

THE
REPORT
OF A
COMMITTEE, APPOINTED BY THE SYNOD
OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NOVA SCOTIA,
TO
PREPARE A STATEMENT OF MEANS
FOR
*PROMOTING RELIGION IN THE CHURCH, SECURING
THE PERMANENCE OF THE CHURCH,*
AND
ENLARGING ITS BOUNDS.

AND ALSO,
THE SUBSEQUENT RESOLUTIONS AND ARRANGEMENTS OF THE SYNOD,

WITH
Other Documents

ON THE
PROPOSED UNION OF THE SECESSION IN SCOTLAND.

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The God of Heaven he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and  
build. JEREMIAH.

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1819.

ADVERTISEMENT.

ANTICIPATING a union between the two sides of the Secession in Scotland, this republication of the Report of the Synod of Nova Scotia, is most respectfully submitted to the consideration of the Ministers and Members of the Secession Church. The Report speaks volumes on the happy results of union. It proposes rational and scriptural plans for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom in the world. It embodies the principles on which the union has been effected in Nova Scotia, and, in fact, embraces the grounds of admission to office in the church, on principles which cannot fail to meet the approbation of every enlightened Seceder.

THE Appendix affords a favourable specimen of the spirit and temper with which the cause of union will be met by the General Associate Synod, as well as the feeling already manifested by both sides of the Secession Church.

THE resolutions of the Glasgow meeting are only an echo of the sentiments of the people in general, and, as such, are submitted to the serious consideration of all who feel an interest in the cause of God and of Truth.

Glasgow, February, 1819.

Truro, Court House, October 9, 1817.

The Synod met, and was constituted—Took into consideration the Report of the Committee for suggesting ways and means for promoting religion—The Synod remitted the Report to the Committee, and enjoined them to revise it, and to publish it without delay.

JAMES ROBSON, Syd. Clk.

REPORT, &c.

THE Committee, in stating to the Synod the result of their investigations, beg leave to make a few preliminary remarks, which, in considering the subject of their commission, occurred to themselves, and directed their attention to several points contained in the following statement.

The present times are distinguished by the energetic exertions of good men in almost every part of the world, to disseminate the knowledge and influence of pure and undefiled religion. In the success of these labours of love, the church also contemplates additional proofs of divine faithfulness; and the approach of those days, when all ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and all kindreds of the nations shall bow before him. The Sun of Righteousness has arisen upon the dark places of the earth; and many, guided by his illuminating rays, are already coming from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and are sitting down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Amidst this enlargement of the border of Zion, the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia appears as an object of no ordinary interest. Commencing, not many years ago, in the feeble attempts of a few individuals to provide the Gospel for themselves and their families, it has, by the divine blessing, acquired a consistency and extent which promise much good to the wilderness and solitary place. Nor ought it to be overlooked, that the whole Church is yet the fruit of missionary labour. Though at present consisting of several Presbyteries, it still bears the character of a Missionary Church. It contains many who have been redeemed unto God, but none, trained in its bosom to the work of the ministry.

The union of its parts, which has been lately formed, deserves also, to be noted as an unusual event. Religious parties have rarely coalesced without some dereliction of truth or duty; but an adherence to both is the basis upon which this Synod was founded. Every member of it proceeded upon what appeared to himself to be scriptural principles, and acquiesced in the measure, as well calculated to promote the purity, and enlarge the bounds, of the Church. These were the points upon which all had fixed their attention. Though a union of persons appeared to be highly desirable; a general concentration of energy upon that work in which all were individually labouring, was chiefly regarded; and the the Committee conceive the investigation assigned them, to be the first fruits of union rendered subservient to this great end. In

obedience to appointment, therefore, they will proceed to specify some of those means which seem to them calculated to cherish religion in the Church, to secure its permanence, and to enlarge its bounds.

I.—Means for promoting Religion in the Church.

From the nature of religion, the internal prosperity of a Church must always be proportioned to the degree of scriptural order observed by its members. The divine blessing is the source of all spiritual improvement; and submission to the authority of God is the only means by which that can be attained. It is the order of religion, also, that every degree of faith and obedience, introduces a corresponding dispensation of grace. Viewing the Church, then, as expressly instituted for the mutual assistance of its members and their conjunct communion with God, every act of religion contributes to the general advantage. For the same reason, individual neglect of means must affect the general fellowship, and injure the interests of the whole; and hence the warning of scripture: "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled."

From these remarks it will appear how important it is, that a just direction be given to the faith and practice of the Church; and consequently, that those who teach and those who rule, discharge with faithfulness the duties assigned them.

In all religious societies, the conduct and character of public teachers, have been experienced to be of extensive influence. This arises from the nature of their office, and from that confidence which the Members of a Church usually repose in the integrity of the person to whom they have intrusted the direction of their spiritual affairs. Viewing him as a teacher and a pattern of righteousness, they imperceptibly imbibe his sentiments, imitate his conduct, and even adopt his language in their acts of devotion. For these reasons, illustrations of the private deportment and public labours of clergymen, constitute a prominent feature of the Christian revelation. The scriptures, in revealing the doctrines of religion, propose themselves also as a pattern of public teaching and ministerial conduct; and, upon these points, they illustrate precept by example. When they explicitly define the character of a preacher of the gospel, they show what our Lord himself was, and how his apostles taught and practised. The interests of the Church therefore require, that its Ministers, in studying the scriptures for improvement, keep equally in view, an acquaintance with doctrinal truth and apostolic example. Thus, they will be prepared to act as religion prescribes; and their ministrations, by the divine blessing, will tend to illuminate and purify the Church.

The Committee do not presume to specify what course of doctrine may, in the present state of the Church, be most profitably

taught. This must be left to the judgment of teachers, directed by the word of God, and by just views of the particular circumstances of those congregations over which they preside. Only, it may be in general observed, that the grace of the gospel cannot be too clearly stated, nor rectitude of conduct too strongly enforced.

