

open, energetic, united defence of the Truth as it is Jesus, on the part of those to whom the ministry of the Word is committed.

VINDICATION, OR REASONS FOR RETURNING TO THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

We have been much pleased by perusing a "Vindication, or Reasons for returning to the Church of Scotland, including a Correspondence with a Free Church Minister, in a letter to his friends of the Free Church, by James Lamont." Mr. Lamont is a Rothesay student or licentiate, and is, if we are not mistaken, the same personage on whom we had occasion to animadvert about 12 or 18 months ago, when he appeared to us a little over-zealous in deprecating Sabbath schools as inimical to family training and strict parental supervision on the Sabbath evenings. If we are correct in our reminiscence, the circumstance is not unworthy of note, as showing that the author of the admirable pamphlet now before us was never wanting in zeal; and indeed we have reason to believe that he has always been highly esteemed in his connection with the Free Church, that he enjoys the reputation of possessing superior talents, to which, combined with his acknowledged energy and zeal, the Free Church, looked as affording hopeful promise of future distinction and usefulness, and that he was regarded, in short, as one of the most promising and gifted aspirants to the Ministry in that particular denomination of dissentients from the Church of Scotland.

Mr. Lamont however, we say it to his credit, has thought better on the subject; and was one of the Free Church students received into the Church of Scotland at the last General Assembly.

We hail Mr. Lamont's return, and that of his companion in the same course, to the bosom of the venerable Church of Scotland as the mere beginning of a movement which will not terminate here, and which we believe that the pamphlet before us, published by Mr. Lamont in his own vindication, will tend greatly to accelerate.

We strongly recommend this really able pamphlet for general perusal. Though written, we presume, by a young man, it is one of the most masterly productions of the kind we have read for many a day. It has nothing juvenile, or flippant, or presumptuous in the style; but is on the contrary evidently written by one who has thought long and maturely on the subject, who utters his convictions in perfect sincerity, and who, as the result of his calm and deliberate judgement, after the most ample and earnest investigation, has come to the conclusion that the Free Church occupies a false position, that its leaders, and therefore its proceedings, exhibit an improper spirit; and that therefore he had no alternative but to return to the Church of Scotland, which, as he shows (and not the Free Church), holds inviolate at the present day the principles of John Knox and the other early Reformers.

Mr. Lamont begins by showing that he did not take the important step, of which his pamphlet is a vindication, "with the prospect or promise of any temporal or pecuniary advantage." This, we think, he shows in a very satisfactory manner, without reference to his just remark, that "in the present state of affairs the Ministers of the Free Church are on the whole about as well paid as those of the Establishment." Indeed it must be obvious to any intelligent reader of the "Vindication" that Mr. Lamont had nothing to fear with reference to his future prospects in life, had he continued in connection with the Free Church. But the whole spirit of the pamphlet is quite sufficient to show that he has evidently not been influenced by such considerations. Even the Rev. Mr. Craig, his late minister at Rothesay, confesses that "he is quite at a loss to understand what reasons are which weigh with him," and never for a moment thinks of imputing mercenary motives. The actual reasons Mr. Lamont developed in a long letter to Mr. Craig, which produced the following reply, a mere evading of the

question, and which, moreover, we must characterize as a singularly rigmorole effusion of Free Church balderdash, spiritual pride, and blarney:—"Rothesay, 26th May, 1853.

"MY DEAR SIR,—I have read your letter—which, I have no doubt, it was very painful for you in some respects to write.—I say, I have read your letter with deep pain and grief, as at once affecting both the character of your head and your way. I grieve, indeed, as one would grieve over a son fallen. I must say it to you, that I cannot otherwise regard you than as a fallen man; and your letter of to-day is to me quite sufficient evidence. It would be most easy for me to answer and refute all the thrice-repeated and thrice-refuted statements and arguments you have so scornfully brought forward as having determined your judgement; but, as you have taken your step, having made your choice, I forbear as useless taking any further notice of them; and must now only mourn over you. What more than this mourning I can and ought to do will be to pray for you, as one fallen from the rank of a testimony-bearer for Christ, and one who has joined the ranks of slanderers and revilers of many eminent saints and faithful servants of Christ.—Yours, with something like anguish of mind,

ROBERT CRAIG.

"Mr. James Lamont."

This letter is wonderfully characteristic. It contains not a single word in reply to the resistless arguments which Mr. Lamont had adduced. It is a more confused, incoherent ejaculation of pitiful whining and maw-wormism, while there is a sting in the tail to the effect that the Rev. Mr. Craig, honest man, has no resource but to pray for one "who has joined the ranks of slanderers and revilers, &c." Is Mr. Craig so obtuse as not to see that this very expression is a piece of reckless unmitigated slander, joined to something very like consummate hypocrisy? What right has Mr. Craig to use such revolting language, especially in writing to one, who, as the following letter will show, is evidently far his superior. The letter is long, but it is important; and we think it really deserves and demands as much publicity as we can give it.—

"7, India Place, Edinburgh, 23th May, 1853.

