

### Contributors and Correspondents

#### IS THE ORGAN A CIRCUMSTANTIAL?

On the evening of the 7th, the closing lecture of Knox College was delivered by Professor McLaren, his subject being "The Truth of Teachings of the Second Commandment as bearing on some of the questions of the day." And I need hardly say that the Professor ably maintained his reputation for depth of thought, logical power, and clearness of expression, whilst treating the opinions of others with fairness and liberality.

He very clearly deduced the Romanizing tendencies of the day, from the breach of this second commandment, and nobly upheld the principle laid down by our reforming forefathers, "That what is not warranted by express or implied authority of Scripture is necessarily forbidden." With this grand principle, he at once swept away the onerous rites and ceremonies with which the Church of God is sought to be suffocated. But, while thus pointing out so plainly the bitter root of Ritualism and Popish corruption, I regret that he has therein lent the influence of his high name to a branch of ritualism springing up amongst ourselves, taking the ground he has so distinctly brought out "that what is not authorized is forbidden." I am the more surprised that his logical mind has not seen the fallacies of his own reasoning, the more especially as he well characterizes the arguments usually brought forward in the discussion of the question of Instrumental Music in Public Worship, as untenable. The arguments adduced by some from the Old Testament, he wisely at once gives up, and tacitly admits that no enacted law exists in the New Testament. This materially narrows the question at issue, he thus resting his argument upon the basis of expediency alone, and seeking to justify the use of the organ in public worship upon the ground of its being one of those circumstantialia connected with the worship of God which are indifferent in themselves, and are to be regulated by the light of nature and Christian prudence. This then is the ground taken by the worthy Professor, and it is an intelligible and manly statement of his views, and one am inclined to think more prevalent in the Church, especially among the clergy than that of any other.

Now, Mr. Editor, let us look at this question of circumstantialia. What are those things which the light of nature and Christian prudence are entitled to deal with in the Church? This is an important point to have settled, for, under this guise, many dangerous innovations may be, and have been, made upon the doctrine and worship of the Church. A plea is put in that such and such an alteration in the matter of worship would be a great improvement, and there being nothing to forbid it in the Word of God, it becomes a matter left to the discretion of the church. Windows so darkened by representations of the great events of gospel history, as to shut out the light of both day and truth, are thought to give a highly solemn air to the place of worship, and to incline the mind of the worshippers to devotion; it is reckoned, therefore, an aid to devotion, and termed a circumstantial.

A representation of the cross, perhaps of the Saviour, hanging thereon, is placed in a prominent place, that thus the mind and heart may be brought through the senses, to realize more deeply the great event consummated on Calvary, and so the use of this Nohushtan is called an aid to devotion, and one of those things which Christian prudence may employ in the service of God. In like manner the modern organists plead for their idol, that it materially aids their devotion, that they feel a more religious frame of mind when occupied in the service of praise with the accompaniment of the swelling solemn sound of the organ; that they can enter with more feeling (I mean it is with many, more feeling) upon that service when their ears are gratified by the cadences and pleasing sounds of instrumental music; and so being a circumstantial left to the light of nature and Christian prudence, it is deemed expedient to introduce it into the worship of him who is a spirit, and requires to be worshipped in spirit and in truth.

There thus appearing to be great danger in mistaking the true meaning of the saying, and so frequently referred to, it becomes a vital question as to what are the circumstances in which the light of nature, and Christian prudence are permitted to regulate our conduct in God's worship. I believe it is very easily settled; we have, I think, a safe rule by which to decide this point,—the circumstances in which common sense, the light of nature and Christian prudence, are to be brought into operation, where such acts and things are necessary to the due performance of public worship; not where they may be considered an improvement or aid merely, but where they are absolutely necessary to the thing itself. It is necessary for example that when the people assemble themselves together for the worship of God, they should have a common