With respect to doctrine, however, the Committee would remind the Synod, that the progress of religion in the Church, depends much upon ministerial improvement. It is a peculiarity of the Christian system, that it prepares man for duty and happiness, by forming his mind to intelligence. On this account, public teachers ought to be men of information; and those who have acquired the most enlarged views, must be best qualified to promote these important designs of religion. For the improvement of the Church, therefore, divine authority enjoins that ministerial profiting appear; and experience exemplifies its invigorating influence upon the minds of Christians. Every person who has observed human nature, knows the power of variety. This, every scribe instructed unto the Kingdom of God, should turn to the account of religion, and bring from his treasures things new and old.

From the particular situation both of the Church and its Ministers, much attention is due to this subject. At present, the prosperity of the Church requires an unusual exertion of talent; yet, for various reasons, it can scarcely attain what is necessary for the stated and ordinary discharge of duty. The difficulties unavoidable in the planting of a Church, are a powerful obstruction to literary pursuits: they even deprive a clergyman of the time requisite for deep research into the subjects, most immediately connected with his public labours. Without advert- ing to what cannot be remedied in the present state of the Church, the Committee would only request the Synod to consider, that many Ministers are deriving a part of their support from sources unconnected with their official duties. The Committee particularly refer to farming and teaching, which, though perhaps necessary to the existence of some congregations, must occupy much time that might be more profitably employed for the furtherance of the gospel. It appears adviseable, therefore, that the Synod form some arrangements which may, by degrees, connect more closely the preaching and support of the gospel, and also excite its Ministers to exert their talents for literary and theological improvement.

Upon the first of these points the Committee would observe, that modes of ministerial subsistence, unconnected with the dispensation of divine ordinances, do not in general correct the evil which they are designed to remedy. They tend to abstract the attention of Christians from the discharge of a duty, which appears to be requisite in order to the progress of religion. If

a Church does not feel an interest in the support of its ordinances, its members will also want that energy of exertion, upon which its enlargement and permanence depend; and it has been usually experienced that the Clergyman who has other resources than the liberality of the Church will, on that very account, receive less sympathy and attention.

With respect to literary and theological improvement, the Committee would recommend that discourses for the pulpit be prepared with care. To preach truth is important; but the workman who would not be ashamed, must do it seasonably and well. A careful observation of the particular circumstances of the Church, correctness of thought and expression, and a becoming mode of address, are all useful means for fixing the attention of men upon the truths of religion. Even the last of these, as a profitable recommendation of truth, ought to be cultivated with care. Oratory has ever been a powerful engine in society; and, surely, the gospel is entitled to all its energies. Blue and purple and scarlet, were formerly consecrated to the service of God; and no ornament of which religion is susceptible, should yet be withheld. Accuracy of sentiment and language, and a dignity of enunciation according with the sublimity of scriptural truth, constitute a part of that simplicity and godly sincerity which the Ministers of Christ are enjoined to observe. The Clergyman, therefore, who details his crude conceptions, or uses an uncouthness of language or manner, obscures the splendour of truth, and gives to religion an unseemly and forbidding appearance. For promoting improvement in these points, the Committee would recommend the revival of an obsolete practice, from which the Presbyterian Church in other countries has derived much advantage: that is, that the meetings of Presbyteries be as frequent as possible; and be designed for ministerial improvement, as well as for the direction of the affairs of the Church: and, that each Clergyman in rotation, for the exercise of his talents, receive a subject for discussion, which he shall deliver at next ordinary meeting, subject to the critical remarks of his brethren.

The Committee would farther remind the Synod of the relation which the discipline of a Church bears to its progress in religion. Discipline is evidently a leading feature of the Christian system; and where it has been regulated by scriptural principles, experience has uniformly proved its excellence. He who preaches the truth, is enjoined to take care that it be believed and practised in the Church. The arrangements of Christ for its government, also, mark the importance of this part of duty. The Minister who labours in word and doctrine, has helps for government allowed him; and it will be always found, that much of the prosperity of a congregation, depends upon the zeal and activity of its session. Beside that purity of deportment, there-

fore which these ought to exemplify, their station in the Church requires them to feel an interest in the preservation of its purity, and to exercise an affectionate vigilance over the conduct of its members. For gaining these ends, an example of ministerial faithfulness is, perhaps, the most effectual means. The sentiments of the Clergyman who shows an affectionate concern for the religious improvement of the members of the Church, will generally have much weight with his session; and this influence will consequently assist him to give a just direction to their views and conduct. The Committee would likewise recommend, that, in all ministerial visitation of families, the attendance of every elder in his own quarter be enjoined, as a necessary part of this religious duty. In those Churches which we profess to imitate, this regulation has been adopted with much profit to religion. Such an arrangement tends to excite, alike the vigilance of elders and the circumspection of the members of the Church. It also enables a Clergyman to know more exactly the state of families and individuals under his inspection; and thus assists him to render his intercourse with them subservient to their improvement.

The Committee would farther recommend, that, in all acts of government and discipline in particular congregations, a strict attention to regularity be observed. What is designed for preserving good order, should never be done in a disorderly manner. Authority belongs to the session conjunctly; and is to be exercised, only where its members have been regularly convened and constituted in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Where this order is not observed, the Church loses an essential part of its dignity, and discipline much of its influence. The irregular exercise of discipline may afford to the members of a session a temporary convenience; but it will ultimately affect their general respectability and influence in the congregation over which they preside. It will expose them individually to the prejudice and dislike of the members of the Church, and occasionally devolve upon a Minister much blame, from which it is one express use of a session to relieve him. Besides, discipline irregularly exercised, cannot enjoy the divine blessing in the same degree, as when all things are done decently and in order.

With respect to the admission of Members into the Church, the Committee would advise that it be conducted in such a manner, as may illustrate the nature of a Christian profession. For this purpose, a formula containing a profession of the faith and of the submission due to the good order of religion, might be adopted and used in all the congregations under the Synod's inspection. This would establish uniformity in the Church. It would also give to admissions an impressive solemnity; and, in the subsequent exercise of discipline, might be productive of advantage.

