robert Craigie, of Glendog, advocate, elder, reformed very warmly for censuring. "He is a man that follows the fashion of the present time—his principles and conduct in the pulpitations appear to be of a piece." Mr. Wilson's manuscripts partly unprinted.

If just conclusions are drawn from these notices of the character of those who were strenuous for censuring Mr. Erskine, they cannot be favorable to the party to which these persons belonged. Mr. Erskine, in his sermon, asserted that God's people, as a Church, are "the first society in the world." But the conduct of the Synod, in this cause, was like that of a company of slaves, who, instead of thanking the person who boldly and kindly maintains their right to be free, combine to insult him, and express their contentment and determination to remain in pitiable bondage.

It is well known that, from the commencement of the attack, neither Mr. Erskine nor his discourse received justice. The different propositions objected to "were jumbled together by a sub-committee, without noticing their connexion with the other parts of his discourse, and not one of them in the shape in which it was laid before the Synod, so that they could not be justly reckoned his; and though Mr. Erskine replied, yet the Synod never noticed his answers. They were determined to proceed to censure, that he and others might be deterred from the like honest, faithful freedom." (Wilson's Memoirs.)

The discussion in the Synod, it would appear, was conducted with the utmost violence, and continued for three days. The prevailing party discovered an unhallooed determination to crush, if possible, everything like faithfulness and zeal for the purity of religion, and the prosperity of the church. A paper had been prepared by a committee containing what were considered exceptionable passages in the sermon. Mr. Erskine, with difficulty, obtained a sight of it. He exposed the charges made as misrepresentations of his discourse, and the comments offered by the Committee as uncandid and frivolous. Mr. Wilson, and others who honourably stood forth in his defence, declared that the condemnation of Mr. Erskine, for any thing that he had said, was not only to do him serious injustice, but was to introduce a new and obnoxious term of ministerial communion, namely, that no minister should preach against any Act of Assembly, though convinced in his conscience that it was unscriptural in principle and subversive of the liberty and purity of the Church. Notwithstanding every effort of the faithful few to vindicate Mr. Erskine, the Synod, by a majority, as has been stated, of six votes, declared him to be deserving of censure.

As soon as this decision was passed, Mr. Alexander Moncrieff, of Abernethy, entered his dissent and protest against it, and in doing so, he was joined by Mr. Merik, the Moderator, Mr. Wilson of Perth, and ten other ministers, and two ruling elders. Mr. Erskine himself proposed and appeared to the next General Assembly, in which he was joined by Mr. James Fisher of Kinclaven, his son-in-law. Mr. Erskine, having insisted that all further procedure should, in the meantime, be suspended, now withdrew from the Court. "But," says Dr. Andrew Thomson, "undeterred by this formidable minority, and undelivered by Mr. Erskine's own appeal of the case to the revision of a higher Court, the Synod proceeded the case, and gave it as their judgment that he should be rebuked and admonished to-morrow at their bar, on account of the passages in his sermon, reported by the Committee; and, in the event of his not being present to-morrow, that he should be called up at their meeting in April next, and rebuked and admonished there in terms of the sentence. It is one of the surest marks of a corrupt Church, when ecclesiastical offences are visited with greater severity than doctrinal errors or immoral acts."

(To be continued.)

ERRATA.

- Page 91, col 2, line 15 from foot, for "grievances" read "grimacies."
 "92, ... 1, ... 14 from foot, for "this" read "their." (believed.)
 "92, ... 2, ... 3 from foot, for "were believed," read "were not."
 "92, ... 2, ... 22 from top, for "Mr. Uag," read "Mr. Hog."
 "92, ... 2, ... 31 from top, for "Mr. Uag," read "Mr. Hog."
 "93, ... 1, ... 51 from top, for "has," read "have."
 "93, ... 2, ... 46 from top, for "ameliorated," read "accelerated."