

with respect to particulars as to which there are serious differences of opinion." This was probably a still more important point than the last. They were not Independents, but Presbyterians, and they were prepared to adhere, he believed, generally speaking, to the Presbyterian form of worship. They were bound to keep guard over their congregations; and if there was one principle of an ecclesiastical kind more cherished by the Church of Scotland than another, it was that the Presbyteries and superior Courts were to watch over their members, and guide them with respect to ecclesiastical things.

Professor Crawford, in seconding the motion, said he was anxious to guard himself against being thought to attach any excessive importance to those practices which, under the name of innovations, the overture appeared to him to be directed. But was the circumstance of these practices being in themselves considered matters of indifference any sufficient reason why the ministers of the Church should at their own discretion innovate upon their old-established usages by adopting them? He could not think so; he entirely concurred with the statements of Dr. Pirie, that in every regularly constituted Church, most of all in an Established Church, there should, even in regard to subordinate matters, be a general and substantial uniformity of observance, and it seemed to him at once unseemly and inconvenient, to say the very least of it, that the several congregations belonging to the same National Church, still more that the several members belonging to the same congregation should very widely and perceptibly differ from one another, in the order, form, and method of their religious worship. Such a state of things appeared to him to be inconsistent with the rule, "Let all things be done decently and in order." He was well aware of the grounds of expediency on which these innovations had been advocated. They had been told that the adoption of them might tend to prevent secession from the National Church on the part of some who had a predilection for the imposing ritual of the sister establishment. He very much feared that the effect of adopting them would be the very reverse of that which was thus anticipated by their advocates. He had heard the suggestion made that whenever the members of a congregation were either quite unanimous, or well nigh unanimous, in desiring to adopt those changes, in that case the minister and kirk-session might be allowed to introduce them; while in all other cases they ought to be strictly and sternly put down. Now, whatever plausibility there might be in that proposal, when examined it was liable to several very grave and serious objections. For example, the very attempt on the part of a minister to secure the consent of his congregation to these changes might have a tendency to introduce discord and dissension among them. On these grounds, as well as on some

other grounds stated by Dr. Pirie, he was strongly of opinion that it was highly inexpedient and injudicious in any minister of the Church to disturb in the way he had referred to the old habits and associations of the people. He thought the matter was, in many respects, one to be sent to a committee in terms of Dr. Pirie's motion.

Dr. Bisset began by some remarks on the history of the overture, narrating the circumstances under which it was passed by the Synod of Aberdeen. He said, the Rev. Doctor who introduced the discussion spoke of those things as small changes and of trivial importance, and the Rev. Doctor and this venerable Assembly must recollect that there was such a thing as the Reformation some 300 years ago, and that the cardinal principle on which it rested was the liberty of private judgment. These things might appear to these most respectable and excellent persons to be trivial, but there were many who did not think with them. He did not think that anything connected with the worship of God was a thing of small importance. If they had a good way, and a better way, and if there were also a best way, they must not take even the good or the better, but the best; and though the thing might appear trivial, and of small importance to some rev. gentlemen, he believed there was a rising and deepening feeling in the land that these things were of importance; and he should next illustrate that statement by giving a special example how some of these changes have been introduced into a congregation. This statement he had from one whose name must ever be mentioned with honor in the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, by one who had a world-wide reputation. He told him that on one occasion he was expounding to his congregation the 95th Psalm—"O come let us sing unto the Lord, let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation," &c. He told them that it was the clear duty of all to consecrate every faculty of soul and body to the worship and service of God, and not only so, but to use these faculties in such a way as best to attain the end in view. To the appointment of a committee in some respects he had no objection. It might be that some cases required the interference of the Assembly. Not to detain the House further, but deeply feeling that there was an upward surge rising out of the very depths of the human soul in regard to these changes, and that these ought to be encouraged instead of repressed, he begged to move, "That the General Assembly find that no case of innovation has arisen calling for its interference, and remit to Presbyteries to take order that no changes in public worship are introduced inconsistent with the laws of the Church or subversive of the harmony of congregations."

THE PROCURATOR said he had listened with the greatest attention to the discussion