

one particular point ; he has declared that to his apprehension the teaching of Holy Scriptures itself anent the matter was not so clear as to preclude the possibility of reasonable doubt ; he has placed side by side two classes of Scripture texts, one of which seems to be in complete harmony with the subordinate standards of his Church, and the other of which appears to be in irreconcilable conflict with them ; he has apparently no doubt that these portions of the Word of God are in complete harmony with each other when properly understood, but he has signified his failure to find the *tertium quid*—the underlying principle by which they can be reconciled in the "Confession of Faith." Perhaps it is too much to expect that the Presbyterian Church will put its standards upon trial, and open the discussion as to whether the Westminster Catechism and Confession of Faith harmonise in their teaching with the Word of God. To such as put the dogmatic statements of these works upon a par with the axioms of Euclid or the multiplication table, they must be accepted as absolutely final and infallible, and to put their accuracy or truthfulness in question would be impious. And even to such as take a more sober view—who believe in the possible imperfection of these venerable documents, and even have a lurking suspicion that the time may come when they will have to be pretty radically overhauled to bring them into harmony with the advanced state of knowledge,—there is something almost appalling in the idea of opening a discussion which may shake the Church to its very foundation. And yet it seems scarcely possible to put Mr. McDonnell on his trial without in effect putting the "Confession of Faith" on its trial at the same time. The sole question to be decided by the church courts no doubt would be whether Mr. McDonnell believed and taught the doctrines of the Presbyterian Church as set forth in its standards ; but the more august tribunal of the general public would not fail to so extend it as to include the question of the harmony of those standards with the Scriptures ; and that an able, learned and pious minister should be censured or silenced for merely entertaining doubts in respect to the correctness of their teaching upon one particular point, when he took his stand upon the Word of God, would scarcely have the effect of increasing the respect of independent and unbiassed on-lookers for their authority.

The fact is, this matter brings up one of the most difficult and important questions with which the Church of the future will have to deal, viz.: the relation of the dogmatic authority of the Church, in its organic unity, with the individual liberty and independence of its ministers in the investigation of truth and the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. The Bible is said to be the religion of Protestants ; the Holy Scriptures are declared to be the only and sufficient rule both of our faith and practice ; and Protestant communities are agreed in holding that nothing is to be taught as