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"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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Religious.

Progress of Religious Thought in Scotland.

It seems only due to the importance of recent ecclesiastical movements in Scotland, to notice them a little more particularly than we have been able to do in the current intelligence of the last few weeks.

As in everything else, so in its religious aspect, Scotland has a character peculiarly its own. No European nation has preserved the form impressed upon it at the Reformation so perfectly. The reformed religion accepted almost unanimously by the Scottish people, took its outward form from their preferences, relied solely on them for its support and defence, and rewarded their allegiance by always affording its sanction to their schemes of liberty. The result of this intimate relation between the Church and the people has been, as might have been expected, a unity of thought and feeling in all matters of religious truth, and an attachment to the Church of their fathers, such as no other land has witnessed. And accordingly, while in politics Scotland is the most liberal section of the United Kingdom, in theology it is the most conservative. Liberty for the slave, for the Italian, for the Pole, have nowhere found more earnest and practical support than north of the Tweed; but liberty to go beyond the limits of thought laid down by its Confession is something for which Scotland has yet to learn to care. Wonderfully acute, inquisitive, courageous, as the Scottish mind is in every other line of life, in the line of religious thought it is timid and feeble. The uniformity of faith brands all innovation in doctrine or in worship as dangerous. The Scotch in general have the same feeling towards every item of their creed and worship, which Augustine had to the findings of the Catholic faith. *Securus judicat orbis terrarum.* The world hath sortied it. There is in Scottish history such a *consensus patrum* of Scottish fathers, we mean of course, in favor of everything believed, that ninety-nine Scotchmen out of every hundred ignoring all other faith as beneath their notice, feel that theirs is the faith which 'always, everywhere, by everybody' has been held. We cannot but regard this feeling as natural. Until about five and twenty years ago when a form of the Arminian controversy was agitated, the points on which the theological controversy was expended were of such fineness as to be unintelligible to English minds. War was waged, for instance, on the question of the relation of Christ as Mediator to earthly monarchies; the relation of natural blessings to Redemption; the order of faith and repentance in conversion. When everything seemed settled but points like these; when their faith was halloed by its association with the names of men like Knox, and Rutherford, and the Erskines, and Chalmers, and when the general management of the Churches was judicious and wise, we can hardly wonder that the Scottish mind should have been content to rest and be thankful, and should look upon everything novel as impertinent and crude.

At the same time few things are more damaging to the progress of Christianity than the stagnation of thought which was thus produced. The torch of truth, the more it's shock it shines. The healing virtue of the pool of Bethesda lay in its being stirred. Inactivity of mind in religion is of itself sufficient to create the impression that religion needs mental inactivity, and that it fears too close a scrutiny. Besides, nothing that is not the subject of earnest thought can have great influence on the lives of thoughtful men. And when science, politics, business, receive from Scotchmen a large amount of thought, it needs no prophet to discern that unless every problem of religion is taken up by Scottish thought, with the same thoroughness with which it treats other things, the influence of religion upon the life of the people must be gradually weakened. In these circumstances we are pleased to observe in recent meetings of the general assemblies of the various churches many indications of freer thought and life. The world at large owes a heavy debt to Scottish energy, Scottish enterprise, and Scottish perseverance for the ad-

vancement of civilization and the diffusion of commerce. And we believe the world of religion might owe an equal debt to Scotland if, with her sturdiness of thought and thoroughness of education, she could throw herself into the religious discussions of the day. We accordingly hail with delight all the symptoms that look like life. Let us note a few of them. First we have the advance towards union between the Free and United Presbyterian Churches. This is indicative of deepening spiritual life and thought in many ways. It shows how completely the Free Church has accepted her position as a voluntary church. There may be some theories still left as to the duty of the State to support the Church, but the hankings after establishment are gone, and the speeches of Dr. BUCHANAN and Dr. CANDLISH show also that all expectation of it is gone. This wish for union shows, too, a growing breadth of religious feeling. The United Presbyterian Church holds largely what are known in Scotland as the views of the "marrow" men. Otherwise Calvinistic, her ministers believe very largely in the universality of the atonement. The Free Church on the other hand, whose religious thought is more tinged with pietism, is more rigidly Calvinistic limiting the provision of atonement to the elect. This difference may not seem great to English readers, but it is somewhat large in a Scottish eye; and yet this difference is, by the leading men of the Church, ignored.