The Committee would farther observe, that the admission of Members into the Church, requires particular care. Faith and

holiness are the characteristics of the family of Christ; and without clean hands and a pure heart, none should be received into his house. High degrees of purity, it is true, are not to be required; for the Church is Christ's school, and his children are disciples. But where persons without the marks of discipleship, are admitted, a temporary quiet is purchased at the expense of future trouble. Sessions which, for the sake of peace, allow the Church to be defiled will not remain without reason to repent their unfaithfulness. Unworthy members are roots of bitterness, which usually re-act upon the religious comfort of its rulers.

But farther, in inspecting the conduct of the Members of the Church, much watchfulness ought to be exercised. To go on to perfection is the Christian character; and to stimulate the Church to sustain it honourably, is one principal use of a session. It is, therefore, the duty of elders, to exercise an affectionate vigilance for the improvement of those over whom they preside; and both by their example and influence, to stimulate them to higher degrees of Christian purity. For these ends, religion has provided the necessary means; and it is the duty of a Session to take care that these be properly improved. In addition to the arrangements already introduced into the Church, the Committee would suggest a few particulars, which appear to them calculated to promote the knowledge, spirit, and good order, of religion.

It must be always important, that the members of a Church perceive clearly the line of distinction between themselves and those who are not in its communion. At present, however, in many congregations under the Synod's inspection, this is not so obvious as religion requires. As yet, to form congregations has been the employment of Ministers. During the progress of this work, their support cannot be derived solely from the Members of the Church; and besides, in the management of the temporal affairs of congregations, all who contribute to their support, have usually a share. By these means it not unfrequently happens, that those in the communion of the Church, overlook their particular relation to their Minister, and the corresponding obligations under which religion has placed them. Instead of viewing themselves as a part of one body, united to their Clergyman by solemn and endearing ties, they consider themselves merely as individuals, paying him so much salary and receiving certain privileges in return; and thus, they are prevented from feeling a due interest in the prosperity of the Church; and their Clergyman, in cases of difficulty, is left without that encouragement which they ought to afford him.

It appears, therefore, to the Committee advisable, that every Minister, beside explaining occasionally the nature of a Church, should, together with his session, from time to time, meet with those under their inspection by themselves; and engage with them in such acts of religion, as may fix their views upon their individual relation to the Church and its rulers. In the present state of the Church,

also, to lay before them at those meetings the transactions of the session; and particularly such acts of discipline, as would impress upon their minds the importance of purity of communion, might be attended with profit. Such meetings would give them a practical view of the distinction between the Church and the world. Thus, they would also become better acquainted with each other as members of the same Church, and ultimately, more closely united. Besides, by such occasional reports from the session, they would gradually acquire that interest in the purity of the Church, which every member should feel.

The Committee also conceive, that the increase of Meetings for Christian Fellowship, would be a gain to religion. Experience has proved their excellence; and, in all pure Churches, they are duly appreciated and cherished with care. When men fear the Lord, and speak often one to another; the divine blessing attends them. Such friendly and affectionate intercourse, adds to the energy of Christians; and thus becomes profitable to themselves and to the general interests of the Church.

The advancement of religion likewise requires, that a more marked attention be paid to the younger part of the Members of the Church. This Synod maintains that the children of professing parents belong to the Church; but, as yet, the operation of this principle has been almost entirely restricted to their admission by baptism. Afterwards they have been viewed, rather as related to their parents, than as connected with the household of faith. This, the committee would remark, obscures the excellence, and restricts the benefits, of the Christian system. Admission into the Church, is particularly with a view to the benefit of communion. Christianity, also, has its degrees of fellowship adapted to every period of life; and, perhaps, the neglect of this benevolent and comprehensive arrangement, with respect to youth, has injured religion more than any other cause that can be assigned. Youth is the season in which the mind is most flexible, and in which habits are most easily formed. Then, also, vice is more alluring, and less easily resisted. It is, therefore, that period of life which needs the greatest attention. If youth be neglected, the care of manhood will be both more difficult and less profitable: no labour in harvest can compensate for the want of cultivation in spring. The Committee, therefore, would earnestly recommend the adoption of the order of the primitive Church; that those received into communion, be divided into full members and catechumens; and that the latter, at an early period of life, be taken under the inspection of sessions, for instruction and the exercise of discipline according to circumstances. To give efficiency to this arrangement, sessions should be enjoined to meet with them as often as possible, for their improvement in such parts of religion as are befitting their years.

The Committee would farther advise, that Sessions endeavour to introduce among the younger Members of the Church, a taste

for that rational and religious information which may be acquired by reading. Many young persons, merely because they have not been habituated to employ their hours of relaxation in such a way as might both amuse and instruct, are ensnared by temptation, and lost to the Church. In several parts of the Church, congregational libraries have been already begun; and the Committee conceive, that, were these more general, and adapted in part to the capacity of youth, religion would soon experience their beneficial consequences. Were the interesting information respecting the progress of the gospel, which is now annually published by many religious societies, also diffused through the Church, it would both afford instruction, and contribute to form the taste of its members. For this purpose the Committee would propose, that some members of Synod from time to time publish an abstract of religious intelligence. This measure they conceive to be vastly important. Without enumerating the advantages which other Churches have derived from periodical publications, the Committee would only remark, that, in this country where there are few books and little inclination to read, a judicious selection of religious intelligence, interspersed with just views of scriptural truth, would not only amuse and instruct, but imperceptibly introduce a disposition favourable alike to literature and religious improvement.

In recommending this measure, the Committee are naturally led to suggest, that a printing press, under the controul of the Synod, would be a valuable acquisition. Particular circumstances may occasionally require them, to give publicity to their views and proceedings. Besides, individual Clergymen, by exercising their literary talents for the press, might improve themselves, benefit the public, and do honour to the Church. But, in this Province, at present, the state of printing presents a formidable obstruction to the attainment of these ends.

The Committee would likewise suggest to the Synod, as a useful measure, that they adopt some arrangement, by which the exact state of the Church may be annually ascertained. For this purpose, each session might be enjoined to deliver every year to their Presbytery, a statement of such particulars respecting the congregation under their inspection, as might illustrate the degree of success attending the dispensation of divine ordinances. From these again, a presbyterial abstract might be made and transmitted to the Synod. This would concentrate every circumstance of importance; and, by giving a just direction to their views, contribute to regulate their subsequent measures. Perhaps, also, the publication of a brief summary of the whole, might be an advantage to the Church.

