

[The following letter, it will be seen, was sent to the Free Church Record for insertion, in reply to some animadversions on an address delivered by the Rev. Mr. Proudfoot of London, when in Scotland last year. It is but right to say, that the late lamented Editor of the Record, Mr. Burns, agreed to insert it as a matter of justice, and of course reserving to himself the right of reply. Owing to his death, the gentlemen who took charge of the publication of the Record for May, declined publishing it. We wish to express no opinion here on the grounds of refusal than to say, that it was not the writer of the review, but what was written, that was to be considered; and especially when it was somewhat of a personal matter, the Record was the proper and just channel for the vindication. We publish it at the request of the writer.]

To the Editor of the Ecclesiastical and Missionary Record.

SIR,—

Your publication for February contained a review of an address by the Rev. John J. A. Proudfoot, minister of the United Presbyterian congregation in London, entitled "Claims of Canada as a Mission-field;" which address was delivered by Mr. Proudfoot, when he had occasion to be in Scotland last summer, at a missionary meeting of the Students in Theology, belonging to the United Presbyterian Church in Scotland, and the substance of the address was afterwards published in the *Missionary Record* of that Church. As that review is considered by those who have it in their power to compare it with the address itself, to be grossly unfair, and fitted to give those who have not seen the address an unfavourable impression respecting both Mr. Proudfoot and the section of the Christian Church with which he is connected; and seems to have been penned from the impulse of better feelings, the cause of which will appear presently, it will, therefore, be no more than an act of justice to admit into your pages a few remarks in reply. The writer of them hopes he will be enabled to maintain an *animus* different from what has been displayed in the review. He will keep in remembrance that "the wrath of men worketh not the righteousness of God," and that in giving a reason for his sentiments it is right and best to do it in meekness.

The Reviewer very soon brings out what has occasioned in him such hot displeasure against this address, and given a black tinge to his strictures upon it. He says, "Mr. Proudfoot assures the Scottish Theological Students that the voluntary character of their Church gives it a most prominent and influential position, and the tide of public opinion is fast setting in its favour: whilst another Church, of which better might be expected, occupies a strange, undefinable position, nobody rightly knows where, and holding principles which nobody rightly understands, and which are enunciated in ever-varying terms, such as expediency for the time may dictate. Hence it is to our Church mainly—not to mention the Congregationalists, who hold the same views on this point—that liberal and enlightened Presbyterians look as the proper, consistent, and unflinching representative of voluntary principles in religion." The reviewer complains that in speaking thus, Mr. Proudfoot "aspersed another Church and glorified his own." No Church was named, but the reviewer readily made the application to the Presbyterian Church of Canada; doing so with resentful feelings, which appeared to have mastered his temper and prudence, and to have sent courtesy to the winds.—Accordingly he proceeds, without any ceremony, to make onslaught on the luckless address which fell into his hands. Without staying to enquire whether Mr. Proudfoot had any good ground for what he said in the obnoxious paragraph, or even attempting to show that it really contained an aspersion he takes hold of some motives which Mr. Proudfoot set before the Students in the Theological Hall, to recommend Canada to them as a field of Missionary labour; and he certainly does asperse these motives most unmercifully, and with a disregard of all Christian charity. He states them, stripped bare of all that was said upon them, and then abuses them in no measured terms. He holds up Mr. Proudfoot as seeking to influence young men, studying for the ministry, to come to Canada merely under worldly considerations; whereas the reviewer could not but know, as every one acquainted with the country knows, that there is not scope for such considerations in any Church in Canada which repudiates State support. No; it will be a long while before any voluntary Church, in this country, can present to the candidates for its ministerial work tempting inducements from worldly wealth or clerical ease and indulgence. The reviewer could not but be aware of this; and therefore we say, it is he who has aspersed another church. In all our reading we have seldom met with anything so forcibly reminding us of a remark made by Montesquieu, respecting the disingenuous Voltaire, and we give it in his own language as showing the point of the remark:—"Lorsque Voltaire lit un livre, il le fait puis il écrit contre ce qu'il a fait." When Voltaire reads a book he makes it as he likes, then he writes against what he has made. As something at least approaching to this, the reviewer read the address, and shaped the motives in it to such a fashion as gave him occasion to vent his feelings, and out came a flood of recrimination. We think that unprejudiced persons who read the address as a whole (and this is necessary to do it justice), and who judge of it according to the circumstances in which it was spoken, will concur with us in our opin-

ion of the review. When Mr. Proudfoot delivered it, he was aware that what was particularly expected of him was, to communicate specific information respecting Canada. He did so, describing the country justly, as the reviewer allows, in its population and otherwise; and exhibiting to the Students *encouragements* quite moderate as to temporal things; to induce some of them to make Canada the scene of their future labours. In short, he wanted to make them understand distinctly that it is a rapidly improving and attractive country, and that there is in it the prospect both of much needed ministerial work, and of comfort.—Was there anything wrong in this?

