

RELIGIOUS THOUGHT IN SCOTLAND.

Scotland has always been regarded as a stronghold of evangelical faith. In the doctrinal standards of the Presbyterian Church there is a very full embodiment and expression of the fundamental principles of Holy Scripture. A consistent adherence to these standards has tended in an eminent degree to preserve the Church and the country from the inroads of superstition and unbelief; and not only have Scottish divines been among the foremost champions of orthodox truth, but for at least two hundred years the Scottish Church has proved a veritable bulwark of Protestantism, in the fullest acceptance of the term.

There are, however, very striking indications of a change in the direction of a latitudinarian system or spirit, by which a divergence from "the old paths" will become inevitable, and through which, it is feared by some, that the power of the Church will be injured. As symptomatic of this it is enough to mention the controversy engendered by the article of Professor Smith on the "Bible" in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* and the speech of the Rev. D. Macrae in the Greenock U. P. Presbytery on a revision of the standards. Both have taken the country very much by surprise and both have given rise to an amount of disputation which clearly demonstrates a greater contrariety of opinion on doctrinal subjects than has been previously known within the bosom of the Church.

A remarkably striking article on this subject appears in the March number of the *Contemporary Review* from the pen of Principal Tulloch. It is characterized by all the productions of the worthy principal, with closeness of reason and clearness of expression, combined with judicial calmness and philosophical acumen. As a fair exposition of the progress and aspects of religious thought in Scotland at the present time, the article is of great value, and should be

very widely and carefully read. In this notice it is impossible to do more than indicate the general purport and bearing of the article; and this even will be of much interest to those who watch the religious condition of their native land, and yet who may not have the opportunity of examining in detail such a striking production as this.

In the opening paragraphs of his essay Principal Tulloch says that there are many unmistakable signs that the "old and hard crust which so long enclosed the religious thought and life of Scotland" is beginning to break up. This catastrophe, he says, was distinctly foreseen by such men as Dr. Robert Lee and Dr. James Robertson, who did so much as to promote the cause of "liberal Christian thought." Since the Secession of 1843, he considers that the main influences which have educated the youthful Scottish mind have been largely outside the universities and the Church, and have been "partly literary and partly speculative." Among the chiefs of those causes which have operated "beneath the surface towards a determinate change in the theological opinion of Scotland," he mentions the teachings of Coleridge and the Hares, of the school of Maurice and Kingsley, and of Carlyle and Erskine, with the study of German theology and metaphysics. In building up "its ecclesiastical system," he considers that the Free Church committed itself to a system of "ultra-orthodoxy" under the leadership of Cunningham and Candlish, to whose eminent ability he pays a just tribute of admiration. Even Dr. Candlish, however, lived to "neologise" in his own behalf in the ablest and best of his theological writings—"Lectures on the Fatherhood of God"—in reply to which a champion of orthodoxy appeared in the ranks of the Established Church.

In the "second decade after the Disruption," Principal Tulloch proceeds to show that a "new spirit of Christian thoughtfulness made rapid progress."