

But in this, we doubt not you will see, there is a most grievous mistake. The recording of a dissent and protest against the errors and defections of a Church in matters of secondary importance, may, and we believe does, warrant Ministers and Elders to conclude that they have thereby freed themselves from responsibility for these, and that they may lawfully continue to hold office within her pale. But the application of the rule it is obvious has a limit; else might Christians continue members of any Church, where only dissent and protest was allowed, however great her sins—and that limit plainly is, that it applies only to matters not vital and fundamental in their nature. In a matter so deeply affecting the honour of the Redeemer's Crown, and so inseparably identified with the purity and efficiency of the Church, as that to which the decision of the Synod referred—in the case of a Church giving her sanction and support to another Church guilty of practically repudiating the doctrine of the sole Headship of the Redeemer—no dissent or protest we hold can free the office-bearers of a Church from guilty responsibility for her sins, or can warrant them any longer to remain in her communion. When a Church is thus flagrantly witnessing against Christ, we hold that she has reached that point, at which those who would be faithful witnesses for Christ are called to witness against her—that it ceases to be schism to come out from the midst of her—and that if the sin of schism is nevertheless the result, its guilt is not on those who go out but on those who remain.

Plainly, you will see, there was no alternative, and we only did what it was our imperative duty to do, when we withdrew from the Synod in connexion with the Church of Scotland, and formed ourselves, upon scriptural principles, into the Presbyterian Church of Canada.

Such, then, Dearly Beloved, is the case which we submit to you: and such the great argument of principle by which our proceedings in the formation of the Presbyterian Church of Canada are justified in our own consciences, and will, we doubt not, be commended to yours. And we venture to say that no one will calmly and dispassionately consider what we have now laid before you without feeling that it contains a triumphant vindication of what we have done; and in particular, a most conclusive answer to the popular but worthless objections which have been so confidently urged against us, that the Synod of Canada had nothing to do with the sins of the Church of Scotland, and that if she had, the conduct of the Synod was not such as to warrant a disruption. Such objections, it will be seen, can only bring the discredit of low and unworthy views of the duties and responsibilities of churches upon such as urge them.

But, Brethren, we have other reasons, besides those which we have above stated, to justify our secession—and a word or two upon these, as you will find them exhibited in the reasons of dissent and protest which we gave in when withdrawing from the Synod, will finish what we wish to say in vindication of the cause which we are now calling upon you to support.

1. The first reason of protest, is the great argument of principle which we have just endeavored to set before you, and which is of itself so conclusive and complete. It is as follows:

"FIRST—That in our conscientious conviction, this Synod are thereby giving their virtual sanction to the procedure of the Established Church of Scotland in the great questions at issue between that Church and the Free Protestant Church of Scotland, and lending the weight of their influence, as a Church, to the support of principles which are incompatible with the purity and the liberty of any Church, by which they are allowed—and which are fitted at the same time to do grievous injury to the cause of the Redeemer throughout the world."

2. The second reason is—

"SECOND—That in a cause relating to a Church in which they have many and obvious reasons for feeling a very deep and special interest—a cause

too in which the honor of Christ's Crown and the interests of His Kingdom are intimately concerned,—they have refused to discharge the obvious duty of lifting up a full and unambiguous testimony for the truth, and thereby strengthening the hands of those who are witnessing for Christ and suffering for His sake."

Even had the action of the Synod with the Established Church of Scotland, not been of that peculiar kind which we have shown you it actually was, we hold that it would have been the duty, and considering the simple fact of her origin, the special duty of the Synod to issue a testimony against the sins of the Established Church, and in favour of that suffering Church, whose martyr testimony has awakened the admiration of the world. The bonds which unite all Churches together, as members of the body of Christ; the sympathy which they are bound to cherish with the joys and with the sorrows of one another, the interest which it becomes them to feel in any thing relating to each other, by which the honour of Christ or the prosperity of His cause may be advanced or hindered in the world—all called upon our Church to lift up a full and unambiguous testimony on the side of Christ. It is worthy of remark, too, that there is scarcely a pure Church of Christ in the British Empire, or even in the wide world, which has not more or less witnessed in this great cause; and we hold it to be a grievous aggravation of the sin of the Synod, that, in these circumstances, she has acted as she has done.

3. The third reason is—

"THIRD—That after solemnly pledging themselves, in various forms, and at different times, to maintain the great principles for which the Free Protestant Church is now contending, and which the Established Church of Scotland has practically repudiated—and especially after the import and the sincerity of such pledges had been brought into question by the actings of various ministers, and even of one of the inferior Church Courts—they have virtually receded from their solemn pledges, and destroyed the weight of every expression of their opinions in favour of the aforesaid principles embodied in their records."