But, in speaking of Canada, Mr. Proudfoot could not avoid telling his interesting Scottish auditors something about the great ecclesiastical questions which have, for many years, agitated and sometimes almost convulsed this country, and is now more exciting than ever—the question of the Clergy Reserves. After expressly referring to the Church of England, as the main grasper of this enormous prize, he said—"One Church is willing to remain quiet, or even to help her a little on condition of receiving a pittance of the spoil." He then added what has called forth the ire of our reviewer—"Another Church of which, alas! better might have been expected, occupies a strange, undefinable position," that is in reference to this *questio vexata*, "nobody rightly knows where," &c. No doubt this was unpalatable when it came to this side of the Atlantic. But the query is, is it true of the Presbyterian Church of Canada, professing to take up a great standpoint as to superior principles of church polity, so as to give them a warrant and make it a duty to withdraw from those who were once their brethren; for few, or none, will deny that unnecessary division is wrong, and a great evil. If it is true, Mr. Proudfoot did not asperse that Church, but stated the case as it really stands. We beg leave to adduce a few facts to justify what he said, joining with him in the deep regret he felt that the case should be so.

1. When about nine years since, a disruption took place in the Presbyterian Synod in Canada, connected with the Church of Scotland, the separating party, after forming themselves into a distinct Synod, forwarded a petition to the Canadian Government, for State support, holding the two principles of the Church of Scotland. They thus showed not only willingness, but great desire to participate in the Reserves, or any other civil funds. The petition, however, was refused, but with this reserve, that some of their number who formerly got State money, should not be deprived of it; and those of them still alive, continue to draw it. We would merely hint whether this be at all consistent with what we shall state in our fourth particular.

2. Next, an attempt was made to get up a Sustentation scheme, after the example of the Free Church of Scotland, but it did not succeed, and soon fell to the ground. However, there was an improvement on the former move, though the design of every such plan is to lessen the relation of dependence between a minister and his congregation.

3. The Presbyterian Church of Canada has never given to their people and the world a printed exhibition, or even summary of their principles as a Church. They may say, these are to be found in the Westminster Confession of Faith. But their former brethren of the Church of Scotland can equally say the same. So can we; with this important qualification, that we distinctly make known (and it is not much) what in the Confession we disapprove of and do not hold; and we can also refer to successive published testimonies, amply elucidating our doctrinal views, and ecclesiastical position, as a branch of the Parent Church in Scotland. Since the brethren of the Presbyterian Church of Canada made a separation, they were bound to shew why, and on what grounds. If their people are asked to give a reason for the position which their Church occupies, they have nothing to indicate it. How different with the Secession Church. In all her stages, on to the now United Presbyterian Church she promptly presented to public view the principles for which she judged it a great duty to contend. But neither the Free Church of Scotland nor the Presbyterian Church of Canada has done so. The Free Church of Scotland has never emitted any display of principles, except a small Tractate, containing a Pastoral Address by the General Assembly in 1845; the Claim of Right, before the memorable exodus in 1843; the Protest, and the Act of Separation, and Deed of Demission. Having read that Tract, we take the liberty of saying, that it is meagre, defective, and unsatisfactory, to all who look to scripture for proof of principles, and not to old Acts of Parliament and of Church Courts.

4. The only thing tangible within the range of our knowledge, relative to the ecclesiastical principles held by the Presbyterian Church of Canada, is a paper which appeared in the printed minutes of various meetings, which took place several years ago, between joint Committees of the Presbyterian Church of Canada and the United Presbyterian Church in Canada, for accomplishing the union of these two Churches—"a consummation devoutly to be wished"—if it could have been effected on right scriptural ground. That paper was published, among others, by the United Presbyterian Synod, after the endeavours towards union had failed. It was the only paper given in by the Committee of the Presbyterian Church of Canada; and it may be justly called a mere outline or skeleton. Let us repeat here what it says about State endowments:—"With respect, however, to the common objections of injustice and violation of the right of conscience brought against the national endowment of religion, on the ground of the money thus appropriated being in part the money of those of a different and perhaps opposite creed, it appears