

## REPORT OF SYNOD'S COMMITTEE ON STATE OF RELIGION.

Your Committee have to report that, in prosecution of the solemn and important trust received from you in their appointment to be a Committee on the State of Religion, they met, on the call of the Convener, in Galt, upon the 9th February last, when there were six members present, and agreed upon a series of questions, which they thought fitted to elicit the information which the Synod, and the Church, through you, required. Owing to circumstances to which it is unnecessary here to do more than to advert, it was concluded that there would not be time to communicate, through Presbyteries, with Sessions and Congregations, and obtain replies, although your Committee believe that this would have been the orderly course of procedure; while it would have saved them a large amount of labour. Printed circulars were prepared, one of which was addressed to each Minister (241 in all) whose name stands upon the Roll of Synod for 1863, and to every vacancy in which the Convener knew the Post Office address of any office-bearer or member. To these, returns from 73 congregations have been received, or fewer than one-third. While we may learn from these the state of religion in the congregations to which they refer, it must be quite manifest that we have no correct knowledge of it throughout the Church. It is, therefore, with anything but a spirit of alacrity that they apply themselves to give a summary of the contents of the replies with which they have been furnished. A report from the Committee on the State of Religion, to be of any value, should embrace the great majority of the congregations which the Church comprises. Out of respect, however, to your Court, and to the parties who have had such a sense of courtesy as to supply us with the information sought, and in the hope that in future years there will not be the same ground of complaint we have now stated, your Committee will proceed to give a brief view of the religious condition of the congregations that have reported.

To the first question, "Do you see any fruit as the result of your labours in the Congregation, Prayer meeting, Bible class, or Sabbath school, and in what form do they manifest themselves?" almost all the answers are in the affirmative, and to the effect, that although nothing striking or special has occurred during the past year, yet fruits are visible in the increased attendance upon public ordinances, in the increased attention and seriousness of those who take part in them, and in the increased number that meet in the Bible class and Sabbath school—those nurseries of the Church, or schools of divinity, in which so many of the doctrines of the gospel are communicated and may be acquired. One writer says, "Not in any extremely marked manner, except by improved attendance upon the means of grace, greater outward seriousness, more intelligent acquaintance with divine truth, a higher tone of morality, occasional striking cases of conversion, a gradual increase of communicants, and warmer interest in divine things." Another says "It would not be right to say that we see no fruit as the result of the preaching and teaching of the word of God. Some, who were neglecting God and living in sin, have, so far as human judgment can discern, returned to him. Prayer meetings and the services of the sanctuary on the Lord's day are numerous attended, and with apparent seriousness; but, after all we can say with regard to promising appearances, decided fruit is rare indeed." A third replies, "Some; though less than we could desire. The profession of Christ's name by a considerable number, a spirit of earnest inquiry on the part of a few, manifesting itself in a desire for conversation with the pastor on the way of salvation, and a very general waiting upon God for the blessing not only in the Sabbath meetings but in those of the week day as well." A fourth says, "Progress can be reported in attendance, increase of membership, and the general morality of the neighbourhood; in the number of prayer meetings, and attendance upon them; in some cases of conscience not only among the young, but of persons pretty well advanced in years." Another answers, "Yes; the forms in which these fruits appear, are, increase of membership and general atten-