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THE EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE

THE EMBODIMENT OF

THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTENDOM.

ADDRESSED TO THE

MODERATOR OF THE FREE CHURCH.

BY

THE AUTHOR

OF "LETTER TO DR CHALMERS ON PRESENT POSITION OF THE FREE CHURCH," &c.

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TO

DR SIEVEWRIGHT,

MODERATOR OF THE FREE ASSEMBLY.

REVEREND SIR,

THE greater part of the following Letter was transcribed for the Press when the Author learned that Dr Chalmers, to whom it was designed to be addressed, had been removed by death, which rendered it necessary to give it, while retaining its original sentiment, a somewhat different form. In order to secure it a perusal by some in the Free Church, I have taken the liberty of addressing it to you, as Moderator of the Free Assembly.

I have it for my principal object to shew, that the Free Church, by falling in with the popular voice in regard to the Evangelical Alliance, has committed herself to lax views on the great questions of Toleration, Free-Communion, and others of a kindred character, and has thereby obscured, if not destroyed, her distinctive standing, virtually proclaimed her inadequacy, if not incompetency, for resisting the aggressions of Popery and Infidelity, negatived her professed constitution, and forfeited her claim of Identification, and even substantial agreement, with the Historical Church

of Scotland. The questions that thus fall to be considered, and which bear directly on the distinctive character, peculiar work, and eminent duty of the Visible Church of God, are at all seasons, but especially in the present serious juncture, of the very last importance. Apprehending, as I do, that the mode in which these questions are now discussed, is in contravention of that adopted by the Reformers both in this country and on the Continent, I have not hesitated to speak freely ; and I have felt encouraged so to do from the wholesome breath of some of the Free Church ministers, during the late discussion on the Alliance, and the general question of Christian Union. Although there is little or no prospect of the Free Church, as such, retracing her steps, yet as a few of her ministers have honourably acquitted themselves on this subject, I submit, through you, for their confirmation, the following consideration of these popular subjects.

I am,

REVEREND SIR,

Yours, &c.

THE AUTHOR.

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REVEREND SIR,

OUR country's crisis, oft and long predicted by many of her clearest headed and warmest hearted sons, having at length arrived, must plead my apology in taking advantage of your official name, in addressing to the public, and especially to the Free Church, the few following rather free, but I trust courteous remarks, on that popular scheme which many "Masters in Israel" conceive to be well fitted to meet the perilous emergency. For some time previous to, but especially since the passing of the Relief Bill in 1829,—that dark measure for Britain's liberty, and which some of its most eloquent theological advocates are now forced to admit has proved "a historical failure,"—a series of very extraordinary events has passed over our heads. The more prominent and eventful of these were the Anti-patronage, the Voluntary, the Non-Intrusion, and last, but not least, the Disruption movements, which appeared in the ecclesiastical firmament with a fiery glare, and in rapid and startling succession. The talent, and learning, and eloquence, not to say piety, that were thus brought into play, gave formal promise that the Third Reformation had commenced, that Scepticism must hide its face before such a display of religious principle, and that Popery, under whatever name or guise, would cut a sorry figure in that brief and brisk, but conclusive struggle, which would introduce the glory of the latter day. In order to reach this "consummation devoutly to be wished," in addition

to what was already in existence, a great variety of politico-ecclesiastical machinery has been constructed and put in active operation; yet, notwithstanding these golden promises and various appliances, there are few now who scruple to admit, that the political, and especially the religious world, has undergone no real amelioration, and that matters have gradually, although of late rapidly, become so embarrassed, as to leave us in our present dangerous predicament. Since Popery has laid aside that vizor under which it has so long and so successfully played off its tricks of legerdemain, and has found its most potent abettors among not only nominal Protestants but professed Presbyterians, the thinking and sober portion of the British community are, although not disappointed, yet sincerely alarmed, and no longer hold it to be a problem, whether, in this country, there be a sufficient amount of intelligent, thorough-paced, and consistent Protestantism, successfully to confront the adverse compact and influential faction. We certainly cannot, without extreme infatuation, shut our eyes to the fact, how variously soever we may attempt to account for it, that **THE POLITICAL PROTESTANTISM OF THIS COUNTRY IS GONE**, and is not to be recovered, without a very serious struggle, if not a complete disorganization. On the other hand, Christendom, popularly so called, feeling the effect of the widespread and painfully successful Popish conspiracy, after casting about, has formed a counter confederation upon a gigantic scale, and of very imposing character, under the attractive designation of **THE EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE**. A felt and acknowledged inadequacy in any of the existing religious denominations *individually*, or in all of them *con-junctly*, to resist and overthrow the aggressive liberal-

ism of the age, has suggested and created, and still fosters, this measure, as the last shift in the game of equivocal policy for conserving at least the remanent evangelism of the religious world. I very readily admit the fact, that a loud and eager cry for religious union or confederation comes from almost all denominations ; but it must also be granted, that there is not one of these denominations that enjoys internal union ; while, on the other hand, it augurs ill for the Protestant interest, that some of the largest, and, of late, hastily formed alliances, have had, by the intervention of not merely incidental points, but great constitutional questions, their equilibrium seriously disturbed, and their efforts materially crippled. In this state of matters, it becomes a very grave question and one to which every well-regulated mind will solemnly address itself, Whether any merely religious association, and especially the Evangelical Alliance,—considering its heterogeneous composition and its professed principles,—can guarantee our safety during that severe ordeal through which the country must soon pass. Without, therefore, commenting on the necessary distinction betwixt the scriptural and merely theological signification of the term Evangelical, which the Alliance has chosen as expressive of its character ; and without instituting an enquiry as to whether, or to what amount, the Free Church is implicated in the movement—although her judicial deliverance in 1846, whereby every minister is left to the freedom of his own will, is, beyond all doubt, all that the Alliance, from its unrepresentative character, can consistently seek or take ;—and without introducing anything of a purely gossiping character, which the discussion of the subject has unevangelically gendered ; I propose, in the subsequent remarks, as calm and candid a con-

sideration as I possibly can, of the constitution, principles, and leading objects of this popular scheme; —not so much, however, on its own account, which is of secondary importance, as because it is the professed embodiment of the spirit of the religious world, in which comprehensive view of it, it is a movement for immense good or immense evil.

THE CONSTITUTION, ORGANIZATION, AND LEADING OBJECTS OF THE EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE.

I deem it proper, as a preliminary step, briefly to advert to the difficulty of ascertaining the exact character of the Alliance, because of the conflicting accounts given of it by some of its warmest abettors and ablest defenders. In the reported discussion of this question in the Free Assembly, Dr Candlish is ever and again complaining, that, as the character and objects of this association are not understood, they are consequently misrepresented; and, so confident is he of this, that were the Alliance what some represent it, he for one would declare off from it for ever. On the other hand, Mr Gibson, and those who acted with him, insist, in support of the correctness of their representation of the Alliance, on the published, uncensored, and much applauded speeches of its most eminent and influential members; while it is amazing, if not amusing, to find learned professors of the Free Church gravely declaring they cannot, for the lives of them, make out what kind of an association this Alliance is. “Dr Duncan said, even were the Evangelical Alliance what Dr Candlish had represented it, he would feel difficulty in giving in to his motion; but for the life of him, he could not make out what that Alliance

was." I mention this difficulty which meets me at the threshold, not for the purpose of shewing that it is fitted to have a bewildering effect on the great bulk of the people, who have little time, and perhaps less inclination, calmly to study the subject; nor to shew that these conflicting views about the very constitution of a large and influential association, especially among those conversant with such questions, and capable of accurately discriminating, might have taught the Assembly to be chary of granting a judicial allowance to her ministers to act in regard to such an association as their contrary views might guide them; but simply to deliver myself from the charge of intentionally misrepresenting the character of the Alliance. And having an advantage over the Free Assembly since its last discussion of the question, by the authoritative documents of the Alliance itself, since its formation in London last year, I shall freely avail myself of them.