"REV. DEAR SIR,—I am in receipt of your favour of the 26th inst., which I beg most respectfully to acknowledge. I have no desire to raise or prolong anything like a contest or controversy with you; but there are two or three expressions in your letter which I cannot suffer to pass without remark. You consider that I have abandoned 'the rank of a testimony-bearer for Christ.' This I beg most respectfully, and yet most decidedly, to deny. I have abandoned none of the principles or views which I had previously held on the Headship of Christ, or the absolute independence of the Church in matters purely spiritual. I always held by the principle of an Establishment, which, to the best of my knowledge, is speedily dying out of the Free Church. I am as much a non-intrusionist as ever I was. I never could see my way to the approval, at least to the defence, of absolute popular election; and I never thought the question of patronage was one worth contending much for or against. I left the Church of Scotland in 1843, because I thought the Free Church party had good and valid ground to go upon, and that by legal enactments the rights and liberties of the Establishment were intruded. I was led to believe that the Free Church could in its leading and distinctive principles be identified with the Churches of the first and second Reformation—the Churches of Knox and Melville—and that the Establishment had in 1843 been remodelled and modified into something contemptible in the extreme, if not execrable. More minute inquiry, and more extensive information, have induced me to change my mind on these points; and, perceiving nothing in the constitution of the Church of Scotland to militate against my views of non-intrusion and spiritual independence, and therefore no ground for my standing aloof from her communion while I hold by the principle of an Establishment, I have sought her membership, as the only way in

which I could free myself from the heinous sin of schism. Holding, however, as I do, that Christ is the Sole and Supreme Head of the Church, in the sense that He is her only Lord, her rightful Lawgiver, her supreme and final Judge; and that He alone is the fountain of all saving grace and spiritual blessing, with regard both to their imputation and their application. I cannot consider myself as having abandoned 'the rank of a testimony-bearer for Christ.'

"Rev. dear Sir, had such a charge been brought against me by any except by such a venerable father, I should feel strongly tempted to retort it. Why, I think I have put myself in the true position of a 'testimony-bearer for Christ'; for, if I understand the spirit and tendencies of the age, the great opposition made to the cause of Truth is the denial of Christ's Headship, not over the Church, but over the nations; and, while I apprehend that the time may not be far distant when full expression shall be given to this opposition by the overthrow of Religious Establishments in this country, I cannot but regret most deeply that I should have been so long connected with a section of the Church which has done more than any other to accelerate such a crisis. But I forbear on this point. I am further accused of having 'joined the ranks of slanderers and revilers of many eminent saints and faithful servants of Christ.' It would be painful for me to read such an assertion from any one; but it is doubly so from your pen. If the words be meant to describe the character of the letter which I took the liberty of sending you, I have only to say that, strong as you may think some of the expressions used, it is throughout the language of deep and painful conviction, and comes far short of fully expressing my opinion of the conduct and character of the Disruption. If on the other hand the language is meant to describe the party which I have joined, I must just say that my experience of that party is somewhat limited; but, taking Scripture for my guide, and recalling my own observation and experience, I know well to which party slander and reviling are as necessary food. I am not aware that the Establishment, as a body, or any considerable number of her members, can be accused of slandering or reviling the Free Church; and I presume you do not require to be informed how much the Free Church indulged in slandering and reviling the ministers and people of the Establishment. I have met with much sympathy and Christian kindness at the hands of the members of the Church of Scotland during the last ten days. I build very little upon that. I attach comparatively very little importance to it by itself; for it may be the ephemeral expression of a feeling excited by the novelty of circumstances, and therefore I take it for what it is worth; but I have seen nothing that can lead me to suppose that I have joined the ranks of slanderers and revilers of Christ's eminent saints and faithful servants. It may be that, when I become as well acquainted with my new friends as I am with the old, I shall discover as much exclusive bigotry, uncharitable judging of others, hypocritical pretensions to all that is good, and unscriptural pride and selfishness in the one party as I may have done in the other. If so, I shall mourn over a discovery which shall entirely contradict my past experience, so far as that goes. The only other expression to which I mean to advert is, 'that you cannot otherwise regard me than as a fallen man.' The word *fallen*, as commonly used by theologians, is one of deep and solemn import. A highly respectable member of the Free Church said recently, 'If you join the Establishment, your soul will be damned;' but I cannot believe that with your candour, charity, and Christian liberality you could have used the word in any such sense. If you mean that I have fallen from the esteem and favour of my former friends, I must admit that this consideration was fully before my mind when 'counting the cost'; and, however much I may regret the fact, I have no right now to complain of it. We must follow the path of duty through bad as well as through good report; and