

and promote the interest of religion in the Church."

DR. COOK.—When I come to look at these plans, what do I find? The first plan proposes "that patrons shall possess the right of nomination or presentation as at present, but that the members of the particular congregations shall be invested by law with a co-ordinate right in regard to the presentation, so that, unless they concur in it, the presentation shall not be effectual for further proceedings in the Church Courts." That is to say, if you take this in its obvious interpretation, it will be essentially necessary, whenever a presentation is issued by a patron, before it can become valid for bringing the presentee before the Presbytery, there must be the assent of all members of the congregation. That is the plain result of the reading of the plan as it stands here; and that is a result which I need not say, can never be achieved. But what do they say?—"What persons are to be considered members of the congregation, what should be regarded as their 'concurrence,' what ought to be the nature of the procedure to follow upon the lodging of the presentation and other similar matters of detail, may be left for after inquiry and arrangement." I should scarcely imagine there are many men in this General Assembly who will be prepared to say that this is the plan they will prefer, when they have yet to find out who are to be considered "members of congregation," what the word "concurrence" that is required means, and, "what ought to be the nature of the procedure to follow upon the lodging of the presentation." (Laughter.) And then, as if all this were not sufficient to leave us in a considerable amount of darkness, they add "other similar matters of detail." (More laughter.) Then we come to the second point—"It was suggested that a direct and unqualified voice might be given to the people." Well, I understand a "direct unqualified voice" in the election of their minister, when it is given to the people, means that the people are to be entitled to come forward and give their votes for the person they believe to be most capable and fit to be their minister. But that is not the intention of this plan; for the report reads, "and that for this purpose the plan of election might be based on a system formerly recognised in law so far as suited to the present time." It is not, you will observe, to be based on the "system formerly recognised by law," but that system, like the system of patronage, is to be broken up also, that it may be "suited to the present times." "For this purpose," they go on to say, "it is proposed to re-enact, with this qualification, the Act of William and Mary, 1690, c. 23, giving the initiative power in the election of ministers to heritors and elders." That is to say, the kirk-session is to be one of the parties who are to act in the election of ministers. If the kirk-session is to be the representative of the

people in the election of the ministers, is it expected that they are to put all their places at the disposal of the people with the view of their being re-elected? That is not proposed; but it is proposed to break up the system on which additions have been made to the kirk-session, which system has existed since 1642. It has been proposed to popularise all our kirk-sessions, that they may discharge the duty of expressing the mind of the people in the election of ministers. To suppose for a moment that the kirk-session in such a case would be left to exercise an independent voice is to make the widest supposition that can possibly be conceived. Then they are to be joined with another party—joined with the heritors of the parish; and the old system also is to be broken up here—not to make it suited to modern liberality, but, what I would say, to make it suited to modern intolerance. (Hear, hear.) It is gravely proposed that from out the body of the heritors of Scotland are to be weeded all those men who do not belong to our communion. Now I am not prepared to deny that it is to me, as it is to every other member of the Church, a matter of regret that so many of those who hold high and influential positions in Scotland do not belong to the Church of Scotland; but I think there are obvious causes and reasons why that should be, without supposing that it implies hostility and opposition to the Church of Scotland. (Hear, hear.) We must remember that, in consequence of long-continued connection with England, we have fallen much out of the place of an independent kingdom, and that there is an amount of intercourse between the aristocracy of the two countries which has led to the education of the great body of the young aristocracy of Scotland in England. I say that, under these circumstances, it is perfectly natural that many of these young men should adhere to the communion of that Church of which during their education they have been members; and am I to be told that a man is to be punished for holding conscientious religious opinions—(hear, hear)—that for maintaining the religious opinions he holds to be most consistent with the Word of God, there must be withdrawn from his inherited and patrimonial rights? (Applause.) If there is one thing for which I am more proud of the Church of Scotland than another—if there is one reason why I more steadily adhere to her communion and desire all men to continue in it—it is because of this, that I believe the Church of Scotland to be one of the most tolerant Churches that now exist. (Hear, hear.) Whether I look to Established Churches or to other denominations of Christians, I know none of them that entertain a truer spirit of Christian moderation and liberality than the Church of Scotland: and I grieve to think that they should have come forward even with the suggestion of a proposal which would not for one moment, as was