I. According to the views of its individual advocates, as well as its authorized documents, the Alliance is not, strictly speaking, either an ecclesiastical association, or a substitute for the Church, but simply an association of individuals from evangelical denominations. There is some little difficulty felt by its friends in properly and felicitously designating this feature of its constitution; hence Dr R. Buchanan calls it "a human association," and Dr Candlish says "it is not so ecclesiastical" as some represent it. Without referring to other and similar loose definitions, I shall here state that given authoritatively by the Alliance itself. "Rev. Dr Wardlaw moved, Rev. Dr Olin seconded, Rev. S. L. Pomroy and Rev. M. Vermeil supported, That this Conference, composed of

professing Christians of many different denominations, all exercising the right of private judgment, and, through common infirmity, differing among themselves in the views they severally entertain on some points both of Christian doctrine and ecclesiastical polity, and gathered together from many and remote parts of the world, for the purpose of promoting Christian union, &c. Carried.”* This scheme therefore differs from that called “Co-operation without Incorporation,” in as far as the latter had respect chiefly to a religious conjunction of *parties*, whereas this has respect solely to a conjunction of *individuals* out of these parties. This change of tactics, by which the Alliance is careful to guard against the old gravelling objection of an ecclesiastical association, as a sort of rival to the Church, is skilfully enough contrived, but is, on the other hand, a discouraging exponent of the cry for religious union, as confined to individuals, but opposed by those denominations to which they respectively belong. This shears the Alliance of much of its glory, as it leaves denominations, on the subject of general union, where they were, and proclaims its impotency in meeting the adverse conjunction, not of individuals, but parties, and also systems.

II. The Alliance is based upon real, or alleged, common ground. This ground, defined by what is called its Basis, which contains nine doctrinal statements, is held to contain that ascertained amount of evangelical truth which, abstracting from their denominational peculiarities, is common to the members of the Alliance. This Basis is professedly of a general and not a distinctive character, or as merely indicative

* Minutes of Evangelical Alliance, p. 9.

of that class of persons whom it is desirable the Alliance should embrace, lest it should fall under the category of a *Creed*, properly so called. But while this professedly vague Basis is rather an equivocal test of evangelism, it is certainly understood that every member of the Association should say of it, *Credo*; and what is that but a creed? The object proposed to be reached by this extreme wariness in guarding against the common acceptation of a conventional term, is the unrepresentative character of the Alliance, as no way implicating denominational dogmas; but this position, so eagerly sought, still proves the unripeness of denominations for any such confederation. To secure, and render apparent this position, the Alliance carries the following motion:—
 “Rev. Dr W. Symington moved, Rev. A. M’Leod seconded, That in this Alliance it is distinctly declared, that no compromise of the views of any member, or sanction of those of others, on the points wherein they differ, is either required or expected; but that all are held as free as before to maintain and advocate their religious convictions with due forbearance and brotherly love. Carried.”*

III. The objects of this Association are declared to be both various and numerous. That which is professedly the primary and central one, is thus declared by the Alliance itself:—“Rev. Dr Wardlaw moved, &c. That this Conference, &c. rejoice in making their unanimous avowal of the glorious truth, that the Church of the living God, while it admits of growth, is one Church, never having lost, and being incapable of losing, its essential unity. Not, therefore, to create that unity, but to confess it, is the design of

* Minutes of Evangelical Alliance, p. 19.

their assembling together. Carried."* This leading object of the Alliance is thus stated by Dr Chalmers in his own terse style:—"The object of the Evangelical Alliance is something more than to bring about an actual unity among the members of different churches or different denominations. Such a unity already subsists between all real Christians. They agree, and are at one, on the essentials of the faith. The thing wanted is, that this agreement should be made palpable to the world. In other words, what is sought after is more than real or actual—it is an ostensible unity."† The other and subordinate objects are thus set forth by the Alliance itself:—"That, in subserviency to the same great object, the Alliance will endeavour to exert a beneficial influence on the advancement of Evangelical Protestantism, and on the counteraction of Infidelity, of Romanism, and of such other forms of superstition, error, and profaneness, as are most prominently opposed to it. Carried."‡ From these definitions, having the authority of the Alliance, it is clear, that its professedly leading object is, to constitute itself a mirror for collecting and visibly reflecting the evangelism common to the various religious denominations; while it is concluded, that this visibly reflected common evangelism will tell effectually on the advance of Romanism, Infidelity, and Liberalism.

IV. In order to reach these objects, the Alliance sets in operation a machinery of an indirect kind. The deliverance come to by the Alliance, under the head of the means to be used, is, first, of a negative, and secondly, of a positive character. "Rev. W.

* Minutes of Evangelical Alliance, p. 9.

† Dr Chalmers on Evangelical Alliance, p. 1.

‡ Minutes of Evangelical Alliance, p. 29.

Ewbank moved, Rev. Dr King seconded, That it is not contemplated that this Alliance should assume or aim at the character of a new ecclesiastical organization, claiming and exercising the functions of a Christian Church. Its simple and comprehensive object, it is strongly felt, may be successfully promoted without interfering with, or disturbing the order of, any branch of the Christian Church to which its members may respectively belong. Carried.* The positive character of its organization is thus declared:—"In promoting these and similar objects, the Alliance contemplates chiefly the stimulating of Christians to such efforts as the exigences of the case may demand, by publishing its views in regard to them, rather than accomplishing those views by any general organization of its own. Carried."† While "the different branches of the Alliance are left to adopt such methods of prosecuting these great ends as may appear to them most in accordance with their respective circumstances," it is extremely obvious, that the stimulating process must affect the denominational machinery in existence, and consequently, not only Christians individually, but also the denominations themselves. Hence Dr Chalmers gives this exposition of the Alliance machinery, and the mode of its operation. "What the Alliance contemplates—and we rejoice in observing it—is an Universal Home Mission. Yet not by an organization of their own. No such organization is required, when they purpose, and as we think very wisely, that they (the Alliance) should confine themselves chiefly to the stimulating of such efforts on the part of *the Church and Christian societies* as the exigences of the case may demand."‡

* Minutes of Evangelical Alliance, p. 19. † Ibid. p. 29.

‡ Dr Chalmers on Evangelical Alliance, p. 42.

Without anticipating subsequent remarks, it may not be much out of place here to state, that this peculiar feature of the organization of the Alliance will not be easily made to cohere with its unrepresentative character; for while, on the one hand, it repeatedly disclaims the character and functions of an ecclesiastical association, on the other it advises, stimulates, and directs all the varied ecclesiastical machinery existing among denominations. Thus, while the denominations provide the engines and furnish the engineers, the Alliance recognises and employs both, administering, all the while, counsel and direction, if not dictation, as to speed and the proper terminus. It is presumed it will not be very easy to shew why the Alliance, in recognising and directing the denominational machinery, should not also drive it; or how it can consistently lament over divisions, and at the same time stimulate the efforts of those who are conscientiously resolved to perpetuate them. Does not the stimulating of Christians to duty eminently belong to those who are the office-bearers of the denominations to which these Christians are attached? Does not the Alliance, by thus professedly stimulating these Christians, sadly reflect on both these Christians and their office-bearers? And does not this attitude which the Alliance assumes, and this high function which it exercises, *set it above* all the churches or denominations? This authorized account of the Alliance shews that its different parts are sadly incoherent; for although, on the one hand, "it recognises the essential unity of the Christian church, and feels constrained to deplore its existing divisions, and to express its deep sense of the sinfulness involved in the alienation of affection by which they have been attended, and of the manifold evils which have resulted therefrom;"

yet, on the other, this Alliance allows each of these divisions to retain its distinctive character as fully as before. This is what Dr Candlish calls "the keystone of the Alliance." "But you surely know that the very key-stone of the Alliance is the understanding that we recognise one another as, in the judgment of charity, individually believers in Christ Jesus the Lord; without reference to our several church connections and our different church principles. And you must be aware that an express condition of adherence to it, is the reservation of the full right of all its members, to maintain and carry out their peculiar views, exactly as they might otherwise have done."* This is the organization of the Alliance, whatever may be the mode of reconciling it with its professed non-ecclesiastical character.

V. The meetings of the Alliance held at London were characterized by such devotional exercises as prayer, reading a portion of the Scriptures, and singing the Psalms of David, and other various hymns. These services are solemnly spoken of as Pentecostal, as what never were witnessed or experienced on earth before by its members, and what were worthy being eternally remembered. Without at present adverting to this mode of speech, as at least having a tendency to make the Alliance, if not superior, certainly equal in point of efficient instrumentality, to the church of the living God, I shall, before considering the alleged merits of the scheme, briefly point out

THE

* Letters to Rev. E. B. Elliot, by Dr Candlish, p. 123.