meeting place, that if possible churches should be built, capable of comfortably seating the assembled worshippers, and that such buildings be comfortably heated and ventilated. It is equally necessary that the stated hours of worship be made known to the people, that they be summoned either by advertisement, circular, sound of trumpet or bell, to go up to the house of the Lord, and when assembled, it is equally necessary that the worship of God be conducted decently and in order; thus in the service of praise, it is evident some member of the church must lead the voices of the congregation, otherwise there might be fifty different tunes employed at the same time, hence the necessity of appointing one of the congregation to act as leader or precursor, so in the public prayers, though all are called upon mentally to follow and engage in this exercise, the minister alone gives audible expression to the petitions of the people, thus avoiding the unbecoming spoken of by the apostle Paul. In the administration of the ordinance of baptism, the Professor says it is a matter of indifference what quantity of water is used. I agree with him, but consider he is unfortunate in adducing this as a circumstantial; we have direct authority for its being administered by the application of water, but the quantity is not regulated by any ecclesiastical authority that I am aware of (of course I speak of our Presbyterian Church), and therefore is not a circumstantial at all. Were the Popish additions of oil, the sign of the cross, or any other addition made to the simple rite, those indeed might be called circumstantial, and the same may be said of the Lord's supper; the quantity of bread or wine used is not a matter of regulation or made a circumstantial; each communicant acts for himself in this particular. The only circumstantial I know of, connected with its dispensation, are those attached to the conducting the service with due solemnity and decorum. These the light of nature and Christian prudence teach, such as cards of admission to the table, the service of the elders in conveying the elements to the several communicants, and such an arrangement of the tables as will give the ordinance somewhat of the social character, of which it is fraught. I think it will be thus seen that the circumstances in which the light of nature and Christian prudence are to govern, are strictly confined to those which are necessary to the due performance of public worship, and which common sense would dictate.

Now apply this rule to the organ, and what position will it occupy? No sane man will say it is necessary for the solemn service of praise. The Professor himself admits that the simple power of the human voice has impressed him more than the majestic swell of the organ, and the fact that the early church confined themselves to that mode of celebrating God's praise, prove that it is not necessary, and not being necessary, not a circumstantial, and therefore not one of those things to be regulated by the light of nature and Christian prudence.

The Professor claims that the organ is no addition to the singing of God's praise. How he makes that out, I fail to see. Does he mean to assert that the box of pipes praises God, and if it does not, it is clearly something extra to the service of praise. That service can be conducted without the use of an instrument, therefore any accompaniment must be an addition; that act of worship is complete without an organ, therefore an organ is an addition.

He quotes several of the psalms to show that David praised the Lord with psaltery, harp, and timbrel. In order that modern Christians might follow his example, it would be necessary for each worshipper to carry with him to church his or her musical instrument (as he or she does his or her psalm book), as the drawing forth of the music must be an individual act of the worshipper, his fingers being employed as well as his voice, in the praise of God. But unfortunately any argument drawn from this source proves too much. Musical instruments are not the only things spoken of. What about the dance? Would the worthy Professor like us to turn shakers? Would he like to see that mode of praising God adopted in the Presbyterian Church?

But I have already occupied too much of your space, Mr. Editor; I therefore conclude with an extract from the lecturer, and which I heartily endorse:—  
"There is no principle more fundamental to our Presbyterianism, and none on which from Knox to Cunningham greater stress has been laid, than the assertion that nothing in doctrine, worship, discipline, or government, is to be brought into the church for which the scriptures do not furnish a warrant. If the use of instrumental music can only be defended by surrendering this bulwark, then we think we are asked to pay too high a price for the entertainment."

**B.**  
Rev. Wm. Knight, Dundee, has declined a proposal to accept of a transfer to one of the most important Presbyterian charges in Melbourne, Australia.

Nearly a thousand conversions have already been the immediate and more remote result of a revival of religion at St. Johnsbury, Vt., under the united efforts of the evangelical churches of the place.

The Glasgow News understands that the Rev. Professor Eadie, of Lanark, Glasgow United Presbyterian Church, has been invited to take up his residence in London, but will not leave Glasgow on any account.