But farther, the Committee conceive that a regular correspondence with evangelical Churches in various parts of the world, would be a useful measure. This, in the infant state of the Church of Nova Scotia, would add to its respectability; and were the in-

formation given and received, occasionally communicated to its members, it would assist them to feel an interest in the prosperity of its affairs. Besides, it may be observed that such a correspondence, without affecting the principles of the Church, would tend to diffuse among its members, that enlargement of views and catholic spirit which ought always to characterize the house of the living God.

II.—*Means for securing the permanence of the Church.*

The Synod are already aware, that, when a Church is founded, to provide for its permanence is both a necessary and important measure. It involves in it the interests of the present and succeeding ages; and the Committee apprehend, that, from the present state of the Church of Nova Scotia, it is entitled to immediate and serious consideration. This Synod is yet a missionary Church, and may be said to have neither plan nor arrangement by which its wants can be in future supplied. Already, the Church has many demands unanswered; and were any brother removed from his labours, this would at the same time increase the wants, and diminish the efficiency, of the Church. It appears, therefore, to the Committee, that every member of this Synod is indispensably obligated to exert himself, that the ordinances of religion may be transmitted to succeeding ages.

For the purpose of immediate supply, it is necessary to cultivate the friendship, and solicit the assistance of those Churches in Britain, which have hitherto cherished the gospel in this country. To these, the gratitude of the Church of Nova Scotia is justly due. They have done much to plant and water it; and they still present every encouragement to expect their unabated friendship. The Committee, however, would remind the Synod, that this mode of supplying the Church, will be attended with considerable expense. This, as far as it is practicable, should be borne by those who are receiving the benefit. At present, the ability of the Church of Nova Scotia is small, and it has much to do; yet the Synod, by an exertion proportioned to their resources, ought to manifest, that, if they possessed the power, they do not want the inclination.

The Committee, however, in suggesting the propriety of looking in the mean time to the British Churches for Preachers of the Gospel, would request the Synod to consider, that all supplies from that quarter must be temporary and precarious. By and by, also, these may be required to a greater extent, than those Churches may be able to afford. Besides, such a mode of providing for the wants of the Church, has many disadvantages. Without entering into a detail of these, it may be only observed, that a Church which has no resources for a succession of Clergymen, can neither be extensive nor permanent. The Committee would, therefore, earnestly recommend to the Synod, the establishment of a seminary of edu-

cation from which Preachers of the Gospel may be procured; and, in the event of attaining this valuable acquisition, it might be also advisable, to afford to young men of piety and talents, every possible encouragement to dedicate themselves to the work of the ministry.

III.—*Means for the enlargement of the Church.*

With respect to the enlargement of the Church, the Committee would remark that much depends upon the Church itself. By the divine blessing, its enlargement will necessarily arise out of the usefulness of its ministers and its general respectability. It cannot, therefore, be too strongly impressed upon the mind of all in its communion, that their deportment ought to be a recommendation of their religious principles. It is from an observation of facts, that the quality of any denomination of Christians, is usually estimated. Practical godliness, then, is the best recommendation of doctrinal truth, and an appointed means for the enlargement of the Church. When its members approve themselves to be good men; attentive to the ordinances of God; and diligent to acquit themselves in their social relations; they adorn religion: and others, seeing their good works, glorify God in the day of visitation. As the congregations under the Synod's inspection, therefore, can be noted for their attachment to religion, submission to good order, and public spirit to promote the ends of society, they will contribute to the enlargement of the Presbyterian Church.

In present circumstances it is also necessary, that every Minister consider his relation to the Church at large, and his consequent duty to exert himself for the prosperity of the whole. The interests of a young and growing Church, require much general co-operation and labour. On this account, to the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia, enlarged views of the ministerial office are at present particularly important. Where so much good may be done, every Clergyman should exemplify an enterprising spirit to extend his usefulness, by taking his full share of those general labours, which may be judged requisite for the dissemination of religious knowledge.

The Committee have made these remarks partly, because missionary excursions appear to be a principal means for the enlargement of the Church; and these they would recommend to be as frequent and extensive as possible. They would also observe, that the success of such missions must considerably depend upon the way in which they are conducted. When our Lord missioned his disciples, he sent two and two together; and perhaps the Synod, particularly in sending the Gospel to places not previously visited, might find it advantageous to adopt the same plan. The Committee would likewise advise, that no remuneration be taken by those who are sent. If any settlement wish to show

their sense of the obligation, it would be more consistent with the dignity of the Church, that they be directed to transmit their offering to the funds of the Synod; from which the reasonable expense of missions ought to be defrayed.

The Committee would farther suggest, that in all missionary excursions, it would be advisable to introduce into destitute places, not only the Gospel, but the order of the Church. In order to the progress of religion, both are requisite; and the Committee conceive that were this plan adopted, congregations might be gradually formed in many places, where the preaching of the Gospel alone, would not tend to the enlargement of the Church. The prudent husbandman fences, as well as sows, his field; and the children of this world ought not to be wiser than the children of light.

Such are the principal means, which appear to the Committee necessary for promoting the prosperity of the Church. Several of the measures recommended, will subject the Synod to much labour and expense: but the cause deserves both; and neither Ministers nor other Members of the Church, should shrink from the exertion. In this labour of love, it belongs to the former to set the example; and the Committee express themselves with confidence, in adding, that the latter will tread in their steps, and perform their full share. In all religious societies there will be individuals, who, for the sake of saving a few pence, will muster a host of objections against every work of benevolence. But the Committee persuade themselves, that, in the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia, neither the number nor influence of such is extensive. The measures which they have recommended, involve in them the very existence of the Church; and, on less important occasions, the public spirit of many of its Members, has been amply proved.