THE MODE OF ITS DEFENCE ADOPTED BY ITSELF
AND ITS INDIVIDUAL FRIENDS.

I. That the members and promoters of this scheme should make frequent and pointed appeals to the Word of God, was nothing more than what all expected. Hence, we find that those passages are fixed upon which bear upon the exchanging of religious thoughts and experience. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another." Very liberal use is made of those that respect the beauty and utility of Christian union, among which we find as a special favourite, our Lord's intercessory prayer: "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." These, together with all that are condemnatory of strife and divisions, and injunctive of brotherly love, are, and ever have been, in the movements of religious confederations, household phrases. It is almost superfluous to state, especially to those versant in the history of projected religious unions, that these and similar passages have been employed for bringing together the extremest religious parties, as Papists and Protestants, and have been jeeringly quoted by sceptics for discrediting all "Disruptions" for the truth. By the indiscriminate use of these beautiful passages, richly recommendatory of brotherly love, many a solemn dirge has been sung over the supposed recklessness of the Witnesses of Christ, who struggled hard and bled for his Crown rights. And truly we require, at this time of day, and in our peculiar circumstances, something more than the repetition of such passages, without note or comment, to reconcile us to every projected union, or self-styled Evangelical Alliance.

II. Real or alleged analogous cases are resorted to, and dwelt on, as a kind of "argumentum ad hominem,"—a kind of home stroke. These supposed analogous cases are accidental meetings of religious friends, whether at tea-parties, funerals, or "on the decks of steamers." And this kind of defence is made to assume a graver aspect by references to Missionary Societies, composed of ministers of different denominations. In pressing such cases into the service of the Alliance, much is assumed that ought first to have been clearly proved. For admitting that Missionary Societies, the composition of which is such as I have described, and the Alliance sanctions and employs, it was essentially requisite to demonstrate that such societies are themselves scriptural. Clear it is, that if the argument drawn from these societies is valid, it proves too much, as not only shaking, but overthrowing the main position of the Alliance, that it is not, strictly speaking, *an ecclesiastical association*. It is not necessary to shew, even to those who urge this as an analogous case, that such Missionary Societies confessedly undertake, and really exercise, the proper functions of the Church of God. This defence, so oft resorted to, is as really damaging as it is fallacious.

III. A supposed strong point of the defence of the Alliance rests upon the assumption that all the so-called evangelical denominations are but so many sections, or integral parts, of the one Visible Church of Christ. This religious nomenclature has, for a considerable time, been stereotyped; and to set about questioning its accuracy, has been designated a curiosity of the nineteenth century. The prevalence of its use certainly renders it somewhat hazardous to attempt to shew its inconsistency with both Scripture and reason. As it is conceived that the pith of the contro-

versy is to be found under this assumption, I shall, for the present, reserve a more full and formal consideration of it to an after part of the pamphlet; and, in the meantime, simply state that its assumption draws deeper on the character of the Church of God, and involves in more difficulties than some of the ablest, but not most politic advocates of the Alliance have calculated upon. Undoubted it is, that if what is assumed in this current phraseology were allowed the full benefit of its legitimate consequences, no society of any kind, whether civil or religious, could long exist. As this is the breath of the religious world, and is the true exponent of the Alliance and all cognate associations, it is of the first moment that we have clear and definite views regarding it.

IV. Not a few risk the defence of this scheme upon some isolated, and withal dubious personal acts of the Reformers in this country and on the Continent of Europe. Defences of this character are supposed to act as a charm upon a large portion of the religious world, who have a vague attachment to the Reformation cause and the character of the Reformers themselves; and some are encouraged to ply more and more this mode of reasoning, which has proved so successful in some recent popular movements. Without intending any invidious distinctions, there are always some in every large association who, although not endowed with a very large share of originality of conception, are nevertheless very serviceable in acting the humbler part of resurrectionists of the personal slips of great and good men to subserve a favourite measure,—a process that would not certainly be very favourable to the character of Peter, Paul, or any others of the Apostles, not to say the character of these resurrectionists themselves. I allude to the

stale story of Rutherford and Usher, sported off in the Free Assembly, without any reference to the age of Rutherford, or whether the story be properly authenticated, or to the clear fact, that were it authenticated, it is, at best, but *Rutherford* versus *Rutherford*.* But, although not a new, yet a deeper game was played by the Rev. Mr Gray, Perth, who, in his Assembly speech, put forth all his strength in attempting to wring from the Westminster Standards a sanction to all such associations as the Alliance. His words are somewhat remarkable:—"Our friends have plunged into this controversy with the conviction that they are espousing the cause of our Standards, and that their services are needed to preserve the Standards from danger. Such being the case, it will be somewhat remarkable if I can prove that, in these very Standards, the arguments and policy of our friends are condemned. I think this can be done, and that I can satisfy the House that the Standards have been departed from by those who are here opposing the Evangelical Alliance."† The kind of reasoning pursued by Mr Gray in support of this pompously announced position, is cognate with that usually employed to defend the current phraseology, "different sections of the Church;" a formal reply to which we at present reserve for that distinct subject; and now simply state, that if Mr Gray's argument be valid, it must defeat the object for which it is employed; for, by allowing it its full swing, it must embrace Free Communion, in its common acceptation, and thus implicate, notwithstanding all disclaimers, in the acknowledged guilt of a proper ecclesiastical association, warranted to undertake the peculiar work, and exer-

* Rev. J. Begg's Speech in Assembly; Report, p. 36. † Ibid. p. 59.

cise the highest functions of the Church of God. Push that argument, and Free Communion must inevitably follow. Surely Mr Gray, "who has been familiar with the difficulties and nice points of this subject," is aware of the fact, that not only his arguments, but the very mode of applying them, have been used for establishing ecclesiastical full communion in this country, by some of the largest religious denominations; and in attempting to reach this object, they had, at least, the merit of consistency.

V. From the characteristic onward motion of the age, that defence of the Alliance which is most popular, and consequently influential, is of a vague, shewy, and declamatory character. Objects are commended with which we all agree; positions are laid down which all readily admit; arguments are advanced which are willingly assented to, and cannot provoke discussion; and passages are cited, about the subject matter of which there is universal harmony. In the main, this kind of defence consists of the warmest commendations of the loveliness of Christian union; of denunciations of the unseemliness of divisions; that a perfect agreement on all revealed truths has never yet been reached, and is not necessary; and that it is a species of hypochondriasm to stickle for denominational dogmas, when a few central cardinal doctrines are alone essential. Under this head may be placed, as an extremely popular defence, the call to do good, irrespectively of the means appointed, or the order established for compassing that good. Without undertaking to analyze this last plea, it is deemed sufficient simply to state, that "to do good" belongs to and is the prerogative of God; whereas, to use the means of his appointing is the duty and province of man. In order to prepare the way for a calm and more

direct discussion of this highly interesting and eventful question, upon its own merits, I beg leave to submit the few following

PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

I. The discussion of the question of Christian Union has been loaded with unessential and foreign adjuncts, which have prevented a fair and calm consideration of it upon its own real merits. How foreign to this subject is the following language?—"Where is the man, and what is his denomination, who can hold up his face to the declaration, that he would rather have the millions of our hitherto neglected population not to be Christians at all, than to be Christians minus their peculiarity? Or perhaps they look upon their peculiarity as being of the very essence of the Gospel; or, in other words, that theirs is the only true Church upon earth, and that all beyond its pale are as heathen men and as publicans. Be this as it may, for ourselves we should feel it quite monstrous to be satisfied that the people remain as they are, rather than that they should be transformed into good Methodists, good Baptists, good Independents, good Presbyterians, or good Episcopalians."* Although it is not necessary, and, perhaps, would not be easy, to specify all the foreign ingredients that are thrown into the question which is supposed to settle the subject of Christian union, and which is put in illustration and defence of the Alliance; yet it is obvious that the whole question is risked upon mere human opinion, without the assignment of reasons too, and not upon the revealed

* Evangelical Alliance, p. 51,—Dr Chalmers.

