

It has always been found in the Secession church, that when any community has begun to busy itself inordinately about its temporalities, the spirit of christianity has declined in it, individuals have been filled up with self-conceit, and have become unteachable, arrogant, and obstinate, the persons and spiritual powers of the Elders have not been honoured, ministers have become obnoxious, and their administrations unprofitable, and this state of things has still ended in the degradation and detriment of the community, in the apostasy of some, and in the vexation of all of its members; and in the discredit of our profession and of religion in general.

The Presbytery readily admit that every congregation has a right to be fully satisfied as to the state and management of its own temporalities.—They are aware that in many congregations of the Secession, these temporalities are put under the care of managers, vested with different powers.—Nor are they ignorant that the judicatures to which we are subject have never thought it necessary to interfere with the managements of congregations, when their affairs were conducted peaceably, and not inconsistently with the essential principles of Presbyterianism. But they know also that these judicatures never admitted any principle, or sanctioned any practice tending to render congregational managements independent of Sessions: and that when opportunity has offered they have not failed either to assert the right of church office-bearers, to superintend all ecclesiastical affairs, or to direct congregations to assimilate their managements to the appointments of scripture.

In the spirit of love the Presbytery must, therefore, represent to the Session that in encouraging the usurpations complained of,* they have failed in their duty, and are chargeable with a breach of that trust which Christ has reposed in them, and for which they are responsible. They ought to have resisted, and must now resist, meekly yet firmly, and for conscience' sake, every encroachment upon the principles or order of that government of which they are the functionaries and the guardians. Since the institutions of Christ are not only supreme in authority and immutable in obligation, but the result of the tenderest care for the church, and of wisdom which cannot err,—to sanction any deviation from those institutions, or perversion of them, must be unwise as well as unchristian, and must be at once an injury to the church and an indignity to its Head. Peace is not to be purchased by means which involve the condemnation of infinite wisdom, or the dereliction of the appointments of supreme authority.

It appears, indeed, that considerable harmony obtains in the congregation; and if they were of one mind and of one heart in maintaining scriptural order, such harmony would be in the highest degree creditable to themselves, and satisfactory to the Presbytery. But unanimity in trampling upon the principles or the prescriptions of the Word of God, is but the more to be deplored in proportion as it is complete. And such is the harmony of the congregation:—an agreement in constitutions inconsistent with that order for which they, as well as this Presbytery, profess to contend. This harmony was no sustainable reason for the Session yielding to unscriptural usurpations. The Galatians, although indeed they had contentions among them, seem to have been very unanimous in supporting great perversions of the christian system: but was the Apostle Paul therefore silent, or did he therefore refrain from testifying against their departures from undefiled christianity? The Corinthians also were unanimous in certain abuses, and even gloried in them, but this did not overawe that Apostle's enlightened and fervent zeal: and he introduces his remonstrances by telling them, what all church officers ought to remember, continually,—“That it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.”

* It may be proper to mention that this address originated in consequence of certain disputes in a congregation about the management of temporalities. The majority of the Session having been inclined to yield to some innovations proposed by that congregation, two of the Elders carried the matter to the Presbytery. The result was the preparation of the document before us; and its transmission as a reasonable and salutary instrument of counsel to the Session and congregation where the disputes had arisen.

The Presbytery earnestly call upon the Session and congregation to submit to the Divine institutions in all things, and to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Let them remember that every arrangement incompatible with the spirit of Presbyterianism involves, on their part, inconsistency and apostasy, amounts to insubordination to those judicatures to which they have vowed subjection in the Lord, and produces a schism in the church.

In the Secession Church the choice of office-bearers is an acknowledged right of the community, and is exercised by them without control.—It is therefore reasonable to suppose that of the individuals, upon whom the choice in our congregations falls, a great proportion are almost always men of wisdom and true goodness, as well as of fair repute, individuals who deserve and possess the confidence of the people among whom they preside. Such no doubt is the character of those who now compose your Session. If they are not sufficiently numerous for the discharge of all their duties, let them be increased with the necessary additions. But let the important transaction, which so deeply involves all the best interests of the congregation, be conducted with a right spirit, and in the due order, and without precipitation.—Let the Session whose situation best qualifies, as well as entitles them, to determine here, consider maturely what accession of members they need for all their functions of complete superintendence. Let the congregation assemble to choose the specified number of Elders or Deacons; but acting, which doubtless they will do, as a society of honest men, men answerable to God, Presbyterians by conviction as well as by profession, let them, using their best discretion, propose and elect for office none but such as are known to understand and approve of presbyterian principles and order. And the choice being made, let the congregation, as has been the scope of this address to advise, willingly concede to the Session the unembarrassed management of all the objects of their functions. In particular, let externals be conducted according to the institutions of Christ.

