

been transmitted in the form of *Overture*, by a preceding Assembly, to Presbyteries, and though a great majority of the Presbyteries who gave their opinion, were decidedly hostile to the measure, yet the Assembly, in direct opposition to a fundamental law (commonly called the *Butter Act*) which prescribed that *overtures* in such cases should be rejected, not only converted it into an act, but refused to restrict the right to vote to such heritors as were resident in the parish, and members of the Church of Scotland" (Testimony of the United Secession Church).

The following reflections on the character and influence of this Act, may be quoted from the diary of Mr. Wilson, one of the four brethren in whom the Secession originated.

"This Act made much noise, and was justly reckoned a deep wound and thrust at our constitution, and the interests of religion amongst us. Yea, our most valuable interests were hereby basely betrayed, and the settlement of our congregations given up to men disaffected to our constitution, both civil and ecclesiastical,—to malignant enemies of religion and godliness. How deplorable and dangerous now was our situation, especially as our youth were generally corrupt both in principle and practice! Those who appeared to be serious among them, were discouraged and disencouraged; men of lax principles were chosen by the heritors; the Judicatories supported the choice and thrust them in upon congregations. By this means the godly through the land were wounded and grieved, congregations were rent and broken, the wicked were hardened, many were tempted to look on religion as all a cheat, deistical principles prevailed, profanity and wickedness abounded throughout the land."

This tyrannical exercise of the law of patronage was one great cause though not the principal one, which led to the Secession in 1733, when four ministers of high standing for talents, learning, eloquence and piety, being expelled, as we shall see, from the National Church, in a manner the most unjust and arbitrary, Loyalists to their Divine Master being their only fault, constituted themselves into the Associate Presbytery. The principal cause, which we shall take another opportunity of exhibiting, was the propagation, with alarming and increasing success, of gross and dangerous doctrinal errors, by which the Saviour was dishonoured, and the glory of His Church in Scotland, was fast departing. We shall waive the consideration of this chief cause of Secession for the present, in the mean time observing in connexion with the subject before us, that for nearly twenty years after the four brethren had taken the important step referred to, the law of patronage continued to be exercised, and was exercised with increasing rigour, and with much more frequency, till, in 1752, it became a sufficient reason in itself for another rupture in the National Establishment, in which the Relief Church had its origin. To this important event as connected with the early history of the United Presbyterian Church, as well as to the particulars of the origin of the Secession, we shall have occasion afterwards to refer. We only remark at present, that it is the numerous successors of those who first constituted the Secession Church, and those who soon afterwards first constituted the Relief Church, that now form the United Presbyterian Church. We shall, however, in order to do justice to the subject of the rise of the Secession in 1733, return, in another communication, to a review of the doctrinal defections and corruptions which prevailed in the Church of Scotland posterior to the Revolution, and prior to the period when the Secession standard was first reared.

(To be continued.)

ERRATA.—p. 59, first column, line thirty-five, for "over-ruled," read "over-rated." Second column, line nineteen, for "rejoined," read "rejoiced."

[FOR THE CANADIAN PRESBYTERIAN MAGAZINE.]

ASSURANCE OF UNDERSTANDING.

The term *Assurance* has been used by some writers on practical and experimental theology, generally in reference to a person's persuasions of his interest in the atonement of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and the enjoyments and glories of heaven. With this view of assurance, others have properly questioned the opinion which makes faith and assurance identical. But have not these writers both erred in not referring to the Scrip-

tures? Had they done so, they would have been a little more accurate in their definitions. The term rendered *assurance*, occurs as a noun in the New Testament only four times. In Col. ii. 2, it is rendered "Full assurance of understanding." In 1 Thes. i. 5, it is said—our Gospel came in "much assurance," i. e., they had sufficient evidence to convince them of its claims. In Heb. vi. 11, it is rendered "full assurance" of hope; and in Heb. x. 22, it is rendered full assurance of faith. In all these places it is joined to another term expressive of some property or quality. It may be properly rendered by the words *full, sure, or certain*. Let us see how this appears. 1. In Col. ii. 2, the apostle prays that the Colossians might be united in love, in order to obtain a full, sure, or certain understanding of the mysteries of God, even the Father, and of Christ. The Hebrews were to use the same diligence as the ancient saints did to obtain a "sure or certain" hope (Heb. vi. 11), and they were to come to God in prayer, with a firm, sure or certain faith in God.

Regarding the expression "Assurance of Understanding," in Col. ii. 2, as equivalent to a "full, comprehensive and accurate knowledge" of the Scriptures, which contain "the mysteries" concerning God, even the Father, and Jesus Christ our Lord, it is my intention to show—

1. That this assurance of understanding is attainable; and
2. How it is to be attained.

That this assurance of understanding is attainable, because—1. The Scriptures are the revelation of God's will to mankind.

We have ample evidence, derived from the Scriptures themselves, as well as from the fulfilment of Prophecies contained in the Scriptures, as testified by history, that God, at sundry times and in divers manners, spake unto the Fathers by the prophets, and that he hath, in these last days spoken unto us by His Son. This revelation makes known in the plainest terms all that is requisite for man to know, in order to his redemption from sin, his sanctification and happiness; and all may know the truths essential to their salvation, if they but give that attention which these truths deserve, and which many give to an idle tale, or a cunningly-devised fable. But laying aside mere assertion, we might suppose, from the intention of God in giving the Scriptures, and the importance of the truths which they contain, that they would be exhibited in the plainest terms. What could we think of a document announcing pardon to criminals, yet written in such a manner, as required the ingenuity and all the literary resources of the learned to comprehend; and after all that human intellect could do, the persons to whom it was addressed still left in uncertainty as to the meaning? Would we not be warranted to pronounce such a document a mockery, a deception, a snare? But God never mocks at human ignorance or misery. He has recorded in His word in terms of unqualified simplicity and plainness, truths great in themselves, and of infinite importance to man. This revelation contains the testimony of God respecting his own existence and perfections—respecting his character, purposes, and proceedings, so far as they respect man, and so far as they are necessary for man to know. It contains the only true account of man's origin, and the state in which he was created. Here we are told respecting man's depravity and alienation from God, which facts and experience fully confirm. Here God makes known his purpose of mercy towards mankind, which he purposed in Christ Jesus before the world began; and here we are told how he accomplished that purpose in the mission and death of His Son. All this is plainly intelligible; and so it is with the whole record, whether it comprises narratives of events, or doctrines founded on these events—precept or promise—example or exhortation—warning or encouragement—all is given by inspiration, all is written for our learning. In the Scriptures he has given the clearest proof that "he has compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way." He invites us to come to Christ to believe in him; but he knows that we cannot believe in him of whom we have not heard; and therefore Moses, the Psalms and the Prophets, the Evangelists and the Apostles, speak much and plainly respecting the Lord Jesus Christ. So clear and direct is their testimony respecting the person, character, and work of the Saviour, that all the ingenuity, however perverted, that all the sophistry, though ever so plausible, which the enemies of the truth have employed to obscure the light of the truth, have been employed in vain—at least so far as respects those who were willing to know and obey the will of God revealed in the Scriptures. Who does not understand the meaning and feel the force of such statements as these—"All