

who giveth to all men liberally and without stint, and it will be given him. If the parents who are evil know how to give good gifts unto their children, how much more shall our heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him. In fact a pious, devout, prayerful spirit will itself, as a kind of holy instinct, in many cases serve as an admirable test of truth. One thoroughly imbued with such a spirit can often detect a fallacy or solve a difficulty, to use the felicitous expression of an eminent living author, 'by the immediate syllogism of the heart to which there is no reply.'

On the above, we only deem it necessary to offer a few short remarks, by way of explanation, and admonition to the Editor not to tie us to the wheel of his gospel chariot without our consent.

First, as to the Editor's own, he has no right, from the statement of any one individual, belonging to this, or any other church, to say that the church holds any given sentiment in the absence of authoritative evidence. Next, it is not "quite evident" from the professor's statement, that the U. P. Church has less undue respect and reverence for creeds and confessions, than it had twenty-five or even ten years ago. We are not aware that it ever had *undue* respect for them, but it placed them, and kept them where they ought to be placed, as the Church's exposition of the sense in which it understood the word of God. It never set them above the Bible, or in place of it, but only as an expressed definition of Bible teaching to form a bond or platform of Presbyterian Christian Fraternity: and borrowing the Confession of Faith and Catechisms to convey the sense in which it understood the Holy Scriptures, it, as a church, has the highest respect for them. Again, the Church has not changed one whit in lowered respect and regard for the subordinate standards, but rather, there is proof to the contrary, in the fact, that at the late Union, all the subordinate standards of the United Secession were maintained, and the Relief Church, which formerly only held the Confession of Faith, agreed to take also the Shorter and Larger Catechisms. By that act, that branch of the now United Church, did, in fact, *enlarge* its creed or confession. There may be some ministers who desire to have the subordinate standards condensed, but there is not a soul-hearted United Presbyterian who wishes to erase a single doctrine, or cease to respect most highly what are now believed to be in harmony with the teaching of the Spirit of God.

We say, then, to the Editor of the *Canada Evangelist*, we pray thee have us excused from joining in holding up the "scandal" for the object you have in view; and also from in any way throwing the shield of our "large and influential body" over the Evangelical Union in Canada.

In regard to the quotation which, it is said, "beautifully illustrates" his remark, we choose not to argue, for the Professor can explain for himself, if he thinks it necessary to take from the *Evangelist* his countenance to the statement. But for the Church, as a whole, we may safely say, that it neither desires nor deserves to have such a compliment from the organ of Canadian Morissonianism:—

"Quidquid id est, timos Danaos et dona ferentes."

## Original Articles.

[FOR THE CANADIAN PRESBYTERIAN MAGAZINE.]

### UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH HISTORY.

BY THE REV. DR. FERRIER, CALEDONIA.

The principal cause of Secession, as we found in narrating its origin, was the prevalence of erroneous Doctrine in the Established Church.—Ministers were allowed to teach Arminian, Arian, and Socinian errors, and, in short, to make whatever deviations they pleased from those excellent standards to which they had professed and promised to adhere, whilst no censure was inflicted, and in most cases no process whatever instituted against them. The Church of Scotland before the Secession arose was almost overwhelmed by such erroneous sentiments; and but a few ministers, in different parts of the country, seemed to retain their integrity, and to preach the gospel in its scriptural relations and purity. The most of this faithful remnant joined the Secession, and of course in the meantime the Establishment was left worse than it had been, and evangelical truth was maintained chiefly by those who had come out from her communion. It could not be expected that all at once the errors which had overspread the land would be effectually checked. It was a

great matter that the Secession Churches were maintaining, by their free and independent organization, the truth as in Jesus, and holding up the scriptural standards as rallying points to those who were desirous to be found faithful. Two objects, chiefly, might be supposed to be contemplated in providence by the Secession Churches. The first, was to exhibit the patterns of scriptural churches to the country in opposition to the corrupt national establishment; and this object was at once secured by the testimony for truth which both branches of the Secession maintained. The second object was to act as a corrective to the Establishment. But this could only be effected by degrees; and it was long before the tendency to this effect was sensibly felt. For even up to the closing period of last century the Established Church seemed to be almost, if not altogether, as much vitiated and degraded as ever. This last object was at length to be remarkably brought about; but the time was not yet come for its visible and successful operation.

At the close of our last communication we adverted to the errors of Dr. McGill of Ayr, who, in 1786, had published a book entitled—"A Practical Essay on the Death of Jesus Christ," in which he taught, in a manner the most offensive and glaring, a variety of sentiments not only inconsistent with the Confession of Faith, but contrary to the Word of God. Among other errors he taught that Christ, though invested with an extraordinary office, and endowed with extraordinary powers, was not God equal to the Father; that he did not die as the substitute of sinners; that his priesthood and sacrifice were merely figurative; that men obtain pardon on sincere repentance, and are accepted on sincere obedience. At the same time this minister was loud in his praises of human merit, and inculcated the Popish doctrine of *merit*, declaring that sinful men have often received very valuable benefits, which they had no title to on their own account, not only through the instrumentality, but on account of the virtue of others. He also represented the Holy Ghost as the power of God, but not as a Divine person.

Thus the divinity and atonement of Christ, and the work of the Spirit of grace in the salvation of sinners, were all set aside, and thus "another gospel, which is not another" was taught.

The Courts of the Church of Scotland, to which he belonged, did not take up this matter with firmness, nor terminate it as they ought; and it says little for the orthodoxy of the ministers of the Establishment at this period, and for their zeal for divine truth, that this guilty individual was not immediately prosecuted, and subjected to such censure as he deserved. They did nothing in the matter till, in consequence of their leniency, Dr. McGill himself was so bold as to make a new attack which was directed against Creeds and Confessions. He did this in an appendix to a sermon preached in commemoration of the Revolution, of which this year was the centenary. Here he treated with contempt all his opponents, vilified the Seceders, and declaimed against the bondage of not being permitted to give his own heretical interpretation of the language of scripture unfettered by human creeds. "There was a period of the Christian Church," he said, "when they were thought worthy of censure, who would not consent to wholesome words, even the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. But now we are liable to very severe censure, if we do not set aside these wholesome divine words and substitute in their room the commandments of men; yea, submit to the dictates of every reverend upstart creed-maker, who has presumption not only to impose on us his own sense of the scripture, and of the Confession of Faith, but to set up their unscriptural phrases as the objects of our reverence and worship. The greatest author, it is humbly conceived, may, without impiety, and without giving just ground of offence to any Christian, deride the vain and impotent attempts of human wisdom, or rather of human ignorance and pride, to express the articles of our faith in fitter words than the Holy Spirit has done."

The whole of this matter ended with an unsatisfactory apology by Dr. McGill, and without any censure being inflicted on him. But the religious part of the community were by no means satisfied with the results of this process; and the Secession Churches in particular bore their testimony with fidelity and boldness against the errors which had been published, and against the Courts of the Establishment by which they had been so superficially and unsatisfactorily adjusted.

In the Warning against Socinianism, already referred to, which was published on this occasion by the Associate Synod, the leading articles of the erroneous system of doctrine contained in the Practical Essay of