

in the evening, of which public intimation was given, and this session was closed with prayer.

ALEX. MCWILLIAM, *Synod Clerk.*

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General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

[Concluded.]

WEDNESDAY.

The Assembly resumed this morning—
Dr. Cook, Moderator.

OVERTURES ANENT DOCTRINE AND THE STANDARDS OF THE CHURCH.

With reference to the doctrine and standards of the Church, there were also before the Assembly overtures from the Synod of Merse and Teviotdale, the Synod of Perth and Sterling, the Presbytery of Linlithgow, Presbytery of Caithness, Presbytery of Wigton, and Presbytery of Cairnstown. Of these overtures,

The CLERK of Assembly read the following from the Synod of Merse and Teviotdale:—

"Whereas it is essential to the peace and unity of the Church of Christ established by law in this land, that the relation of the Church to the Westminster Confession of Faith as her doctrinal standard shall be loyally and consistently maintained; and whereas the doctrine and government of the Church, as set forth in the aforesaid Confession of Faith, have been discredited by the expressed opinions of persons of influence in the Church, it is humbly overtured by the Synod of Merse and Teviotdale to the Venerable the General Assembly, indicted to meet at Edinburgh on the 24th of May, 1866, that all Church judicatories be directed and enjoined to see that all persons who shall have signed the aforesaid Confession of Faith shall not, directly or indirectly, depart therefrom, but shall loyally and consistently adhere thereto."

After a pause,

Mr. PHIN, Galashiels, rose and said—I did not wish to bring this matter before the Assembly. I knew there were other Synods that had brought up some overtures, and as I have had occasion once or twice within the last few hours to address the Assembly, I was not anxious to speak again this forenoon; but I should have felt I was failing in a duty to the Synod of which I am a member if I allowed an overture from it to be thrown over the table, or lie on the table, and the Assembly to proceed to the next business, without coming forward and stating the grounds on which that overture was transmitted by the Synod, I voting in the majority of 24 to 8, by which it was counted. Now, I take leave to state that the assertion in the commencement of the overture is one which it seems to me cannot properly be doubted in this

venerable Assembly—"Whereas it is essential to the peace and unity of the Church of Christ, established by law in this land, that the relation of the Church to the Westminster Confession of Faith as the doctrinal standard shall be loyally and consistently maintained." I hope there is no difference of opinion on the point. I hope we are all determined, whatever may be our difference on matters of comparatively small importance—I hope we are all determined that the Westminster Confession of Faith, in all its integrity, shall be maintained as the doctrinal standard of this Church. I have occasionally seen statements that what is desirable is that we should be left at liberty, as it is called, to interpret our creed according as we may think proper to interpret it. By all means let us have a creed, it is said, but then leave us to interpret that creed. I say, better have no creed than have a creed which every man is at liberty to interpret for himself. And I say further, and the experience of the past few weeks has proved it, that suppose you have no creed you will be involved in inextricable difficulties. I am grieved to be obliged to state that I have seen publications that were fitted to bring into discredit the doctrine and government of the Church as set forth in the aforesaid Confession of Faith. No man doubts that this is the effect of such publications.

DR. LEE—Name them.

Mr. PHIN—I believe the House will not insist upon my naming any one. I have merely to propose—"That the General Assembly, having received the overture, direct to enjoin all the judicatories of this Church to see that all persons who shall have signed the aforesaid Confession of Faith shall not directly or indirectly depart therefrom, but shall legally and constantly adhere thereto." I think that motion will meet the present emergency, and will not involve any painful collision with individuals. Moderator, I cannot conclude what I have to say on this subject without making one other remark. I have spoken, I can assure you, without the slightest idea beforehand that I was to address the House. But I cannot sit down without referring in a word to the petition which was placed on your table a little ago as having been transmitted through the committee on bills. It was got up very hurriedly by my hon. friend Major Baillie. Only a few days before the meeting of the Assembly, my hon. friend said to me that he intended to get up such a movement. Now, Moderator, mark the result. Within a very few days that petition was signed by 600 names which had been sent in to my hon. friend, and among them you will find the Duchess of Sutherland, who has the patronage of fourteen parishes; the Duke of Sutherland, who has also the patronage of a number of parishes; the Earl of Selkirk, Lord Polworth, Lord Seafield, and G. Grant Suttie, Esq., ruling elders; and many others whose names