The Rev. Andrew B. Watson, M.A., assistant to the Rev. Dr. Smith, of North-Loth Parish Church, has been appointed to the charge of the Scotch Church, at Meerut, India. The salary is £800 per annum, and the vacancy was caused by the incumbent accepting the chaplaincy.

#### OUR FORMOSA MISSION.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

SIR,—Your readers, scattered up and down through all parts of Canada, will be glad to know of our safe arrival in this our far off field of labor. God who is so rich in mercy, and so full of loving kindness, kept us all the way. Our journey was not without its hardships and sufferings, but we sorely think of them now, our hearts are so full of gratitude. We cease not to render thanksgivings to Him who has been the breaker up of our way, and who has made plain paths for our feet, and our desire is that all those who have been instant in prayer for us should join us in our mention of God's goodness to us ever since we left home.

Our voyage from Hong Kong to here, though made by instalments, was very disagreeable. The Formosa Channel is celebrated for its roughness. Mariners compare it with the English Channel, so famed for making people sea sick. But let us forget the sea sickness, and think of the pleasant days spent with brother missionaries by the way. The English Presbyterian Church has most flourishing missions in this part of China. At Swatow, a few hours sail in smooth weather—from Hong Kong, we went ashore and were prevailed on to stay for a week. Our visit was greatly profitable to us. Our bodies were rested and our souls refreshed. We enjoyed the kind hospitality of Mr. Duffers, and we could not have been made more welcome, or treated more kindly, if we had been children returning to our fathers' house after many years' absence. I saw something of the Medical Mission work of Dr. Gauld there, and was rejoiced to find that a Medical Missionary had such an open door of access to the people's hearts. I also got from him a great deal of useful information as to the details of such work as lies before me—information which I otherwise should have had to acquire by—that so often slow and expensive process—experience. Of Mr. Mackenzie I saw less than of the others, but I saw enough to cause me to remember him, as I do the others, as a brother beloved in the Lord and in the work. We shall not forget the week we spent in Swatow.

Another night of rolling and pitching in the Channel brought us to Amoy—further up the coast. There we were guests of Mr. and Mrs. McGregor. They with Mr. and Mrs. Gordon and Dr. Douglas are the only English Presbyterian Missionaries now in Amoy, save Mr. Barclay, who is staying with them for a few months before going to his destination on this island. Nor must I omit to make mention of Mr. Gibson, at Swatow, who had just arrived a few weeks before us as a reinforcement to the staff there. He comes from Scotland, and was able to delight us with accounts of the great work going on there at present. But we mustn't stay either at Amoy or Swatow, though the brethren are so hospitable and their houses comfortable. We take passage on the steamer Hai-Loong, and again brave the fury of the Channel. We leave Amoy the evening of Monday, and reach Takao in the centre of Formosa, next day at noon. Mr. Ritchie, also of the English Presbyterian Mission, with whom we expected to live for the first few months, met us on board, and very kindly took us away to his house, but owing to our change of plan consequent on our hearing that a house was all ready for us in Tamsui, we stayed but a few hours with him, instead of a few months. We were glad, however, even to meet him for a little while, and to see him with what God had done by him in the South of the Island. He is an able, his wife and one child having returned to Scotland some months ago. He urged upon us to tarry for a little while, but we thought best to hasten on. Our own Missionary was all alone to. After we left Takao we were driven by stress of weather over to the coast of China again, when after creeping up under its shelter till sufficiently far North, we crossed the Channel for the third time, and reached Tamsui on the evening of Friday the 29th of January.

The next morning Mr. McKay came on board, and gave us this warmest welcome. I don't think, however, that no was any more glad to see us than we to see him. Immediately, we left the steamer, bag and baggage, in small boats called *sau pans*, and were as busy as we could be the rest of that day getting our things out of boxes and trunks, and preparing that we might rest on the morrow, according to commandment. Our welcome by our Missionary's helpers, converts, and worshippers was as hearty as anything could well be. The news of our arrival soon spread, and they came from the different stations in numbers to say how glad they were to see us in their midst. Many, also, who had no connection at all with our work called,

partly out of politeness perhaps, but more likely out of curiosity. Till now, not a day has passed without callers. This state of things will not last long, however, the curiosity will soon wear off, but the people will be well disposed towards us and our work by our receiving them politely and treating them kindly. Anything to help on the work!