mind of God as to what constitutes this union, or the divinely appointed means for reaching and preserving it. This is extremely lax, and although not an intentional, is certainly a real blinking of the whole question. Does not this unhappy, although current phraseology, also betray some confusion of idea, as shifting the question from mere Christian to Ecclesiastical Union, and thereby implicating what the Alliance professedly disclaims—a non-representative character? A good Methodist, Baptist, Independent, Presbyterian, and Episcopalian! Is it not possible to speak of a good man amongst the Baptists, without bringing in his system? for no man can be a good Baptist but in the way of being conscientiously convinced of and attached to his denominational peculiarity. If Calvinism be *the system* which contains Christian principles, then there cannot be a good Baptist, or Methodist, &c. In addition to the strictures already made on this unsafe mode of speech, the question of Christian Union is argued upon *the unity* of the Church. “There are men who monopolise for themselves, as being the only true Church upon earth, whatever of real piety or saving faith is to be met with in Christendom. Such a pretension as this, save among Papists and Puseyites, and perhaps the extreme high churchmen of England, would be looked to in these days as a sort of curiosity.”* This allusion to the Papists is not only very unhappy, but betrays a lack of ecclesiastical lore. Who requires to be told that Calvin, as well as those who affect to be his followers, held and proved, that in order to ascertain, in some good measure, the true character of the Popish Church, we must view her as a very close

* Evangelical Alliance—Dr Chalmers.

imitator of the true Church of Christ. Unless, then, the true visible Church of Christ had held this unity, it will not be an easy task to shew how the Popish Church had, with such success, and for so long a time, imitated her on the great head of Unity. The error, grievous error, of the Mystery of Iniquity, consisted not in holding this unity, but in its gross perversion, by confining it to herself. Passing over the forbidding vocables in the phraseology now animadverted on, as fitted to hold up those who cannot embrace in their whole extent the views it contains on Christian Union, not certainly in the most attractive light, and as little conducive to secure the object sought, it must be distinctly stated, that until a scriptural definition of what constitutes Christian union be given, and until it be proved that such pyebald associations as the Alliance are, a proper representation of it, the whole question is just where it was,—has made no advance, and is still floating “in mare magnum”—the broad sea—of undefined and undefinable “essentials” as distinguished from “non-essentials.” How painfully corroborative of this view is the designedly bald, if not dubious, Basis of the Alliance; which, notwithstanding the extreme care and caution taken in its construction, is a poor stroke at the art of creed-making? It is thus declared that many important articles of divine truth are left out of this Basis, which professes to collect and manifest the Christian union of the religious world. And why are the important articles left out? Not surely because they are important. Can it be that important articles of divine truth are unfavourable to Christian union? or that by stating divine truths plainly, by way of distinct propositions, the Alliance scheme would be blown up? Hence the ambiguity that attaches to the Basis, as the exponent of the constitution of this Association, which has puz-

zled others besides Dr Duncan. It were altogether a work of supererogation to attempt analyzing the Basis for the purpose of shewing that the members of the Alliance do not, and, because of their denominational peculiarities, cannot agree in their views of it. Can any man believe that Drs Candlish and Brown take the same, or merely different views, on the doctrine of Christ's atonement? *Credat Judæus!*

What then is the matter of fact? Why, beyond all doubt, that the object of the Alliance is *a misnomer*, if not a delusion; for how, in such a case, can this Alliance manifest that Christian union which its Basis dare not plainly and distinctly state? Verily if this be the Christian union which the Alliance has professedly reached and aims at manifesting, Christendom is in a more deplorable condition than many were accustomed to believe. The studied ambiguity of the Basis shews something "rotten in the state of Denmark."

II. It is attempted to be provided, that the members of the Alliance shall not compromise their denominational peculiarities, or sanction those of others. This, which Dr Candlish calls "the key-stone of the Alliance," appears from the motion of Dr Symington—"That in this Alliance it is distinctly declared, that no compromise of the views of any member, or sanction of those of others, on the points wherein they differ, is either required or expected; but that all are held as free as before to maintain and advocate their religious convictions, with due forbearance and brotherly love. Carried."* This declaration, which is reputed to be the safety-valve of the Alliance engine, is thus expressed by Dr Candlish—"But you surely know that the very key-stone of the Alliance is the understanding that we recognise one another as, in the judgment

* Alliance Minutes, p. 19.

of charity, individually believers in Christ Jesus the Lord ; without reference to our several Church connections and our different Church principles. And you must be aware that an express condition of adherence to it is *the reservation of the full right of all its members to maintain and carry out their peculiar views, exactly as they might otherwise have done.*” * Although this declaration has “the horns of a lamb,” yet I apprehend it will not be difficult to shew it has “the tongue of a dragon.” The term “reserve,” when applied, as in this instance it is done, to denominations, certainly implies that *they have that right ;* and while the Alliance concedes denominational right “to maintain and carry out its peculiar views,” it cannot escape from the charge of tolerating, if not sanctioning, a right to that schism which it bewails, and professes, by all its efforts, eventually to remove. In attempting to effect an escapement from this charge, it is of no real avail to plead that the tail of the sentence,—“exactly as they might otherwise have done,”—is of a qualifying character ; for “what *they* might otherwise have done” is one thing, and what *the Alliance* allows them to do, is quite another. Will Dr Candlish hold that any have a right to be schismatics ? Can he prove, according to his own explanation, that the Alliance is not giving its influential imprimatur to the maintenance and carrying out of what he and the Free Church condemn as heresy ? It is equally vain to plead, that this declaration simply leaves the question of denominational right where it was ; for it is the declaration of the Evangelical Alliance—no mean declaration—on that great question. I would calmly ask, How can some that are somewhat conspicuous

* Four Letters to Rev. E. B. Elliott, p. 123.

members of the Alliance, reconcile themselves to a subscription of this "key-stone of its Basis," and swear to a Testimony that condemns the toleration of any ascertained heresy? To give the reasoning a practical bearing, How can Dr Symington, the mover, consistently subscribe his own Testimony, which point blank condemns the toleration of those heresies which this declaration, or "express condition of adherence to the Alliance," makes a fundamental law of the house? The one (the Testimony) is solemnly lifted up "against all renters and dividers, &c. &c.;" the other (the Basis) tolerates, if it does not concede, the right to be "renters and dividers." The one binds its adherent never to give himself up to neutrality or indifference about the Covenanted cause; and, according to the Solemn League and Covenant, binds him "to extirpate Popery, Prelacy, superstition, heresy, schism, profaneness, and whatsoever shall be found to be contrary to sound doctrine and the power of godliness." What a contrast! On the one hand, "the extirpation of all heresies;" and, on the other, "all are held free to maintain and advocate their religious convictions!" Subtle distinctions aside, unsophisticated minds will not readily perceive how these two conflicting creeds can be reconciled, unless on Naaman's principle of getting "a mule's burden" of Cameronian earth on which to stand when bowing in Freemason's Hall, London, or rather, getting the bump of Cameronianism mesmerized when in the Alliance. And is this Cameronianism? Surely it is not the thing that it was wont to be,—not the thing that appeared at Rullion Green,—that excommunicated JAMES VII. for granting "a toleration to all his subjects to worship God according to their consciences,"—that drives from beyond its pale the man who would dare to stand as

a member of the British Parliament, because Victoria is not favourable to the Solemn League and Covenant! If these be the distinctive principles of modern Cameronianism, then assuredly those of the former kind may be seen in the convulsed tide, “Sicut ranæ vasto in gurgite.”

But is it a fact that during the different meetings of the Alliance in London there was no compromise of the peculiar principles of any of its members, of the peculiar principles of even modern Cameronians? The Testimony of the Reformed Presbytery says, “We also condemn the sentiments, and testify against the practice, of those who deny the suitability of the Psalms of David to New Testament worship, and on this account introduce into their place *songs of human composition*.”* How does this look side by side with the following?—“Sung the hymn ‘Veni Creator,’ Ordination Service of the Church of England.”† A Cameronian singing “Watts’ Hymns and the Ordination Service of the Church of England!!” I merely fix on the motion of the Reverend mover, which Dr Candlish calls “the very key-stone of the Alliance,” for the purpose of shewing that, with such a “key-stone” the Alliance arch is extremely insecure; and that it has already given way under the weight “of the straitest and most peculiar of our religionists.”