The desire for union is in itself also an omen of good. As Congregationalists we may dread the overmastering influence of a large body like the United Churches, which will number more, probably, than two-thirds of the community. But, on the other hand, just in the degree in which the Church is large it must be liberal. The bulk which makes it more unwieldy for action of any sort, would probably make it more difficult to use it as an instrument of bigotry for the coercion of truth. As power is more concentrated it is less jealous of the freedom and activity of individual churches. And if there is to be any extraneous government at all, perhaps the larger the governing body the better. So that we have not the fear of the union which some Congregationalists have expressed. To accomplish it, Sectarianism must be sacrificed in some degree, and in that degree the result must be for good.

While there is this moving towards union on the part of the churches, each of them presents another proof of life, viz.: a desire of greater freedom in worship. But for the union project it is believed that the United Presbyterian Church would be ready to authorize the considerable changes in its worship which are needed to adapt its services in England to English hearers; while in the Free Church a committee has been appointed to report on the expediency of introducing hymns in public worship.

But the most significant of all movements is that in the Established Church against patronage. By a majority of the assembly, the abuses of patronage have been asserted, and a call has been made for such a modification of Lord ABERDEEN'S Act as will have the effect of placing the election of the minister more in the hands of the people. And in keeping with this effort after freedom, only last week an influential meeting was held, the real object of which was to form a party of liberty in the Church itself. There were diverse opinions represented there, but the ground taken up by all the speakers was virtually that of the Broad Church party here, viz.: that a National Church should be ample enough to embrace within its fold all opinions consistent with faith in the Saviour.

Principal TULLOCH spoke of "that Church being doomed" which could not make room for differences of opinion in the non-essentials of the faith. What this new party—which is largely the anti-patronage party as well—may do, we cannot, of course, divide; but it has significance, and, taken with the other indications of a awakening which we have noted, it looks as if the noble religious life of Scotland were feeling and answering the influences of the age. And when Scotland faces the religious thought of the day, and gives herself to criticism with all the sympathy she has cherished for dogma, we may expect a contribution to the side of evangelical truth such as no nation can surpass.—*Freeman.*

Loosened Spokes.

"I want you to mend my wagon," said Mr. Johnson, as he drove up to a wagon-maker's shop.

"What is broken?" said Mr. Gale.
"The spokes are loose, owing, I suppose, to their not being well seasoned. I have been afraid to use it, lest it should give way." When he had gone, Mr. Gale's partner went out and examined the wagon.

"The spokes in all the wheels are very loose," said he. "His wagon spokes are not the only things getting loose. It would be well for him if they were."

"I don't understand you."
"His principles are getting to be loose. He will break down morally, some day, I am afraid."

"Can't his principles be mended, as well as his wagon?"

"Not quite so easily, if at all. When he first moved here, his principles about keeping the Sabbath were very strict. For years I never saw him out of the house on Sunday, except in connection with public worship, or some work of necessity. Now he often wanders about his farm on Sunday, and occasionally calls on his neighbors."

"Perhaps he makes religious visits."
"Perhaps he does; I can't say that he don't."

"He may have come to the conclusion that the Sabbath is a Jewish institution, and not binding on Christians."

"I have never heard that he entertained any such views. His mode of doing business indicates a loosening of his principles in regard to justice. I used to regard him as a very careful and exact man in all his dealings; but if I were to buy anything from him now, I should want to see it weighed or measured."—*Presbyterian Banner.*

How to act as a Steward for God.

I. DETERMINE FOR YOURSELF WHAT PROPORTION OF YOUR INCOME YOU OUGHT TO CONSECRATE TO THE SERVICE OF GOD.

Nobody has a right to do this except yourself; but it is your duty. The Word of God will be your guide. You will find something there in favour of making the proportion a tenth; but the New Testament rule, about which there can be no question, is, "As God hath prospered you," 1 Cor. xvi. 2. Do not leave this point comfortably vague, but honestly consider it and fix in your conscience the proportion you should give.

II. DO THIS ON THE LORD'S DAY. "On the First Day of the week," It need not take a long time; but it is worth while to do it seriously and thoroughly for the satisfaction of your own mind, as being yourself one who is "bought with a price."

III. SET APART THE SUM, whatever it may be, week by week, so that it shall not be mixed up with your other monies. If your income is a fixed one, a separate purse will be necessary; if you are in business and constantly turning over money, a book regularly kept will serve.