The days have passed quickly and pleasantly since our arrival. We have been busy as you will easily be able to understand. The first Sabbath I preached here in English to a few "foreigners," as all who are not Chinese are called. The next Sabbath I went with Mr. McKay to our nearest station, where we had Divine Service forenoon and afternoon. We had about fifty worshippers—which was under the average. Last Sabbath we were at two stations farther away, at one of which there were more than a hundred hearers. I have been very much gratified to find the chapels so roomy and airy and clean in comparison with the houses of the people, to find the worshippers, and even the heathen who come to hear, so orderly and attentive, and to see with what freedom and eloquence my brother is able to preach to them the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Of course, I am not able to understand yet, but it is easy to see that the people do.

On week days we have been variously employed. Chinese worship every morning and evening. Through the day I study or see patients at the hospital, or help Mr. McKay teach the helpers to sing, or talk over the work, past and future, with him, comparing views and making plans. Speaking of our work reminds me to express the fervent hope that no one in Canada will conclude that there are enough missionaries in Northern Formosa now. Stations where there are already chapels must be regularly visited, converts must be instructed, the heathen must have the Gospel preached to them, the native helpers must be trained, the hospital work must be carried on. To do what is to be done we must have a strong force. There are thousands upon thousands of people within reach, and only two missionaries. Mr. McKay and I will look for at least two more to join us next fall. We will pray for them. May the Lord of the Vineyard hear our prayers!

I will write again before long. Pray for us, that God may keep and guide and bless us, and make the work of our hands to prosper. Hitherto hath the Lord helped us. We are here, and we are well.

Yours very sincerely, J. B. FRASER.  
Tamsui, Feb. 15th, 1875.

#### THE REVIVAL IN BRITAIN.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

SIR,—By the kindness of Dr. Bonar, I am in possession of a copy of his pamphlet, "The Old Gospel, not 'Another Gospel,' but the Power of God unto Salvation. A reply to Dr. Kennedy's pamphlet, 'Hyper-angelism,'" which has been recently referred to in your column, and of which notice was invited in your last issue. In absence of an able pen, I gladly do what I can to present a sketch of Dr. Bonar's defence to your readers.

I say gladly, yet sorrowfully, as in addition to the regret one must feel in dealing with controversy among brethren over matters in which harmony is so much to be desired, it necessarily involves some grave reflections upon the courtesy, candour and charity of one I had learned to love and whose acquaintance I shall still deem it a privilege to have made in his own Highland home. Yet these reflections, while clear and pointed, are ever expressed with a calmness and moderation markedly in contrast with the trenchant style you, sir, so much admired in the other. One cannot but wonder how a man of Dr. Kennedy's spirituality could allow himself such cutting language, such sweeping and reckless assertions. Surely it must arise from the warmth of Celtic blood when crossing swords or pens with a Sassenach opponent. We must wish that, if he thought noisive treatment necessary, he had brought forth the lance instead of the claymore, and used it, however firmly, yet tenderly, upon what he considered diseased and dangerous.

The issues between them lie mainly in two lines: (1) as to conclusions and results, which are matters of opinion, and (2) as to facts upon which these opinions are based.

With the latter alone will time and space allow of our dealing at present. Dr. Bonar presents a strong a priori argument as to his being better acquainted with what really took place in Mr. Moody's meetings than one who, like Dr. Kennedy, had not seen one hundredth part of what was being done, who had not come into close contact with the movement itself, nor had fellowship with its originators, or many of its minor agents, nor conversed personally with the awakened by hundreds. He had viewed it chiefly from a distance, and from the outside—though not as a mere "onlooker apart," as every one must own who reads his published accusations of his brethren, of things concerning which kindness, and wisdom, and Christian teaching