From the experience of other Churches the Synod will ascertain, what plans they have found most effectual for calling forth and concentrating the liberality of Christians. The operative influence of religion is every where the same; and similar measures, adopted in this church, will produce the like fruits. In the present case, the Committee would advise the Synod, to lay before the several congregations under their inspection, a plain statement of their plans for promoting the interests of religion. These, according to their importance, will receive the approbation of every reasonable and religious man. The publication of such a statement, will also secure their concurrence in every good work; and, at the same time, counteract the influence of misrepresentation.

With respect to resources, the Synod already possess every reasonable encouragement. Many congregations within the bounds of the Church, have, with alacrity, connected themselves with the British and Foreign Bible Society; and it is not to be supposed that these, feeling for the uninstructed in distant lands, will resist

an application, which aims at providing the ordinances of religion for the very place where they have acquired a property, and where they expect their children to remain. This subject, the Committee can state, has already engaged the attention of many Members of the Church; and several very generous legacies have been bequeathed, for promoting some of those plans which are now proposed to the Synod.

At present, the Committee would only beg leave farther to remind the Synod, that it is not the ordinary business of the Church which now requires their attention. This Synod is placed in circumstances which call for unusual arrangements; arrangements, that equally require enlightened views and persevering exertions. The measures, which they adopt, will involve in them the honour and success of the Gospel in this part of the world: they will affect the present, and may extend their influence to succeeding ages. To the conduct of this Synod, then, there must be attached a solemn and awful responsibility; and, therefore, the Committee fervently pray, that every Member may abundantly receive the spirit of illumination from above, and exemplify that wisdom which is full of mercy and good fruits.

*Abstract of the Resolutions and Arrangements of Synod
upon the preceding Report.*

1. Ministers were directed to suggest to their people, the propriety of appointing, in each congregation, fit persons for the management of its temporal affairs: also, to report progress at next meeting of Synod.

2. It was recommended to Ministers that, in the ministerial visitation of families, they be attended by an elder.

3. It was ordered that Presbyteries meet as often as possible: and that, at each meeting, a discourse upon some topic, previously assigned, be delivered by one of the Members; which discourse shall be afterwards criticised by the brethren in private.

4. Each Presbytery was enjoined to prepare for the consideration of the Synod at their next meeting, a formula of questions, to be put to persons at their admission into the communion of the Church.

5. It was recommended to Sessions, that they occasionally meet with the members of the Church, apart from those who may usually worship with them, for appropriate social and religious exercises.

6. It was appointed, as a part of established order in all congregations under the Synod's inspection, that, when the children of church members are about fourteen years of age, they shall be taken under the direction of the Session, for instruction and the exercise of discipline.

7. Ministers were enjoined to recommend to their people, the formation of fellowship meetings for improvement in knowledge and practical religion.

8. It was recommended that congregational libraries be formed in every part of the Church: and that, in the selection of books, regard be had to the improvement of youth.

9. Ministers were enjoined to open subscriptions in their respective congregations, for the purpose of purchasing a printing press, to be placed under the direction of the Synod.

10. The Rev. DUNCAN ROSS, THOMAS M'CULLOCH, and JAMES ROBSON, were appointed a standing Committee of Correspondence with other Churches, and enjoined to report their proceedings at next meeting of Synod.

11. The consideration of the proposal of a periodical publication, for circulating religious intelligence and diffusing religious knowledge, was deferred till a printing press be procured.

12. Sessions were enjoined to report annually to their respective Presbyteries, the number of members, and the state of religion, in the congregations under their inspection; and Presbyteries, to transmit to the Synod an annual abstract of these reports.

13. It was recommended to all congregations under the Synod's inspection, to show their attachment to religion and literature, by encouraging the proposed seminary of education in Pictou.

14. It was agreed, that no member of Synod shall receive any remuneration from those among whom he may be occasionally missioned to labour: and, that, if those persons who are visited, desire to show their attachment to the gospel, by contributing to the support of its ordinances, they be directed to transmit their offering to the funds of the Synod; from which the reasonable expense of missions shall be in future defrayed.

15. Ministers who may be missioned to destitute places, were enjoined to introduce, as far as it may be practicable, the order of the Church.

*Formula of Questions to be put, by Order of the Synod, to
all who are ordained to the Office of the Holy Ministry.*

1. Do you believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, and the only rule of faith and practice?

2. Do you believe that the whole doctrine contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, as received by this Church,* is a scriptural exhibition of divine truth; and do you engage, according to your station, to profess and maintain it in the Church?

3. Do you believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only King and Head of the Church, and that he has revealed, in Scripture, those principles according to which it is to be ruled?

4. Do you believe that the Presbyterian form of government, as maintained in this Church,† is agreeable to the Word of God; and do you promise to maintain it doctrinally, and practically to adhere to its discipline, both as a Member of the Church and as a minister of Christ?

* This Church receives the whole doctrine contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, except that part of it which respects the Magistrate's power in matters of religion. They give no decision as to the doctrine taught in these words, Con. Ch. XXIII, Sec. III. "Yet he hath authority, and it is his duty, to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in the Church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire, that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed, and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered and observed; for the better effecting whereof, he hath power to call Synods, to be present at them." And they deny the doctrine taught in these words, *Ibidem*, "And to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God." And they hold that Church Rulers have authority, *ex officio*, to meet for government and discipline, whensoever the circumstances of the Church require it, any thing in Con. Ch. XXXI. Sec. II. notwithstanding.

. It is no new thing for Presbyterian Churches, to receive the doctrines of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, with certain explanations and restrictions. *Vide, Act of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, approving the Confession of Faith, usually prefixed to the Confession.*

† This Church holds that the substance of Presbyterian government consists, in the equality of Church Rulers, and subordination of Church Courts.

5. Do you engage to maintain the spiritual unity of the Church, in its doctrine and government, worship and discipline; and do you solemnly pledge yourself, in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ and his Church, never to propagate any contradictory principle, nor introduce any contrary practice, among those entrusted to your charge, nor in any other public way, till you have regularly acquainted your brethren in the ministry with the alteration of your views, and till these views have been discussed, and the general sentiments of the Church ascertained?

