

we denounce them as anti-Christian in spirit and tendency—as useless and worse than useless, worthy only of pagan times and countries; and we do all this caring little whether we are to be called “puritanical” and “narrow-minded.” Healthful and exhilarating amusements are allowable and praiseworthy; but these can never be antagonistic to the pure and benevolent spirit of Christianity. Christian families cannot without infinite loss descend even for a day to the platform of pleasure-seeking Paganism; our citizenship is in Heaven and a bright light from Heaven sanctifies all our pleasures.

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### STATE OF RELIGION IN THE FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

Many of our readers are aware that a new magazine has recently been issued in Edinburgh called “The Presbyterian,” under the management of the friends of Union in the Free Church, and the first article in the January number has for its subject “Spiritual Life in the Church,” by Rev. Walter Wood. The ground-work of the remarks offered is founded on the Reports on the State of religion submitted by the Synods of the Free Church to the General Assembly in 1870 and 1871. While our own Presbyteries are preparing Reports to Synod on this most important matter, we will select the leading points of the article in question, which gives in brief the reports on the following topics:—

1. *The Preaching of the Word.* While it is true that never at any former time was the word more ably, earnestly, soundly and perseveringly declared from Presbyterian Pulpits generally, still it is conceded that there is room for improvement in many cases, and the effect produced is scarcely commensurate with the means employed. It is conceded that there are many cases on which lay preachers awaken a deeper interest than ordained ministers. This is explained in part by natural curiosity and the love of novelty; but a farther reason is entitled to thought, the use by the lay preachers of the language used by the people in ordinary conversation, while the

ministers use book-language to a much greater extent. And the advice given, and which is surely worthy of earnest consideration by ministers, is as follows:—

“In short, what we would press on the attention of all who wish to render their pulpit services effective is not that they should practice extemporary thinking, which generally means saying whatever comes uppermost, but that they should labour to acquire the art of delivering extempore that which they have carefully thought out in the study.”

2. *The Sacraments* next claim attention. The Synod of Aberdeen specially urges the more frequent dispensation of the Lord’s Supper. It is acknowledged that this will draw after it certain other changes, such as simultaneous communion, the diminution of services; and it is added, “Time will show which of these changes are profitable, and, in the meantime, it behoves the church to act with deliberation and prudence in the matter.”

3. *Prayer.* It is gratefully acknowledged that God has poured out the spirit of prayer and supplication to some considerable extent. There are prayer meetings in nearly all the congregations, but, in some, few aid the minister. It is recommended for the removal of this backwardness that ministers should try and induce their flocks to meet in twos and threes for united prayer, after the manner of Cottage meetings, as these have been tried both in the cities and rural parts of the Lower Provinces.

4. *Religious Education.* To this subject great prominence is given. Both Sabbath Schools and Bible classes are common, and all but universal. But it is added, “Something yet remains to be done by the church in giving to baptized children their proper place. They are members of the church, though not yet in the enjoyment of full membership; and they ought to be dealt with and addressed as members, and to be more constantly reminded of their dedication to the Lord. In many congregations sermons are preached especially to children, at short intervals throughout the year. And there is one uniform testimony as to the advantage of such sermons, not only to