

three which precede it, and its latitudinarianism is, if possible, even more gross and palpable. It is said that "both communions attach equal and paramount importance to the predominance of the religious, and more especially of the Scriptural, element in all the schools and seminaries which are subject to their own influence and control." Granting this, though we know that it is strongly denied by Free Churchmen, what is the practical inference deduced from this rule? Why, that, as regards the State, "it is not necessary that any fixed principle should be laid down, in the event of an union being happily effected." In short, the object can be secured only by getting rid of all "fixed principles" whatsoever. What one thing could not be managed in this world by abandoning and repudiating "fixed principles" whenever they happen to stand in the way? The process is simple and decisive, and the result beyond all question.

The last resolution is one in favour of the Sabbath, which seems the only point on which the subscribers are really at one; and yet even here, we might discover, on a close scrutiny, some material discrepancies. It is notorious that, amongst the Voluntaries, the opening of Crystal Palaces, Museums, and Picture Galleries on the Sabbath, is a favourite scheme. What we would ask of these gentlemen is, do they contemplate on their union to make this an open question likewise? If they do not, we predict that they will not stick together for a twelve-month.

On the whole, we have seldom perused any document so replete with mis-statements, fallacies, and perversions of common morality. It is calculated to undermine the whole superstructure of distinct and demonstrative religious principle, and substitute a platform of negations and nonentities. No doubt, it is possible that a body may be brought together without some cohering medium—so may a rope of sand—but what would be the worth or the use of it for any practical or efficient ends? The Free Church may become an avowedly Voluntary institution, but it set out with a far different profession and vocation. The terms of the proposed union with the United Presbyterians are in the last degree degrading and insulting to such a body. It may be said, indeed, that they will elevate the United Presbyterians to their level; but all experience proves that the tendency of such connections is downwards—both parties are doomed to sink to the level of the lowest. At this result, happen when it may, we shall not be greatly surprised, for we have ever held it to be the natural and legitimate issue of the Free Secession movement. We do not believe, however, that the numerous excellent and high-principled men and women who still adhere to the Free Church will allow themselves to be dragged along with this Voluntary movement; and in the process of separation, we may not unreasonably expect that the wheat will be winnowed from the chaff,

and thus, after all, the "residuaries" may get their own back again

(From the Scot-man)

The projected union between the Free and United Presbyterian Churches, already influentially announced in our columns, is fitted to excite chiefly surprise among those whose memories are retentive of the not distant past; and even among those who may look only at the present and altered circumstances, the announcement may perhaps create as much of fear, or at least of misgiving, as of hope. Union, and especially among Christians, is ordinarily and in its nature a thing to be desired; and though, except on such an occasion as this, one is scarcely permitted to say it, the differences which keep some bodies of Christians separate from, and at war with each other are ludicrously or deplorable insignificant. Nevertheless, union may be accomplished on terms neither honourable nor likely to be beneficial to the contracting parties, and also injurious or dangerous to that larger portion of the community having no share in the transaction. Union is not always peace. Union is not always even strength—and though it were it is quite possible, in a case like this, that the strength may have such an origin and such purposes as not to be desirable for the public weal. It is as much in the way of inquiry as of judgment, and with the utmost respect for the opinions and motives of most of those who have signed the proposal, that we would throw out one or two considerations bearing on the questions whether a union, under such terms and circumstances, is one which the parties can make with due respect to principle and with reasonable hope of profit; and, chiefly, as being more in our province, whether it may not be such as to threaten a new danger to the public in such matters as intellectual progress and Christian liberty. It is impossible to forget—and therefore only do we speak of it—that men composing the two parties now contemplating union, were, a very few years ago, the most determined and bitter opponents of each other on almost every ecclesiastical question that arose. The battle never was so fierce between the Dissenters and the men now composing the Established Church, as between the Dissenters and the men now composing the Free Church. For instance—and it is a fair instance—the divine now occupying the highest permanent position in the Free Church deliberately denounced the whole of the other body now contemplating union as "perjured and apostate;" and similar compliments, though in more humanized phrase, were discharged in retaliation. Of course, if either party now profess to have changed its principles—if the one party had abandoned those opinions which led it to charge the other with perjury and apostacy, or that the other had abandoned those opinions which brought such accusations upon its head—there would be nothing to be said, except in praise of such a noble forgiveness of injury. But neither side professes to have resigned its opinions—the proposal

is simply that the opinions which they made the topic of such fierce conflict and denunciation are not of importance enough to prevent their incorporate union—that things that were called "perjury and apostacy," and other such names, are not things which should stand in the way of the same men still with the same opinions becoming fraternal and identical. Even on this we say no more than that we are glad of the result—especially as another proof that these clerical comminations so common in our time, and of which even our humble selves have had a large share serve I out "hot and hot," have really no meaning, force, or effect whatever. Perjurer or apostate, Papist or Infidel—all such phrases from ecclesiastical lips do not mean the thing they signify, but are mere aids to rhetoric, much like *tol-de-toil* in a drinking chorus. We always felt so and said so—and it is not for us to raise objections to this new and signal proof of the hollowness of that sort of thunder.

The real objections or doubts affecting this proposed union are not that the parties, professing the same opinions as before, now seek to make nothing of what they before made everything, but, 1st, That on some points they profess in words a concord which does not exist in fact: 2nd, That on some other points one of the parties seems preparing to abandon doctrines of which it once assumed the foremost advocacy, and, so far as in it lies, to damage interests and principles greater than any that are peculiarly its own.

One of the points on which the unionists assume a concord which does not exist, is in saying "that both Churches maintain the great principle of spiritual independence." Undoubtedly this can be said in a certain sense of each Church—but it is mere delusion to say it in the same sense of both Churches. What the one Church calls "spiritual independence" the other calls "ecclesiastical usurpation"—and the "spiritual independence" of this second Church the first used to call "practical atheism." The proof is in the simple fact that in fighting and falling for what it thinks "spiritual independence," the Free Church had no more strenuous opponent than the Church with which it is now interchanging mutual assertions of perfect concord on that very subject. Another impermissible assumption is that which deals with the voluntary principle as having lost all importance by the change which the Free Church has undergone, not in opinion, but in position. This assumption comprises a twofold error. Surely it was not the possession of the principle which was formerly in conflict—it was not because the one party had and the other had not a certain number of pounds a year from a certain source, that all those high arguments and hot denunciations were called forth, but because the one party held a certain principle to be enjoined by religion which the other held to be forbidden. That principle exists yet, and so do the opposing opinions regarding it, though certain men have not at present the power of practicing their opinion in their own cases. But