6. Is love to God, and to the souls of men, your principal inducement to enter into the office of the holy Ministry?

7. Can you, with a safe conscience, declare that you have used no improper means to procure a call to the ministry in this congregation?

8. Do you accept the call to the pastoral office over this people; and do you solemnly engage to conduct yourself as a faithful Minister of the Gospel among them, and also, wherever Providence affords you an opportunity; keeping carefully in view, that this congregation, and the Church at large, be by your labours assisted in the attainment of higher degrees of Christian improvement?

9. Do you promise to exemplify the excellence of Christian doctrine by the conscientious performance of the duties of a holy life, corresponding with your station in the Church, and your relations to Society?

10. Do you declare that you are cordially attached to the civil authorities by which this Province is ruled; and do you promise, according to your station, to give those proofs of loyalty which divine authority enjoins upon subjects towards their rulers?

11. Do you promise to submit yourself, in the Lord, to the authority of this Presbytery, in subordination to superior Courts?

And all these you profess to believe, and promise, through grace, to perform, as you must answer to the Lord Jesus Christ, when he comes with all his Saints?

APPENDIX.

ANSWER OF THE GENERAL ASSOCIATE SYNOD

TO A

Memorial from the Presbytery of Nova Scotia.

(Drawn up by a Committee and Approved of by the Synod.)

INTRODUCTORY NOTICE.

AT a Meeting of the GENERAL ASSOCIATE SYNOD, in the close of the Spring of this year (1815), a Memorial from the Presbytery of our Connexion in Nova Scotia, was presented to the Synod, and read. It contained interesting information relative to *our* Brethren in that quarter; craved additional supply of Preachers; and consulted the Synod on two points of particular importance—the nature of their relation to us, and the prospect of their union with another evangelical society. The Synod, in consequence of this application, unanimously agreed to send over such Licentiates of their Body as might offer themselves to the work, and to appoint a Collection throughout all their Congregations, for defraying the expenses of the mission. Three, accordingly, one Minister and two Probationers, have since been appointed to this service; and of these, two (one of each class) have sailed some time ago. A Committee was also nominated to take charge of the concerns of the mission; to draw up an address relative to the collection; and to prepare an answer to the memorial of their Brethren. The address has been already prepared and transmitted; and the answer, having been read in last Synod, was unanimously adopted, and ordered to be printed;—as expressing

their sentiments and feelings toward the Brethren in that distant quarter of the world, and containing their judgment and advice, with respect to those interesting matters submitted to their consideration. Indeed, on these points of reference, it is little more than a *faithful report* of a conversation which had been previously held in Synod respecting them. The Committee think it necessary only to add, that the Synod would probably have ordered the very excellent paper from Nova Scotia to be also printed,—had it not been rather long for publication, had they not deemed themselves incompetent to do so without the consent of their Brethren, and had not the chief parts been extracted and embodied in this Reply.

November, 1815.

ANSWER, &c.

DEAR BRETHREN,

YOUR Communication to us was read, and the respectful and affectionate spirit which it breathes, was met, on our part, by similar sentiments and feelings.

The statements you give respecting the concerns of your Church are interesting to us; and we cannot but “magnify the Lord,” for all his goodness to you. Not many years ago, *one* went forth from us to your distant land, that he might break the Bread of Life to a few, who were fainting for want in the wilderness; and, by the blessing of God, that small Society has multiplied into many Congregations. He departed like Jacob, with his staff in his hand, all alone; and lo! as in the case of the Patriarch, the Lord hath prospered him exceedingly, and given him many flocks, as the joyful reward of his labour.

In the present state of the Church, however, changes,—mournful changes,—may be expected to occur; and we cannot but sympathize with you under the great bereavement you have sustained in the death of Mr. DICK, whose character you delineate, and whose excellence and acceptance cannot but render his loss more deeply felt, and less easily repaired. We ourselves have, from time to time, to lament promising young Ministers, and aged Servants of the Lord, cut off in the midst of their years, or when increased grace, ability and experience, had rendered them more venerable and more useful. But we have to rejoice, that God is not unmindful of his Church, and that, if some be removed, others are raised up, and in some measure qualified to fill their places, and carry on his work. Nor ought you to despair; for, more scanty as your means of supply are, his eye is still upon you, and his grace is all-sufficient.

That God has, in any degree, blessed your united exertions for extending the light of salvation to those who “sat in the region of darkness, and of the shadow of death,” or possessed the knowledge, and the ordinances of grace very imperfectly, cannot but be satisfactory to us, and to you. May you, by his grace, be enabled to go on, and prosper, more and more!

Your deficiency of means to supply the calls that are made upon your ministerial service, and the consequent loss which your Church has sustained, we must with you regret. That some who might otherwise have formed constituent parts of our Body, have, in such circumstances, resorted to other Denominations for aid, cannot appear surprising; and, if they have applied to Societies that are evangelical, and aiming at purity, we shall mourn the less; but when you say, that some have been lost, not only to our Church, but to religion, and intimate that there are scenes where flourishing Congregations might have existed, that are now mere wastes in the religious world, we cannot but deplore the result with great and unmingled sorrow.

We are consoled, however, with the consideration that the progress of the Lord's work is not altogether suspended; and while you add, that, with a reasonable prospect of assistance from us, your vacancies would soon be increased, and "that it is no groundless assertion to add, that you might be enabled to lay the foundations of a Church, compared with which, the whole Body of the Secession would be a mere speck in the kingdom of Christ," we feel ourselves elated with the magnificent prospect, and animated to make every exertion for your supply.

Indeed, neither these hopes, nor your solemn and affectionate appeal were necessary to excite our interest, or command our efforts. Your want of supply from this quarter has not arisen either from forgetfulness or supineness, far less from indifference or alienation, on our part; but from causes which were unavoidable, and which, having been temporary, we trust will not return, or at least return in such force as to preclude our doing something for your interests. Amongst others, the pressure of the times—the exhausted state of our country—the vicinity of the warfare to your settlement—and those internal and most anxious deliberations to which you allude, contributed their part to produce this effect, and, with your candid consideration, will at once explain and excuse any deficiency that may have occurred. We may say, however, that your situation was in part remembered; that a Committee of Correspondence was appointed; and that a Preacher was engaged to go over and help you, and while every thing short of compulsion was done to carry his mission into effect, the disappointment which arose from his recoiling, was as painful to us as it has been discouraging to you.