III. Great care is taken, and extreme sensitiveness is apparently felt, to guard against the possibility of attaching a representative character to the Alliance. It was moved, seconded, and carried, “That the Alliance is not to be considered as an Alliance of Denominations, or branches of the Church, but of individual

* Test., p. 93.

† Alliance Minutes, p. 24.

Christians, each acting on his own responsibility."* As formerly stated, this characteristic of the Alliance is its chief defence against the compromise of denominational peculiarity, and its alleged ecclesiastical aspect; and the sensitiveness on this head respects either the importance of the characteristic itself, or the fear lest any should look upon it as a Church, or something like a Church. Notwithstanding this declaration of the distinctive character of the Alliance, it is important to enquire whether it really does or can sustain a non-representative constitution. And, I deem it requisite to a right understanding and proper settlement of this question, to make the following observations.—1. The clerical members of the Alliance are recognised as ministers of Christ. The recognition of their ministerial status is, undoubtedly, a recognition of the denominations that conferred that status; and, as this status and the denominations that conferred it are inseparable, the recognition of the one is necessarily a recognition of the other. I do not reason on the propriety or impropriety of this denominational ministerial character, although the case of the deposed Strathbogie ministers might throw some light on that question, but on the fact that the Alliance, by recognising this character, must be held as recognising the denomination that confers it. It will not surely be said that the Alliance acknowledges this status merely and simply as a matter of courtesy. 2. As the Alliance disclaims reaching its objects by any organization of its own, is there nothing of a representative character in its employing the denominational organization already in existence and in operation? What

* Alliance Minutes, p. 16.

are we to understand by its stimulating Christians,—by sending back upon Christians in their denominations its clerical members? Where do these clerical members of the Alliance find these Christians that are to be stimulated, if not in their respective denominations? and with what organization can they stimulate them, if not their own denominational organization? The difference betwixt employing and causing to be employed denominational organization, is rather *formal* than *material*,—essentially there is no difference. 3. If the Alliance be without a representative character, where is its benefit or glory as an expression or exponent of union; and where is its adequacy for meeting the adverse confederation? Are Popery, and Infidelity, and Christendom, to hear the Alliance declare, “We have done our best, put forth our mightiest efforts, to exhibit Christian union, but have not succeeded in finding any two different denominations that agree with us; nay more, knowing well the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of compassing such an object, we have not run the risk of professing to seek it.” To such a supposed declaration—and it is virtually the true one—might not the adversary say, “After all, the Alliance is not so formidable an association as we were at first led to believe.” 4. If the Alliance be without a representative character, why should it be so fond of using language that betrays a desire to possess it? In the Conference held in Liverpool, 1845, Dr Brown says, “It is very remarkable that ministers and laymen, of seventeen different religious bodies, have been in this room for three days, deliberating on matters which they all felt to be in the highest degree important, &c. ;”* and, since the formation of the Alliance, the

* Conference Narrative, p. 67.

accession of members is told always in the way of a general allusion to the number of denominations to which they belong. This mode of speech, to speak in mild terms, smacks of a desire to have the denominations represented by the Alliance, while it lets in some light upon the ulterior object of the association. Admitting that "it was very remarkable that ministers and laymen of seventeen different religious bodies" met in Liverpool, was it not remarkable that of these "seventeen," two could not be found to give their unfaltering approbation of this Alliance? As to these facts now adverted to, as incompatible with the declared non-representative character of the Alliance, and also the reasonings which at least seem to leave the glory of the declaration of a very questionable kind, the task of reconciliation belongs to others, and not to me."

IV. In connection with the declared non-representative character of the Alliance, and for the purpose of gaining and manifesting Christian union, it is pleaded that individual effort is not excluded by corporate acting. When the question of Christian union, as affected by the Alliance, was discussed in the Free Assembly, both the motions declared that, for reaching Christian union, the Church, in her corporate capacity, was the competent instrument; but the motion that was carried by an overwhelming majority, was distinguished by allowing individual liberty and effort upon personal responsibility to the Church courts. On this distinction between corporate and individual liberty, the motion of Dr Candlish was defended and carried. "I confess to you, if it shall turn out that my subjection to the Church of which I am a member, is to be considered so rigid as to imply an interference with my liberty to meet with

Christians of other denominations—if it is to be considered so stringent as to prevent me from engaging in any enquiry along with them on a matter such as this—I confess to you, that I should feel it difficult to vindicate my subjection to ecclesiastical authority at all.”* Now, without anticipating subsequent remarks, it is necessary to keep in view, that the motion of Mr Gibson did not exclude individual “liberty *in meeting with* Christians of other denominations,” and did not “prevent from engaging in *any* enquiry along with them on Christian union; it declared that ‘the Church was the appropriate and Scriptural instrumentality, under the appointment of her great Head, to exhibit and seek it;’” while it also sought “the re-appointment of the Assembly’s committee, with special instructions to be on their guard against the risk of doctrinal terms of union which may seem *to omit or detract from important truths of God’s Word.*” Mr Gibson’s motion did not condemn “individual liberty in meeting with Christians of other denominations about Christian union, or any other Christian object, but it condemned the gambols of this liberty in such a large, influential, and, so-called, “Christian Institution,” as the Alliance. In all that was said on that occasion in defence of individual liberty, as distinguished from what is corporate, this liberty was never for once attempted to be defined, or the distinction between it, and that of a corporate kind, which the unsuccessful motion declared for, precisely stated. The Confession of Faith, chap. xx. 4, declares, “That they who publish such opinions, or maintain such practices, whether in their own nature, or *in the manner* of publishing or maintaining them, are destructive to

* Reported Discussion, p. 7.

the external peace and order which Christ hath established in the Church, may lawfully be called to account, and proceeded against by the censures of the Church." That individual liberty, under the plea of which any minister of the Free Church becomes a member of a religious association, larger, more imposing, more influential, and more noted for answer to prayer and a kind of Pentecostal effusion, than the Free Church herself,—an association which, in the words of Dr Candlish, "that has a place in Mr Gibson's motion," has now "run the risk of doctrinal terms of union," and has done more than "seem to omit or detract from important truths of God's Word,"—that liberty does certainly seem "to be destructive of the order which Christ hath established in the Church." Is an express allowance of any schism by any member of the Church, not against her established order and distinctive character as a Witness for the truths of Christ? In order to ascertain the light in which the individual liberty was viewed, and the footing on which it was put, by Dr Candlish and others in the Assembly, I shall attend to the expressed manner in which they propose to use it, and to the security they give that it shall not contravene or interfere with the liberty that is corporate. On all hands it is admitted, that, from its equivocal constitution, and heterogeneous constituency, the Alliance is "a tentative" association; on which account it was, first of all, incumbent on the Church, for the guidance of all her ministers and members, to recommend that they waive the exercise of their private liberty, lest it should come into collision with what is corporate. Instead of any such prudential measure, in regard to a gigantic but acknowledged "tentative" scheme, the Assembly, decides that "it is unnecessary to express any

opinion respecting the Evangelical Alliance, or the propriety of members of this Church joining it, or to adopt any further measure in that matter." Had the Alliance been a small and insignificant association, had it not professed to reach and display the Christian union of Christendom, and undertaken for this purpose to stimulate the Christians of all denominations; had it not been composed of the very *elite* of the religious world, some excuse for the Assembly putting individual liberty on such a footing in regard to it might have been found; but when it possessed such importance, and made such pretensions, it will be difficult to exonerate those who plead for such liberty from the charge of adventurous recklessness. But what security is given for corporate liberty by these adventurous spirits steering their barks on an unknown coast? Their responsibility to their respective Church courts, it is insisted, constitutes the conservation of corporate liberty. "It is perfectly competent for the Church to bid us stop at any time, if she think we are going too far or too fast."* This supposed safeguard of corporate liberty virtually says, "Although the Alliance is "tentative," and "I am not one of those who anticipate very sanguinely great results from it, yet I have joined it; and should my conduct as a member of it be considered at fault, you can bring me to your bar." And thus the Gibsons and others are allowed "the individual liberty" of watching the vaultings of their brethren within the Alliance, and every other questionable, because mottled, religious association! and the Church has assigned her, as a part of her special work, to note down every prank which this liberty may play upon ground which she is solemnly

* Reported division in Assembly, p. 11.