And on what principle can any church decline to commit the charge of its temporalities to its office-bearers,—since to them it commits the spiritual concerns of all its members, which are unspeakably more important, and which on account of the complexity and delicacy of their circumstances present far greater difficulties?

Since every christian must allow that it is always most safe, as well as most honorable, to follow the appointments of Christ in the management of His own Church, there is surely no reason to fear that anything injurious to the interests of the congregation can result from the scriptural arrangement of its ecclesiastical policy, if the change be introduced with prudence, and as the consequence of that illumination in the truth which it is the duty of all christians to attain and to promote.

In the event of the adoption by the congregation of the plan recommended, the Presbytery have one advice to offer to those who may be ordained to discharge the functions of the Deaconship.—Let them affect no concealment of their managements. Let them be at all times ready, by candid disclosures, to convince the people that their affairs are honestly, wisely, and diligently managed. This will confirm at once their own just influence, and the peace of the congregation. If they shall satisfy the impartial and intelligent that they fear no inspection, that they have no object but the public good, and that they guide their affairs with discretion, suspicious reflections, teasing importunities, and censorious scrutinies, will be wearied out and cease, and they will soon proceed in the discharge of their office unmolested by the discontented and factious, and supported by the lovers of order and peace.

But let the whole Session be true to their trust. Let the Elders and Deacons attend each to their appropriate objects. Let them on no account suffer any part of their functions to be wrested from them; but determine to resist every insidious or vexatious proposal to divide those parts of their management which the scriptures have connected. To sacrifice scriptural order for the sake of allaying discontents artfully raised, is as contrary to policy as to duty. To purchase present peace by a surrender of right to the spirit of encroachment,

is the expedient only of weak minds, and it is an expedient always unsuccessful.

Within the bounds of this Presbytery, and in a congregation once misled, though never to the same extent as yours, the arrangements now recommended have been adopted. In the consultations of the Session, and in many of the official transactions among the members of the congregation, the Elders and Deacons mutually assist, yet each order attends to its peculiar duties. The judicial superintendence of all the affairs of the congregation belongs to the Elders, while the Deacons have the full active management of their appropriate objects. The happiest effects have followed the introduction and prosecution of this plan. Order arose out of confusion, and the peace of that society has been ever since more assured than at any former period.

As your Session and congregation cannot certainly accuse the Presbytery of proceeding in this affair in a precipitate or summary manner, or by the decisions of mere authority, they crave in return a dispassionate and conscientious consideration of what has been now suggested.

If after all that has been said, it shall appear to any of the members of the congregation, that the Presbytery have not established their principles on the point in question, the Presbytery have to request that such persons will forbear to act upon this suggestion:—a forbearance which, in the present case, cannot violate conscience. For there are many rights which it is honorable to resign for a greater good. And surely that man but little values the peace of the church who would disturb it merely for the sake of exercising a little authority, in common with his fellows, about the mode of managing an inconsiderable property.

The Presbytery will not detain the Session and congregation by enumerating, but beseech them to remember and to ponder, the important and various arguments by which the scripture enforces attention to order and peace,—not to peace only, but to peace in conjunction with good order.

And now may the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever,—Amen.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND.

On Tuesday fortnight (7th July), the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland commenced its annual session in the Rev. Dr. Cooke's church, May Street.

The Moderator, Dr. Carlisle, of Dublin, preached the Synodical sermon.

Mr. Morgan was afterwards unanimously elected Moderator for the ensuing year.

Dr. Killen, Convener, having been called upon, read a Report of the Committee of Correspondence with Foreign Churches and also a letter from the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States.

Dr. Brown moved the following resolutions:—

1. Resolved—That said Committee be instructed to raise funds to aid the cause of the Reformation on the Continent of Europe, and to transmit portions of it to the Waldensian tribe for the support of retired pastors, and to the Evangelical Societies of France, Geneva, and Belgium.

2. That a letter be addressed to the ministers who have retired from the National Church of the Canton de Vaud, offering them the congratulations and sympathies of this Church.

3. That a letter be addressed to the leading Evangelical Reformers of Germany, offering them also our sympathy and encouragement.

The resolutions passed unanimously.

It having been arranged that the subject of American Churches, in connection with slavery, should be taken up next.

The resolutions of the Assembly passed in 1843 having been read, as also that portion of the letter from the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, which referred to the advices and remonstrance given by the Irish Assembly on the subject of slavery, a Committee was appointed to take the matter into considera-