While your foreign supplies were so long suspended, and at all times precarious, it was natural for you to turn your attention to your own internal resources. Upon your project for educating young men for the work of the Ministry in your own country, the Synod cannot but

"us." This measure of precaution, though it imply distrust of us, we are disposed to overlook; because we believe it must have proceeded from a decided attachment to sound doctrine and purity of character, and arose immediately from the want of distinct knowledge of facts. This information, however, was not withheld by us of design, or through negligence. The truth is, it was agreed that such communication as your Burgher Brethren have received from their Synod, should be transmitted from us to you, and your not having received it, must have arisen from some one of these oversights or accidents against which the utmost goodwill and care of man cannot always effectually provide. The force of your reasoning respecting our rights as a Supreme Court, we feel. They must be limited by a due regard, as you say, to religion and to local distance; nor can we desire either to assume, or to exercise a jurisdiction, which, *in your case*, is connected with no accurate inspection, and therefore cannot be enlightened; which implies no reciprocal privileges or benefits; which must, almost necessarily, prove nugatory or injurious, and which yet implies an awful and extensive responsibility. We are willing, therefore, to consider you, as we have done the Congregations in the United States of a long period, rather as an Associated Church, than as a subordinate part of our Body. But, while we claim to exercise no authoritative controul over you, you shall never want our counsel, or aid, as far as they may be sought, or can be given; and it shall delight us to maintain with you the most confidential correspondence, and to contemplate you as belonging to the same large evangelical communion.

You consult us, Brethren, on a subject of great delicacy and importance, connected with this intimate Association; and we have particularly remarked all that you say concerning it. Nor shall we decline to repay confidence with confidence, and give you our opinion freely. In all cases, Division should be a measure of the last resort, intended only to provide an escape from evils which cannot otherwise be remedied. But in itself division is never desirable; and, when reconciliation can be effected in an honourable and consistent manner, it should not be avoided. To heal the breaches of Zion is delightful work, and, preparatory to that grand union which is predicted in prophecy, and anticipated by every Christian with the highest satisfaction and delight, it is pleasing to us to reflect, that the great cause of contention betwixt the two Bodies of Seceders in this country does not exist in yours; and, while you speak in such terms of commendation respecting the Ministers of the Burgher Connection, and represent their Congregations as of the same complexion with your own, we see that the

restoration of union is greatly facilitated. Indeed, by the interchange of Members, it has already taken place tacitly and partially. At the same time, that is an insulated measure of expediency and necessity, which, though it may involve this consequence in point of argument, you do not consider as fully forming the connection. In order to do so on valid, scriptural and satisfactory grounds, it seems necessary that some suitable statement of principles be *previously* drawn up, and mutually accepted, as the basis of your *explicit and entire communion*. What this should be must be left, in a great measure, to your enlightened judgments; and we have full confidence in you, that you will “do nothing against the truth, but for the truth,”—that this exhibition of principles will be evangelical,—and that you will adopt the spirit and views of the Secession Testimony, as far as it is applicable to your circumstances, and point it particularly against those evils which prevail with you. This, you know, was done by the Sister Church in the United States; and this being done by you, to our satisfaction, your union with your Burgher Brethren will not affect your relation to us, we shall still consider you as a portion of the same Body, wisely modified by circumstances, and that separation which you so feelingly deprecate will not occur.

And this separation, we, as well as you, Beloved Brethren, would feel most painful. We forget you not, though in a land far remote, whither you have gone “for the word of God and the testimony “of Jesus,” (a circumstance which ought to endear you to us the more);—many of us cannot but reflect upon the pleasant intercourse of earlier days;—our hearts follow you to your woods and shores, to the circles of your families and the scenes of your worship;—we feel that the tie which binds us to you is strong and tender;—we know that the cause in which we are engaged is one;—and we cannot cease to pray for your prosperity, personal and ecclesiastical. May our God “feed with his rod, the flock of his “heritage which dwell solitarily in the wood!”—“May he multiply “you, and ye shall not be few, glorify you, and ye shall not be “small.”

And that he will do so, Dear Brethren, is our hope concerning you. You speak of laying the foundations of a great Church, and the Lord build with you. The land of our Fathers is dear to us; but dearer should be, and we trust is, the progress of the Lord’s work, and we cannot but view you with particular interest, as a rising portion of the Church of Christ. When we recollect that the course of Science and of Religion has hitherto been westward; when we

consider the facilities which your country afford for the support of the Gospel, and the rapidity with which its population is filling up; we cannot but anticipate the time when God shall “make of you a “great nation,” and when, perhaps, the Church you are now founding may surpass ours in attainments, in usefulness, in honour. Yet, even in this case, our country, which has been the scene of events so interesting, and the seat of a Church aiming at purity, and contending for the truth, will be remembered by your posterity with interest and veneration, as the land of their Fathers—the land whence came forth the Messengers of Salvation to them, and whence they derived the best of blessings.

P. S.—Since the meeting of Synod in October, information has been received that the two Missionaries, who have already gone over, are safely landed; one of them is settled, and the other is labouring in a scene of great usefulness. At this meeting of Synod (May, 1816), very agreeable intelligence, of various kinds, has been received, both from the United States and from Nova Scotia. To supply the wants and the solicitations of the Church in these quarters, where prospects of great and commanding interest are opened, another Missionary has already sailed; two more are waiting to embark while others have it in contemplation to go forth to the help of their Brethren in those distant regions of the earth.

At GLASGOW, the Fifth day of FEBRUARY, Eighteen Hundred and Nineteen, at a Meeting of the Elders of the Four Congregations belonging to the SECESSION CHURCH in Glasgow, Present Seventy Elders and Deacons,

Mr. WILLIAM McINNES in the Chair.

THE following RESOLUTIONS, which had been prepared by a Committee from the Sessions of each of the four Congregations, were moved, fully considered, and unanimously adopted.