intreated not to define! It is very questionable whether any reputedly orthodox writer on "individual liberty" ever put it in such a strange predicament, and whether any man would feel himself in a happy position by being necessitated to watch the motions of his brethren and leaders of the Church. Who sees not the invidious and extremely painful position of being under the necessity of bringing before the Church courts the questionable speeches and conduct of ambulatory brethren? But it is not very clear that this liberty can be amenable to the Church courts, seeing the Church was intreated, and at length agreed, to say nothing at all about the field upon which it was to display its "tentative" capabilities. Another proffered security is the formal promise, that denominational peculiarity shall not be compromised. "We are ready to give our assurance to the Church that the moment our attendance at these meetings shall seem to compromise, by a single hair's-breadth, our Church's full Testimony, we are off from them, and off from them for ever."* This is drawing liberally enough on the good nature of the Assembly, while it seems to take for granted that certain characters can scarcely do wrong, even although breathing a new atmosphere, and devising tentative measures. But has not Jupiter himself been sometimes caught nodding? And is it criminal to whisper that great men have made great slips on former occasions? There is surely a fallacy in always asserting, that in the Alliance "the full Testimony of the Free Church will not be compromised." Of course if a man seal his lips he cannot be accused of uttering falsehood; but if he seal them, when and where he should open them, the case is con-

* Reported division in Assembly, p. 11.

structively, and perhaps more detrimentally, one of falsehood. But as the Alliance is based on acknowledged "common principles," it is somewhat ludicrous to speak of "not compromising the full Testimony of our Church." There is, although not certainly a very happy, yet a very novel plea advanced for the exercise of this undefined liberty, that "the Church may profit by our very errors, and that our very blunders will really have done no harm; but, on the contrary, may have the effect of making us better acquainted with one another, and of preparing us for action in our ecclesiastical or corporate capacity with more effect, when God in his providence opens up a way."* The errors and blunders of this "tentative" enterprise, advantageous to the Church in seeking Christian union, and this used as a plea for individual liberty, is assuredly a startling mode of defining liberty. As Mr Guthrie would say, What next? But, in conclusion, is the liberty now alluded to strictly and properly private or individual, after it is found within the pale, under the sanction, and enlisted in the advocacy, of the Alliance?—Where is its individuality, when strenuously exercised for the principles of such an association?

V. It is not so material, as already hinted, to ascertain the character of the Alliance, as it is to discover the spirit of the religious world, which it professes to represent. Whether the Alliance be a true embodiment of what is alleged to be sufficient to confront the present confederated Popery and Scepticism, still one thing is clear, that it is an attempt to bring up the discriminating feature of the age, by throwing far into the shade the eminent and comprehensive duty

* Reported discussion, p. 9.

of the Church and individual Christian, on the head of a Christian profession, and by dubbing a few cardinal, but undefined doctrines, as alone essential to be believed and professed. This is undoubtedly the animus of the age, the ruling sign of the times; and it is requisite that we have more logic and less eloquence to prove that this is not the cause and foment of the numberless divisions of the religious world, and the very scepticism which the Alliance laments and professes to remove. If this is not the very same spirit of scepticism in another (and because covert, the more dangerous) phase, I apprehend it will not be an arduous task to shew that it has a strong tendency in that direction; and it becomes a question of vast and pressing moment, whether the Alliance be not more fatal than the Popery and Scepticism which it professes to meet and overthrow. Without adducing any farther preliminary matter, I shall now proceed to a brief consideration of the Alliance scheme, by adducing a few direct arguments against it, as interfering with and contravening some of the cardinal principles of reason and the Word of God.

DIRECT ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE ALLIANCE.

I. The Alliance is a misrepresentation of Christian union. Granting, for the sake of argument, all that its warmest advocates claim for it as a non-representative association; and also, that one of its distinguishing objects is "to confess" the alleged Christian union common to the denominations to which its members respectively belong; still it is denied that what the Alliance designates Christian union is so, really and properly. And in bringing this grave

charge against it, I distinguish *Christian* from *ecclesiastical*, or Church union ; neither do I deem it necessary for substantiating this charge, to institute a very narrow enquiry into what is essential to Christian union, especially as the Basis must be held to be the exponent of the union understood by the Alliance. Taking the Basis then as the test, the exponent, of Christian union, it is not got, and cannot be confessed, by the Alliance. For illustration I shall refer to the figure used by the Rev. J. Hamilton, London—"The basis of the projected union comprehends a body of doctrine regarding which the Evangelical Alliance might send forth, if needful, its united testimony. Should a controversy respecting the composition of some mineral arise, and should ten chemists all agree in discovering gold and silver in it, while some detected traces of other metals, would there be any harm in the ten subscribing a declaration to the two ingredients which they all alike had ascertained—leaving it to the rest to send forth their separate statements regarding those additional substances which they believed to be also present?" In this figure, which clearly and fairly enough represents the character of the Basis, it is assumed that the Alliance has constituted itself, and also acted as a society of Chemists, whereas *exactly the reverse* is the case ; whilst, on the other hand, it must be admitted, that if this figure be employed to set forth the system of Christian doctrines, it is extremely unhappy, as it is very inept, in as far as it assumes that this system contains doctrines about which men may safely differ. But instead of the Alliance acting as a society of Chemists, by submitting revealed truth to a proper analysis, they have avowedly excluded from this figurative mineral many of its important and essential

elements, and have positively refused to explain those they have already discovered. Mr Gray, in his Assembly speech, acknowledges, in opposition to Mr Hamilton, that the Alliance could not send forth a united explanation of their Basis; and it requires little sagacity to foretel that should the Alliance make the attempt, the result will shew a "caput mortuum." Instead of the Alliance being agreed on what they declare they have discovered, there is no denying of it, that there are not two of its members from as many denominations that can agree in explaining what has been discovered. Were Dr Brown to apply his test to the article in the Basis on "the incarnation of the Son of God, *his work of atonement for sinners of mankind*, and his mediatorial intercession and reign," can any man, versant in the late controversy on the atonement, really believe that he would discover what the Free Church would stamp as gold and silver? Nor is this to be restricted to one, for it extends to, and embraces every article of the Basis, which is, of set purpose, vague and ambiguous. Where then, I would ask, is this common Christianity,—this Christian union? The members of the Alliance must, of necessity, expound this Basis—this figurative mineral—in accordance with their denominational Standards,—must read it through their denominational spectacles — which explodes the idea of "common ground," and common Christian union. Although I cannot well conceive of a simpler illustration of the misrepresentation of Christian union by the Alliance, yet it may aid in seeing at one view this misrepresentation, were we to consider the Alliance under the figurative character of a jeweller ticketting his articles for sale as gold or silver. In such a case, were the purchaser stoutly refused the use of the

chemical tests for discovering the truth of the ticketing, no man would be at a loss to "discover" the reason. So is it with the Alliance which tickets the several articles of the Basis, and yet knows full well that the application of the scriptural test, according to the views of the Free Church, would bring up, not golden, but brasen ingredients. What other explanation can be given of the distinct declaration of the Alliance, that "the Basis is not to be understood as comprising distinct doctrinal propositions?" Verily, if this be the Christian union sought and discovered, the Alliance has the honour, such as it is, of shewing, that the religious world is in a most miserable state,—in a worse condition than many were prepared to believe; that there is less of Christian union in the denominations than the loudly expressed desire for it gave many some reason to expect. Ere the Alliance can shew that it has reached and can manifest even Christian union, its Basis must contain distinct propositions of doctrine, clearly and unequivocally expressed.