should alike have led him first to seek private conference. "Almost all in the pamphlet is at second-hand anonymous hearsay, unsupported by anything but Dr. Kennedy's declaration of belief in their truth, which no doubt is sincere, but soon appears in the light of an investigation to be utterly unobtainable." "The facts," Dr. Bonar says, "are not certified by any one; so we might set them aside. Some of them we can recognize, sadly coloured, or rather discoloured. Some of them we know to be unfounded." Of course we can not go over all in detail, but must not omit those to which you have called special attention, especially as they are among the most striking in Dr. Kennedy's pamphlet. You have asked, "Can it be that Mr. Moody used such expressions as these: 'Why raise up your sins again, to think of and confess them; for were they not disposed of nearly two thousand years ago?' Just believe this, and go home and sing and dance." Dr. Bonar, of course, does not deny that there were imperfections of word and deed in the course of the work. When men were the instruments it could not be otherwise. "I may safely say this, however, that I believe there never has been a spiritual movement in our land where so many precautions were taken against everything improper, unsound, and hollow, and where so many tried servants of God of every sound Protestant name, have been gathered together to carry it on in such ways as might most hinder the growth of evil, and best contribute to the promotion of good, both in doctrine and in life."

As to the above quotation, "something like this was one day said in the Assembly Hall, but it was not by the 'leading teacher,' or by any of those connected with the work. Whoever said it spoke inadvisedly with his lips \* \* \* I am glad to be able to give the testimony of my much esteemed friend, Mr. Fairbairn, of New Haven, 'I heard them spoken in the meeting last winter by one whose name I know not. But this I am ready to declare, that these words, or anything like them, were never spoken in my hearing by Mr. Moody. I heard him often, and I never heard him utter a word that was inconsistent with Scripture truth. I bear willing testimony to the blessed effects among my own people by Moody's teaching and Sankey's singing; and I know of at least one sorrowful soul who never either heard the one or the other, but was mightily helped by even imperfect reports in her passage through the dark valley and across the river. . . . This note is an expression of my high estimate of Moody and Sankey, of little value in itself, except as coming from one who in all this movement has been very jealous on the side of orthodoxy.' Besides the above testimony, a letter from Mr. Moody himself is now before me, denying that he ever uttered the words, 'Go home, sing and dance,' and affirming that when he did speak of its not being needful to bring sin continually back, he was speaking to Christians, and warning them against bringing up sin continually, as if it had not been forgiven." As to the sweeping and reckless assertion, that that was only a specimen of what characterized the whole movement, Dr. Bonar says: "Any one who has heard the full, large, solemn confessions of sin at our meetings, will be satisfied with the injustice of the accusation." "The words were often times of the most searching kind, going down deep into the conscience of the sinner, and sweeping away every refuge of lies. There was no trifling with sin, no under-valuing of holiness, no ignoring of the law, no uncertain sound of the trumpet, either as to the present condemnation of the unconverted, or as to the wrath to come which they were treasuring up for themselves, and that word 'repent'—how have I heard it ring through the Assembly Hall in the ears of thousands!"

Another fact is that disposed of.—"Go to the street," said the great American Evangelist, to a group of young ladies who were seated before him, and lay your hand on the shoulder of every drunkard you meet, and tell him that God loves him, and that Christ died for him; and if you do so, I see no reason why there should be an unconverted drunkard in Edinburgh for forty-eight hours." (Dr. K. pp. 13, 14). Dr. Bonar replies: "Suppose I question the accuracy of this statement, will Dr. Kennedy name his authority? No one of us who were in the habit of daily hearing Mr. Moody, ever heard such a statement from him. But in addition to this, Mr. Moody himself writes that 'It is a false statement; I do not think it would be a proper thing for a young lady to do. I never advised it. I spoke of drunkards being treated with kindness, and being told of God's love, but not by young ladies going to them and laying their hands upon their shoulder.' Mr. Moody spoke of Christians in general going out among these drunkards, and said that if such Christian men and women were to do their duty thus, all would be thus reached and brought under Christian influence within forty-eight hours. He did not say converted." Surely Dr. Kennedy and his informants are not reliable witnesses even as to the bare facts. As to matters of opinion we may return again. W.M.R.