You are aware that the Synod has not been altogether an uninterested and passive spectator of the struggle which issued in the disruption of the Established Church of Scotland. From 1841 to 1843 she has issued and put upon record various strong and decided expressions of opinion in favour of the principles contended for by the Free Protestant Church, and now repudiated by the Establishment. You are also aware that several of her ministers have in contempt of these authoritative declarations of her mind in this matter, openly given in their adherence to the Established Church, nay! received as the reward of their adherence not a little of her money, and that one Presbytery—the Presbytery of Bathurst—has with unparalleled contempt alike of the decisions of the Synod and of the principles of Presbyterianism, publicly and officially avowed its adherence to the same sinning Church, and in these circumstances, you will be ready to admit, that a new obligation was laid upon the Synod to testify on the side of truth, and in particular, that as the import and sincerity of her former testimonies had been brought into question, she was called upon to renew her testimony, for this if for no other reason, that she might vindicate before the world her sincerity and her truthfulness.

Yet it is in these circumstances, you will remark, that the majority who now constitute the Synod have come to the decision of which we complain? And what we would ask, is the legitimate inference—plainly, that they have virtually retracted all their former decisions in the matter, that they have receded from pledges openly and solemnly given, and that, in a word, in order to support the Erastian Establishment of Scotland, they have been guilty of putting open contempt on all the testimonies for Christ, which on former occasions they had been enabled and honoured to make.

Does not this, Brethren, deepen your sense of the degradation into which the Synod has fallen?

4. The fourth reason is—

"FOURTH—That by leaving an open door for the admission of Ministers and Elders from the Established Church of Scotland, holding unsound views on the great principles aforesaid, they have most seriously endangered the purity of the Church, and brought even her independence into peril, through the probable introduction of office-bearers, prepared to submit to the same encroachments of the Civil power by which the Church of Scotland has been enslaved."

One of the most important duties of Churches situated like the Presbyterian Church in Canada, and dependent in great measure for their extension on the supply of Ministers and inferior office-bearers from other Churches, consists in regulating the terms on which these Ministers and office-bearers shall be admitted. For any Church to leave an open door for their admission, from Churches holding or acting on unsound principles in matters of importance, is plainly both sinful and dangerous, as the manifestation of a most culpable indifference to her purity, efficiency, and independence, and fraught with the most disastrous results to these sacred interests. One of the objects accordingly of the resolutions which we submitted to the Synod, was to terminate the practice hitherto pursued by Presbyteries, of admitting Ministers and other office-bearers from the Established Church of Scotland, on the simple ground that they were the Ministers and office-bearers of that Church, and to require that none should be admitted, till first, at least, they had been purged of error, and proved to be men who might be admitted with honour and with safety.

By the decision to which they have come, the Synod have refused to alter the terms on which Ministers and office-bearers from that Church shall be received. According to the practice now in force, the very Ministers of Strathgogie—the men who were guilty of the atrocities of Marnoch—Ministers who were deposed by the General Assembly from their high office, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and never even reposed to office, but held by the Established Church to have never been deposed at all—these men would at once be welcomed and admitted as Brethren.

Brethren, is there no grievous sin in this? Does it expose the Synod to no imminent danger?

It is argued by some, that little evil is to be apprehended in Canada from the continuance of the law or practice of the Synod as it now stands. But first we would answer, the neglect of duty in a matter of such importance—the determination to act on an unsound principle in the admission of office bearers—is of itself a most grievous practical evil and necessarily fraught with danger.—And next we would say, that there are many circumstances in existence, which give obvious cause to fear, even in Canada, the most disastrous consequences. Who could have anticipated a few years ago, the encroachments which have been made by the courts of law in Scotland on the Ecclesiastical Province?—and with the history of these encroachments before us, and with the knowledge which we possess of the Erastian principles on which the Imperial Legislature is prepared to act, and with the notorious fact upon record, that the Prime Minister of Great Britain, in his place in Parliament, has laid down terms indubitably Erastian, as the only terms on which he held that any Church could enjoy the benefits of Establishment, is it not utter folly to speak, as if there were no possibility that encroachments may yet be attempted on the Ecclesiastical Province in Canada, and that men of kindred spirit to those who have submitted to such encroachments in Scotland, would be capable of the same treachery to the cause of Christ and of the purity and liberty of his Church in Canada, as that through which the Church of Scotland has been enslaved.

Brethren, if there be one lesson more than another which the history of recent events in Scot-

16738
1913