I. THAT ever since the formation of the Secession Church, she hath been kept by the good Providence of God uniform in her adherence to the Doctrines of Scripture, as exhibited in the Westminster Confession of Faith, and other Standards of the Church; in her attachment to the Presbyterian form of Church Government; and in her defence of the Rights of the Christian people: while any changes of sentiment, which have taken place upon subordinate points, have been similar in both sides of the Church, and such as to render their sentiments upon these points more nearly alike than were those of the venerable Fathers of the Secession, at the date of the Separation.

II. THAT perfect identity of sentiment, in bodies of any great extent, is unattainable; while the attempt to procure it must result, either in an undefined profession, agreeing in words, but not in sentiments, or, in a perpetual recurrence of schisms in the Church, alike destructive of her peace, her unity, and the edification of her Members.

III. THAT, so far as the Meeting are acquainted with the state of things in this part of the Secession Church, they have reason to believe that, while those who belong to its Communion cherish unfeigned respect for the memory of its Founders, they have now very generally ceased to consider the causes which produced the early Separation into two bodies as sufficient, in existing circumstances, to warrant their denying to each other Church fellowship, or continuing separate Societies, longer than consistency with good order they can be reunited.

IV. **THAT**, while, at all times, since the mournful Separation of the Secession Church into two bodies, her Ministers and Members have never ceased to cherish the hopes of her reunion, and have exerted themselves from time to time to produce it, this Meeting hail with unmingled thankfulness and delight, the increased and increasing spirit of cordiality which at this moment pervades the Secession Church, which makes her Members feel towards each other as brethren, which has already, with the approbation of both sides of the church in Scotland, produced a partial union abroad, and and which, at a date not far distant, this Meeting fondly hope, will, by the good hand of God upon the deliberations of the Courts, produce a perfect reunion in the Secession body at home.

V. **THAT**, were the Secession Church again united, the reproaches which her enemies have cast at her, as actuated by a divisive spirit, would be wiped away; the causes of suspicion and alienation towards brethren, having the same faith, hope, and baptism, would be removed; the spirit of peace and love would be cherished; and the Ministers and Members of the Church, laying aside party distinctions and rivalries, might exert themselves with united energy, and increased success, in promoting the cause of God and truth.

VI. **THAT** the Providence of God has greatly facilitated this union, by removing the cause which occasioned the separation, by producing such changes in the circumstances of the Burghs (at all times few in number) where it existed; and by diffusing every where, such a spirit of liberality into the public mind as to render its revival morally impossible: while, were the attempt made, to serve the purposes of intolerance, it could either be successfully resisted as illegal, or put down by the common sense of society, and the united effort (an effort which in that case, would undoubtedly be made) of the Secession body; or such a modification of it obtained by the same means, as would prevent its being the source of future contention; and such as has been already obtained, even by individual exertion, in more instances than one.

VII. **THAT** while the Meeting consider it their duty to the Ministers and Members of the Church, thus to express their firm conviction, that a union between the two bodies of Seceders is not only highly desirable, but as far as they are competent to judge, practicable, without any sacrifice of Evangelical Truth, or Church Order; they resolve for themselves, and humbly recommend

to their brethren in other places, never to forget the duty they owe to the Courts who are over them in the Lord, and who are well qualified to arrange the means of realizing their hopes, nor, by an intemperate haste, to produce distraction where they intended peace; but patiently to prosecute and promote the cause of reunion, only by Constitutional means; and, above all, to cultivate a spirit of Prayer and Supplication to the God of the Church, whose cause they are firmly persuaded it is, and upon whom its success depends, that he would hear the prayers, which, ever since the mournful division in the Secession Church, his Ministers and People have not ceased to present to his throne,—“That he would heal the breaches of Zion; that the time to favour her may come, even the set time, when Ephraim shall not vex Judah, nor Judah Ephraim, but the Watchmen on Mount Zion shall lift up their voices, and with their voices together shall sing when God brings back her captivity.”

VIII. THAT Messrs. Walker, White, Sharp, Charles, Anderson, Shaw, Newlands, Cross, Carswell, Oswald, McInnes, Risk, Knox, Mitchell, Kirkwood, and Stevenson, being four Elders from each of the four Sessions, shall be a Committee, with instructions to communicate these Resolutions to the different Sessions of the Presbyteries of Glasgow, and to recommend to them to take the subject of union into their consideration *judicially*, and adopt such means as they shall judge most proper for the furtherance of it; and also, to publish them in the Christian Magazine, Christian Instructor, and Christian Repository, and give them such other publicity as they may consider proper. And,

LASTLY, THAT the Elders of the four Sessions, shall again meet on the First FRIDAY of each month, or oftener, if necessary, for the purposes of *Christian Conference, and devotional exercises*, and for concerting and adopting such means, consistent with Presbyterial order, as may be calculated to promote the union of the Secession Church.

WILLIAM MCINNES, Preses.

THOMAS ANDREW, Secretary.

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THE PROGRESSIVE PERFECTION OF THE CHURCH,

A SERMON

PREACHED AT THE OPENING OF

THE GENERAL ASSOCIATE SYNOD,

AT

EDINBURGH, 13th MAY, 1817:

WITH

NOTES.

By JOHN ROBERTSON,

Minister of the Gospel, Stranraer.

Those who are halting on the subject of the proposed union, would do well to read this able, judicious and seasonable discourse. The preacher pursues a train of scriptural, and, of course, unanswerable argument in support of the Apostolic injunction, "Let us go on unto perfection." Like a skilful and faithful pilot, he presents us with a chart, studded with the rocks and quicksands on which the Christian Church has, in past ages, been split and scattered abroad. He places the principles of the Protestant Reformation, if not in a new, in an interesting point of view, as an index to the friends of truth in all succeeding ages of the Church.

The historical notes, appended to the Sermon, serve to throw a light on some of the most important events connected with the ecclesiastical history of our own country, and tend to confirm the sentiments of the friends of union, as well as to reconcile those who, from conscientious scruples, oppose it.

Perhaps, the cause of union could not be more effectually served, than by the extensive circulation of this seasonable discourse.