

On Wednesday morning the ride of a few miles brought me deeper into the bush, to the place of meeting. This was a log chapel closed in, as we express it, having a pulpit without any thing more than temporary seats. This is one of the proofs of the zeal of our Methodist brethren—and yet, I every where, on this journey, saw still greater proofs of that in the persons of men and women who possessed a knowledge of the Saviour through their instrumentality. One woman whom I met with, who had been a member of the Church, under the late renowned Dr. McCrie, told me that she had often said that if she met with a Minister of her own kind—she meant a Presbyterian—she would give him a *good flying* for the neglect which was shewn to Presbyterian settlers. The remark itself, however, was all the scold which I received from her, and I took it in my representative character. Indeed much of what I saw suggested reproof for the neglect shewn by ministers and congregations to the spiritual destitution of the dwellers in the wilderness. And often in my lonely ride did I ponder this text as applicable to our people, who are apt to grudge the absence of their ministers fully as much as to ourselves—"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." The people in this quarter too, were delighted to know that they would soon have a visit from our Missionary. Here, as in almost all the places where I was, there was a greater or less mixture of highlanders, and these every where expressed great satisfaction at knowing that our Missionary would be able to confer with them in their own tongue.

After this service, I immediately sought my way to the Penetanguishine road—traversing many a lofty moraine, (hill of sand or gravel, in geological language,) and many a deep dell. Barrie and Brownville, in King, were successive resting places for the night, at the latter of which I addressed a small congregation collected at an hour's warning, and in the evening of the third day I reached home in safety and peace. And with this public notice of this tour, I would say let God be praised for his goodness and mercy to myself—and let his name be glorified through the word I was enabled to declare; and let his blessing rest on the kind friends whom I met with in all my meeting places.

I have no time now, Mr. Editor, for farther remarks; indeed I fear that you will think I have been rather tedious, and made too much of a few days journeying; suffice it to say that I have gathered information which I trust will be useful to our esteemed young brother who is to be stationed in the parts just described—and that I have received lessons as to the vast importance of Missionary work, which I trust will be useful to myself and may even be made useful to my brethren in the ministry.

Your's, affectionately,

WILLIAM RINTOUL.

Streetsville, 22d April, 1845.

**DR. MCCRIE'S VINDICATION OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH, RESPECTING THE POWERS AND DUTIES OF THE CIVIL MAGISTRATE, IN THINGS PERTAINING TO RELIGION AND THE CHURCH.**

One of the most common and startling objections brought forward is that which involves a charge against the Westminster Confession of Faith, as favourable to persecution for conscience sake, and arming the civil magistrate with a power to punish good and peaceable subjects purely on the ground of their religious opinions and practices. This is a charge which affects all who have owned that Confession, or who declare a simple adherence to it: and among these there are many,

who, it will not be denied, have shewn themselves strenuous friends of the rights of conscience, and who were not likely to subscribe any formula which they had not examined and did not believe. The passage chiefly referred to is in Chap. xx. sect. 1. Let us try if it justifies the charge.

