

tures and ceremonies, however minute the dependence might be—he had never heard or read of such a case, in which the Church was not deviating into a certain greater or less amount of religious indifference. Therefore he desired to preserve unchanged the pure, spiritual, and simple worship of their fathers. In days of yore it had always been held that the very simplicity of their worship was one of its great ornaments—that in point of fact it constituted almost a proof of the purity of their doctrine. At the same time, he need hardly say to the Assembly that so far as many or most of those changes were concerned, he held them as a matter of the most trivial importance—that if the form of their worship has been in conformity with the views of those parties, who desired some modifications, he probably would have been there to support them as they stood, because he held these forms in themselves to be of no importance. If they had stood at singing and sat at prayer, he for one would have said it was a matter of no importance whether they stood or sat; if instrumental music had been introduced into their Church, or had existed long in their Church, he would very likely have said, “Why should we make a change?” If they had had such a liturgy as that of the Church of England, he would have said, “Why, let us keep that liturgy.” He believed that in themselves they were of no importance—the real evil was in members giving them an importance to a certain extent by rending the Church asunder in order to introduce them. (Hear, hear.) Yet let them be as trifling as they might—let them be of as little importance in themselves as they could imagine—yet it was the beginning of the introduction of the wedge. Let it once enter, and it was quite impossible to say how far it might extend, more especially if it were true, as he had now said, that the thing itself had a tendency to generate spiritual indifference. That spiritual indifference might be continually growing, and ceremonies step by step, by slow degrees, be increasing and extending, until at last it might be—God forbid it should happen!—that a change will take place in the character of the whole Church, and these little forms, and these little changes, be gradually insinuated not merely into the forms of worship, but into the doctrines of the Church. It might be so, as it happened in many cases elsewhere—nay, if he was not mistaken, there had been indications given even in this Church that some slight change on the character of their doctrine was not altogether undesirable—(hear)—and if they continued to encourage these forms and ceremonies, the result they might arrive at was perfectly incalculable. The motion he wished to submit to the House was to the effect “That the General Assembly, having had under their consideration an overture from the Synod of Aberdeen on the subject of innovations in Church worship, and being of opinion

that it is of essential importance to the interests of religion that there should be uniformity in the Church worship in each branch of the Church of Christ, and especially in an Established Church. He said “general uniformity,” because he had no wish to limit the liberty of ministers and particular congregations. If anybody chose to stand at singing, he did not know that anybody had any objections; and if anybody chose to sit at prayer, he did not know that anybody had any objection. Congregations must please themselves, but what he objected to was ministers, directly or indirectly, using their influence for the encouragement of such things. (Cries of “Oh, oh!”) This was the thing to be objected to, because if ministers showed that they themselves attached an amount of importance to these forms, they at once constituted a germ of superstition. They might depend upon it, however little value some of them might attach to these forms, that if they adopted the forms of other Churches, to which their people were not accustomed—forms altogether inconsistent with the views of the subject entertained by their fathers and transmitted to them from generation to generation—they would find that the people would adopt the view he had just indicated, and either go over at once to the Church which in reality and not in a mock form carried out these ceremonies, or else go to those denominations of the Christian Church where they found a worship conformable to the worship of their fathers. Were they to have such a state of things introduced that in one Church there was to be one set of forms, and across the street a different set of forms—that in going through the Churches of Edinburgh and Glasgow they could never know the form in which they were to worship? (Hear, hear.) Was the thing to be to be carried to that extent, or, if not, to what was it to be limited? Was every man to choose for himself? Was it not specifically mentioned in the declaration and vow that every minister took, that he should worship in conformity with the form of worship presently adopted in the Church of Scotland? He did not choose to refine upon this subject. He believed that there were refinements put forward, and explanations given of this part of their vows, but he for one did not like that the vows they took should require explanation. (Hear.) He trusted that this might be carefully avoided, because, whatever they might say of these forms, these attempts at refinement on their solemn vows must lead to suspicions of a much more injurious character. So far, then, he trusted he had made out his point. His motion proceeded in these terms—“That it is pernicious in consequences, and inconsistent with the principles of the Church of Scotland, that ministers should take upon themselves, without authority from their ecclesiastical superiors, to introduce changes into the forms of public worship, especially