II. The Alliance is decidedly objectionable, as it assumes that there are many scripturally authorized systems of truth. Of all the positions assumed by the Alliance, this is the most damaging to the unity of the Visible Church of Christ, and to the cause of Christianity. I readily admit that the Alliance disavows having anything to do with "religious systems;" but this disavowal is not sufficient to repel the grave objection, that it assumes there are more *systems* of divine truth than one; and that it tolerates, if it does not actually sanction, with a few exceptions, all the existing systems or denominations. Notwithstanding the above disavowal, does not the Alliance glory in declaring that all the denominations called

evangelical, are “sections, branches, and integral parts” of the one Visible Church of Christ? And if so, must they not, as different systems, be essential to the one system of Christianity? That this is a leading position of the Alliance, is obvious not only from its constitution but the current phraseology of its members and advocates. “Let us suppose a body of Moravians to attempt some manufacturing village where profligacy and irreligion are now universal, and that they succeeded by the power of ministrations in transforming it into another Fulneck, would not many of the Christian world who are Moravians—nay, would not the Christian world at large rejoice in such an enterprise? Or let a body of Wesleyans address themselves to some plebeian streets of most nauseous depravity, and gather their families into a flourishing congregation, would not many, very many who are not Wesleyans, alike rejoice? And would not the very same achievement be looked upon with the very same complacency by all sincere and enlightened Christians, whether done by Scottish Calvinists, or English Independents, or Evangelical Presbyterians, or Episcopalians of the Church of England? Are there ministers and members in our own Free Church who would look jealously and askance at this operation, because the Associate Synod or the Congregationalists, or even the Baptists of our land, were working with great effect in the households of our city-aliens, and bringing them out in thousands to their own schools through the week, or to their own churches on the Sabbath?”* In this intelligible and eloquent exposition of the constitution and objects of the Alliance, as well as of the real spirit of the religious world, the

* Dr Chalmers on Evangelical Alliance, pp. 50, 51.

capital fallacy is, that we are warranted to do good irrespectively of the means divinely appointed, and that it is quite immaterial which of the systems be employed, provided the contemplated object be reached ; whilst the whole question is carried from the Word of God as the rule of duty, and brought, by way of appeal, before our feelings. To the same effect Mr Gray of Perth thus delivered himself in his Assembly speech, which was reputed to be the *chef d'œuvre* of the evening :—“ Mr M'Gilvray has asked what we would do if the deposed brethren of Strathbogie were to appear at the meetings of the Evangelical Alliance in their character of the ministers of the Church of Scotland ? I shall tell him, Moderator, what I would do for one. The very instant they appeared, I should take my leave. Their reception, as ministers of Christ, into any society of which I might happen to be a member, should be the signal for me to erase my name from its roll. I hold that when these men were deposed, an act of scriptural discipline was performed, to the validity of which our great Head put his seal. * * * But while I hold this, I do not hold that the whole Establishment is deposed.”* And so Scotland is to view the great Disruption of 1843, as a disruption from the poor wights of Strathbogie—from these seven deposed ministers !!! What a glorious Disruption !—from seven ministers, whose every step in the litigated case, was, if not directed, at least defended and judicially homologated by what Mr Gray calls “the whole Establishment ;” and this “whole Establishment” acknowledges them as not only undeposed, but glorious ministers of Christ. Rev. Norman M'Leod has no objections to employ these

* Reported Discussion, p. 62.

Strathbogie ministers in dispensing the seals of the Covenant of grace, and yet Mr Gray holds evangelical communion with the said Mr M'Leod ; but perhaps Mr Gray has discovered a method of proving that "things which are equal to the same thing, are NOT equal to one another." Men having no side purposes to serve, naturally enough reason not on the individual members of any association, but on their character as directly affected by the system which distinguishes their association, and of which they are an official organ. It were worse than trifling to expose such illogical and unmanly reasoning, were it not that it is requisite to reveal the anti-scriptural and damaging assumption, that there are more divine systems of truth than one, and that it is not essential which of these be employed to carry on the work of conversion and sanctification—an assumption repudiated by sound reason, and point blank condemned by the Westminster Standards, professedly adhered to by the Free Church. The above extracts contain the very breath of the Alliance and its ablest defenders, which shew it to be the great antagonist to the Visible Church of Christ, which has committed to her but one instituted and authorized system, comprising its four essential parts of Doctrine, Discipline, Worship, and Government. There is—and the Free Church in professing adherence to the Westminster Standards must be held as admitting it—but one divinely constructed engine for ecclesiastical work ; and for its professed engineers to conclude against its efficiency, and to adopt and work any other, because of its supposed slowness or eccentricity of motion, is arrogantly to dictate to the great Head of the Church. Who requires to be told that the second precept of the Decalogue, which, as it is of *a moral positive*, and not

of a moral natural character, respects the Visible Church, and distinguishes her from every other society, requires the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire, *all such religious worship and ordinances as God hath appointed in his Word?*" None of the precepts of the moral law is more thoroughly fenced against infraction, and the infraction of none of them has been more signally met by God, than the second, whilst it is formally distinguished from the other nine by the peculiar and solemn terms, "For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God." Now, Sir, the rejoicing in, and employment of the various and conflicting machinery of Moravianism, Wesleyanism, Independency, and Episcopacy, by the Free Church, is a blow at the heart of the Second Commandment; is assuming that either that one particular system of Divine worship is not revealed, or that it is a matter of indifference, whether, in serving God, we adopt it or any other; and is an open and unabashed avowal that the Second Commandment of the moral law is one of the modern "Non-essentials." This is dark work, and all the darker that it is perpetrated under the amiable but much abused name of Christian charity! The question to be solved is, Has God appointed one particular system of ordinances for the Visible Church,—a system complete in all its parts, and efficient, by His promised blessing, to reach all the purposes of its appointment? This is the question to which an humble enquirer will, first of all, seriously and solemnly address himself. And it will not do, in attempting to evade its claims, to vapour away about the great good that God has done, or may do, in the exercise of his sovereignty, which is not either the rule or the reason of our duty. The next step in the enquiry is, What is the particular appointed system? And neither will it do here to

take refuge under the sceptical query, "who is judge?" for this undiluted scepticism assumes that Scripture is not sufficiently clear for reaching, in the use of appointed means, a safe conclusion on this primary duty. But the Free Church has declared that she has ascertained this one system by her professed adoption of ecclesiastical symbols, has appended her seal to it, as that by which she is distinguished from other associations, and has come—at least her ministers—under formal obligation to uphold it, by rejecting and "endeavouring to extirpate" all other and rival systems. Nor will it avail her in attempting to effect an escapement from this conclusion to affirm, in the cant phraseology of the day, that she only *thinks* her system right, but *it may* be wrong;—that she cannot go the length of positively condemning all the other evangelical systems or denominations;—because this spurious charity would compel to conclude that she worships God upon *an uncertainty*,—upon a mere peradventure,—upon a mere think,—and not in the exercise of that assurance which is essential to faith, "without which it is impossible to please God." How different from, and diametrically opposed to this position is that taken up by the Confession of Faith, chap. xvi. 1—"Good works are only such as God hath commanded in his holy Word, and not such as, without the warrant thereof, are devised by men, out of blind zeal, or upon any pretence of good intention." How very much opposed to the modern mode of speaking and dealing with the true religion and true profession of it, was that which the Reformed Church of Scotland declared and solemnly subscribed—"We all and every one of us under written, protest, that, after long and due examination of our consciences in matters of true and false

religion, we are now thoroughly resolved in the truth by the Word and Spirit of God : and therefore we believe with our hearts, confess with our mouths, subscribe with our hands, and constantly affirm, before God and the whole world, that *this only* is the true Christian faith and religion, &c. To the which confession and FORM of religion we willingly agree in our consciences in all points, as unto God's undoubted truth and verity, grounded only upon his written word."* As the Alliance by "stimulating Christians," to be found in various denominations, recognises and employs the machinery of these denominations, and thus adopts a system of its own, it is incumbent upon it to shew, that if its system be not identical with that of divine institution, it is, at least, not opposed to it ; and farther, it belongs to the Alliance, if its system be not that which is divinely appointed, to assign solid reasons for the rejection of that which has the stamp of divine authority ; and especially does it belong to the members of the Free Church, who are members of the Alliance, to shew, that the system adopted by their Church is inadequate to meet the present crisis. From this assumption of the Alliance, that there are more systems of truth for the Visible Church of Christ than one, flow very many speculative and dangerous practical heresies. 1. This assumption of the Alliance implicates in the toleration, if not in the direct sanction of schism, which consists in the erection of altars against the one altar divinely appointed—in the setting up of systems as rivals to the one revealed in Scripture. This is the clear-toned, the unfaltering voice of the Alliance and its abettors. With what unconcernedness, if not complacency, are the acknowledged conflicting systems spoken of ?