In the second section the doctrine of liberty of conscience is thus laid down: "God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in any thing contrary to his word, or beside it in matters of faith or worship. So that to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commandments, is to betray true liberty of conscience and reason also." This is an important doctrine, and necessary to be maintained against the encroachments and unwarrantable claims of every creature, and of rulers both civil and ecclesiastical. May every man then think and speak, and act as he pleases, under the plea that his conscience gives him liberty to do so, or dictates to him that he ought to do so? To guard against this pernicious abuse of the doctrine, is the object of what follows in the Confession. In section third, those are condemned, who, "upon pretence of Christian liberty, do practice any sin or cherish any lust." The design of section fourth, is to guard against the abuse of the doctrine in reference to public authority—"And because the powers which God hath ordained, and the liberty which Christ hath purchased, are not intended by God to destroy, but mutually to uphold and preserve one another; they who, upon pretence of Christian liberty, shall oppose any lawful power, or the lawful exercise of it, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, resist the ordinance of God." He who is the Lord of the conscience has also instituted the authorities in church and state; and it would be in the highest degree absurd to suppose that he has planted in the breast of every individual a power to resist, counteract, and nullify his own ordinances. When public and private claims interfere and clash, the latter must give way to the former; and when any lawful authority is proceeding lawfully within its line of duty, it must be understood as possessing a rightful power to remove out of the way every thing which necessarily obstructs its progress. The Confession proceeds, accordingly, to state: "And for their publishing of such opinions, or maintaining of such practices, as are contrary to the light of nature, or to the known principles of Christianity, whether concerning faith, worship, or conversation, or to the power of godliness; or such erroneous opinions or practices as either in their own nature, or in the manner of publishing or maintaining them, are destructive to the external peace and order which Christ hath established in the church; they may lawfully be called to account, and proceeded against by the censures of the church, and by the power of the civil magistrate." Now, this does not say that all who publish such opinions and maintain such practices as are mentioned, may be proceeded against, or punished (if the substitution of this word shall be insisted for) by the civil magistrate; nor does it say, that any good and peaceable subject shall be made liable to this process simply on the ground of religious opinions published and practices maintained by him. For, in the first place, persons of a particular character are spoken of in this paragraph, and these are very different from good and peaceable subjects. They are described in the former sentence as "they who oppose lawful power or the lawful exercise of it," and "resist the ordinance of God." The same persons are spoken of in the sentence under consideration, as appears from the copulative and relative. It is not said "Any one for publishing," &c., but "they who oppose any lawful power, &c., for their publishing," &c. In the second place, this sentence specifies some of the ways in which these persons may become chargeable with the opposition mentioned, and consequently "may be called to account;" but it does not assert that even they must or ought to be prosecuted for eve-

ry avowed opinion or practice of the kind referred to. All that it necessarily implies, is, that they may be found opposing lawful powers, or the lawful exercise of them in the things specified, and that they are not entitled to plead a general irresponsibility in matters of that kind: notwithstanding such a plea, "that they may be called to account and proceeded against." Far, be it observed, it is not the design of this paragraph to state the objects of church censure or civil prosecution: its proper and professed object is to interpose a check on the abuse of liberty of conscience as operating to the prejudice of just and lawful authority. It is not sin as *sin*, but as *scandal*, or injurious to the spiritual interests of Christians, that is the proper object of church-censure: and it is not for sins as such, but for *crimes*, that persons become liable to punishment by magistrates. The compilers of the Confession were quite aware of these distinctions, which were then common.—Some think that if the process of the magistrate had been limited to offences "contrary to the light of nature," it would have been perfectly justifiable; but the truth is, that it would have been so only on the interpretation now given. To render an action the proper object of magisterial punishment, it is not enough that it be contrary to the law of God, whether natural or revealed: it must, in one way or another, strike against the public good of society. He who "provides not for his own, especially those of his own house," sins against "the light of nature," as also does he who is "a lover of pleasures more than of God;" but there are few who will plead that magistrates are bound to proceed against and punish every idler and belly-go. On the other hand there are opinions and practices "contrary to the known principles of Christianity," or grafted upon them, which either in their own nature, or from the circumstances with which they may be clothed, may prove so injurious to the welfare of society in general, or of particular nations, or of their just proceedings, or of lawful institutions established in them, as to subject their publishers a *id* maintainers to warrantable coercion and punishment. As one point to which these may relate, I may mention the external observance and sanctification of the Lord's Day, which can be known only from "the principles of Christianity," and is connected with all the particulars specified by the Confession—"faith, worship, conversation, the power of godliness, and the external order and peace of the church." That many other instances of a similar description can be produced, will be denied by no sober-thinking person who is well acquainted with popish tenets and practices, and with those which prevailed among the English sectaries during the sitting of the Westminster Assembly: and he who does not deny this, cannot be entitled, I should think, upon any principles of fair construction, to fix the stigma of persecution on the passage in question.

In support of the objection under consideration, some have referred to chap. 23 of the Confession, in which it is stated to be the magistrate's duty to "take order that—all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed," &c. But as certain means by which he is to endeavour to effect this end are there mentioned, without one word about coercion or punishment, every person must perceive that that passage gives no occasion for such inference.—Other appeal to passages in the private writings of presbyterians at the period when the Confession was compiled. But it is evidently unjust to attempt in this way to fasten on a public deed an odious sense which its own language does not inactively and necessarily imply.

(To be continued.)

To the Editor of the Record.

MR. EDITOR,—I have just seen a letter from a zealous friend of our Church, in Nottawasaga, which mentions that the impression made on the Presbyterian people there, in behalf our principles,

will be happy to receive any such specimens. The donors should give their own names, and mention where the remains were found, and how deep in the soil.