IV. OUT OF THIS BAG MEET ALL CALLS UPON YOU TO GIVE. Take a portion of its contents every Lord's day to His house. Feed your needy brother or sister out of it. Pay your subscriptions to missions, &c., out of it. You need not dispose of all the Lord's Bag contents within the week: some weeks you may have little occasion to give at all; still faithfully put in every First Day of the week what you feel you ought: the occasion for a larger gift will come in good time.

Such is the method. Maintain it with regularity until it has become as much a matter of sacred habit as family worship or going to Church; and you will "provide yourself a bag which—as regards this world and the next—waxeth not old."

REASONS FOR ADOPTING THIS METHOD.

I. IT IS SCRIPTURAL. From the earliest days of revealed religion, we find God's people appropriating a definite sum to His service, and doing this not when collectors went round, but of their own accord beforehand. Abraham, Gen. xiv. 20; Heb. vii. 4-7; Jacob, Gen. xxviii. 18-22; David, 1 Chron. xxix. 2. "First fruits of all," Prov. iii. 9-10.

Such prepared readiness for giving has the example of our Lord. John xiii. 29. And

nothing can be plainer than the injunction in 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2, to make our devotion of substance to God, as frequently as the First Day of the week comes round, and under Lord's Day influences.

II. IT IS ATTENDED BY MANY GREAT ADVANTAGES.

1. It enables you to give more.

2. You have the satisfaction of knowing that you are giving all you should. Having settled the matter in your own closet, you feel quite independent of the judgment of men.

3. You give with ease and pleasure. If you have anything for yourself, you have always something for God, according to this plan: and that being already all devoted to him, grudging is out of the question.

4. It is a steady check on the love of the world. How greatly that is needed, you know. 1 Tim. vi. 7, 10.

5. It tends to secure "a bag that waxeth not old, a treasure in the heavens that fadeth not." Luke xii. 33; 1 Tim. vi. 18, 19. God pays no regard to the amount we give, (Mark xii. 43;) but only to the good conscience, love, and self-denial we evince in giving matter of thought and preparation, how can they be thus acceptable to God?

6. It has a hallowing influence on the whole of your substance." Rom. xi. 16. Many a bankrupt would have been a rich man this day, if he had formed the habit of trying to understand his financial position, once a week.—*Rev. A. M. Symington*

Boldness at a Funeral.

Dr. Spring, of New York, has never been wanting in decision to form his views or in courage to proclaim them. Some of the obstinacy belonging to the Puritan nature was inherited from his birth-place, and has found frequent exhibition in life. He tells in his reminiscences the following story of his course at the funeral of a Universalist, who had begged him on a death-bed to announce that he had adhered all Universalist views. Dr. Spring says:

I accordingly attended his funeral, which was very large, and composed of various characters, and some hard-visaged men. It was a Freemason's funeral; and as we stood around the vault in the north-east angle of the old cemetery, the chaplain of the lodge read their appointed burial-service, and closed with the memorable words, So mote it be! The whole proceeding was sufficiently ridiculous, absolutely unmeaning, and in my judgment not far from impious.

I did not interrupt it, but, abiding my time, felt nervous for an unembarrassed and bold deliverance of God's truth. I begged the attention of the audience, as I had a message from the deceased which he had requested me to deliver to them over his grave, and which I had promised to deliver. "There he lies, but being dead yet speaketh. He did not die a Universalist, but in the full belief of that Gospel which proclaims to every creature, 'He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.' He wished me to say to you that he had no confidence in the soul-destroying doctrine that all men would be saved. It is a soul-destroying doctrine, my friends, and it is nothing else than the devil's lie. It is the worst form of infidelity, and the most subtle and alarming delusion of the age. It is the great deceiver's Gospel, and before you are aware of it will conduct you to the world of despair."

As I proceeded, and with increased fervor I perceived a confusion and busting in the crowd, and heard the words, "Damn him." One of the ruling elders of the Brick church, the late Richard Cunningham, who from the first stood near me, took my hand and said, "Don't be afraid, they are chained. Go on." I went on, and was again assailed with the imprecation, "Go to hell." Gentlemen, I am glad you have changed your minds. I perceive that you now believe there is a hell, else you would not tell me to go there, and when you say *Damn him*, I perceive that you no longer deny that there is a damning God in heaven. So your departed brother believed; but he believed also in Him who is the Saviour of the lost. I will not reciprocate, and say to you *Go to hell*, but rather pray that "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ may be with you all. Amen."—*W. & R.*