* National Covenant.

and what keen and burning vocables are employed to scorch the bigotry of those who cannot see with the Alliance eyes! But is it possible that these conflicting systems, under which bitter and lamented sectarianism finds shelter, can ever be removed,—dare I say “extirpated”—whilst such compliments are paid to the immense good which they are charitably supposed to have been the instruments of effecting; and when their professed aid is sought in Christianizing the world? And is it possible to have an enlightened, warm, and consistent attachment to the Reformed Church of Scotland, when the system which she has delineated is, by her own professed sons, not only placed side by side with, but in many instances far below, other conflicting, and, by her, condemned systems? Her system and these rival systems cannot both be held, or commended, without manifest and hurtful inconsistency. 2. If the assumption be, that there are more systems than one equally, or nearly so, efficient, then the Free Church is endeavouring to manage a somewhat ticklish commission, and to play at a game, the painful upshot of which she will feel, and, it may be, at an hour when she thinks not. Is her system superior to those of others in creating or confessing Christian union; in the work of conversion or sanctification; in confronting Popery, Superstition, and Infidelity? Her first rate men, in the language of the Alliance, answer No. Why, then, should she put forth special claims upon Scotland? Why should her members submit to make such heavy and incessant contributions to her Sustentation and other funds? If other religious systems are equally well adapted, and have proved their efficiency, equally well with her own, to meet the growing scepticism and irreligion of the age, wherefore should she seek “the chief seats of the synagogue,” unless because of the charm of novelty?

The mere accidentals of number, talent, eloquence, and novelty, may yet be found under another system, when the lessons of charity she now gives out may not be responded to, and the societies she now "delights to honour" may not reciprocate her extremely generous offices. 3. This assumption gives no security for the real, because appointed, value and efficacy of Divine truth. The figure of "the Mineral and ten Chemists," chosen by Mr Hamilton, and the remarks of Dr Chalmers on denominational peculiarities, as mere crotchets, are designed to shew, that as *truth is truth*, in whatever system found, so it still retains its value, and demands a Christian acknowledgment. Now, Sir, as this is the drift of all that has been said and written in defence of the Alliance and all kindred associations, I take the liberty of affirming that such reasoning is not only fallacious, but is without the plea of plausible sophistry; and as this is the popular argument, it may be worth while briefly exposing it. Every truth, every doctrine, has its real, because appointed value, simply from the place which it holds in the divinely instituted system. Every truth, therefore, like every figure in an arithmetical account, has its real value only from its relative position. There is, then, no security that any truth, by being severed from the one divine system, and neatly fitted into another and rival one, shall retain its original value. Being by God joined to the system, a putting it asunder from that system does not warrant any man to expect the blessing of God upon its exhibition. This admits of a simple and intelligible illustration by a reference to genuine and counterfeit money. Although gold, wheresoever found, is still gold, yet its proper value depends on the place in which it is found. If used for the surface of the counterfeit coin, although still

the same royal metal of which a Sovereign is composed, yet it not only loses its proper value, but is worse than valueless. Thus, although in all the religious systems so indiscriminately lauded and tolerated, there is much of divine truth, golden truth, yet who is prepared to shew that among them it retains its original value, and is not used to discredit the unique and only one system of divine truth? It is requisite, as declared by the highest authority, that these rival coins be all thrown into the furnace; that the pure, on being separated from the reprobate metal, may be run into the appointed mould, struck at the royal mint, have the royal device, and be current money in the proper evangelical country.—“The wood, hay, and stubble,” must be consumed in the fire, for the preservation, value, and currency of “the gold, and silver, and precious stones.” The one Scriptural system is not only not let alone, but is contravened by this assumption of the Alliance.

III. The Alliance, in confounding the distinction betwixt the Church Visible and Invisible, destroys the unity of the former. I have already hinted, in my remarks on the mode of defence adopted by the Alliance and its friends, that the character of the Church of Christ constitutes an essential element in the proper discussion and right adjustment of the question of union, whether Christian or ecclesiastical. It is readily admitted, and reiterated by all modern unionists, that the Church of Christ is one—that she has an essential unity. The Alliance authoritatively declares, “that the Church of the living God, while it admits of growth, is one Church, never having lost, and being incapable of losing, its essential unity.”*

* Minutes of Evangelical Alliance, p. 9.

In order, therefore, to reach clear and definite views on the unity of the Church, it is absolutely necessary that we distinguish between the Visible and Invisible Church, and ascertain to which of these two societies, and also in what sense, this common phrase is applied. I am fully aware that this is rather a thorny subject; and in the remarks subjoined, I have principally in view to shew, that the modern theory of the unity of the Church is not so free of thorns as some of its fiery, but impolitic, defenders appear to think. In dealing with the Free Church, and especially with those of her members who belong to the Alliance, I shall avail myself of the definitions of the Church Visible and Invisible, which are given in the Subordinate Standards; and as the Westminster Confession of Faith reduplicates upon, and formally acknowledges, her first, called The Scots Confession of Faith, I shall not be found travelling out of the record in referring to both symbolic documents, for their mutually reflected lights on this interesting subject. The Church Invisible is defined as consisting of all those whom the Father gave to Christ to be redeemed, whether born or unborn, whether on earth or in heaven. "The Catholic or universal Church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."* With this accurate and intelligible definition of the Church Invisible, accords that which is given in the Scots Confession. "This Kirk is invisible, known to God, who alone knoweth whom he hath chosen, and comprehendeth as well (as said is) the elect that be departed, commonly called

* Confession of Faith, xxv. 1.

The Church Triumphant, as those that yet live and fight against sin and Satan, and shall live hereafter."* From these definitions we gather, that the members of this society, on earth, cannot *certainly* be known by man, because the society is *invisible*.—No discharge of moral duties, nor punctual observances of whatever kind, can warrant the Visible Church, or the saint himself, to say decidedly of any man, This is a saint. It is teasing to argue this question with those who are never at a loss, by their ready talismanic mark, to set down this and the other man as undoubtedly a believer; and thus by traversing the line betwixt visible and invisible, to confound the distinction which Scripture, and the concurrent voice of the Reformers, is careful to preserve. As clearly, although painfully, illustrative of the popular phraseology by which this line is boldly traversed, I refer to the following:—"But let us recall ourselves from the prospective and the ideal, to the realities of the present. There can be no doubt that, notwithstanding the exceeding number of different communions in the Christian Church, each distinguished by their own peculiarity, there are very many individuals in most of them, and perhaps some in all of them, who have substantially the same understanding of Bible truth, and with the same practical effect too on their hearts and lives. Could we view, as through a window, the tablet of their inner man, we should behold the same epistle of Christianity graven thereupon,—not with pen and ink, but by the Spirit of the living God,—and this, too, without essential variation among them, because the genuine transcript of that one and the same Christianity which is graven on the pages of an outward revelation." † Viewing this as a burst of

* Scots Confession Article xvi.

† Evangelical Alliance, by Dr Chalmers, pp. 19, 20.

charitable generosity eloquently expressed, it is admissible ; but if we are to take it as an argument bearing on Christian union, or any such association as the Alliance, I would calmly ask, Where is its point? It is not surely expected that any man should make a formal reply to an avowed phantom, or combat an argument which rests upon a charitable peradventure. " Could we view, as through a window, the tablet of their inner man?" How can such reasoning possibly be met, unless by simply saying, we cannot, and no living man can, " view, as through a window, the tablet of their inner man." It belongs to God, Sir, as his prerogative, which may not be assumed by any man, or by the Visible Church herself, to " look through that window," and to know " what is graven on that tablet;" and " the day alone shall declare" who are, and who are not, genuine saints. It is a very serious and solemn declaration, to which one and all should take most earnest heed, that very many reputed saints of the first magnitude shall, when " the judgment shall be set, and the books opened," sustain a very different character. " And in that day many shall say, Lord, Lord, have we not done many wonderful things in thy name ; and in thy name have prophesied," &c. Adhering, then, to the definitions of the Invisible Church, furnished in the Scots and Westminster Confessions of Faith, that her members, *because she is invisible*, cannot be certainly known of living man, I shall now proceed to a consideration of the Church Visible. In paving the way for a calm consideration of this extremely interesting subject, which involves most serious consequences, I deem it necessary to advert to a few of the common and popular, although foreign adjuncts, with which it has been loaded. It is oft and gravely affirmed that a small number of persons cannot possibly be the Visible Church of Christ.

Now, of all the vulgar arguments ever adduced upon a subject of truth and duty, this is undoubtedly the most vulgar, is unbecoming a scholar, and puts a damper, at the very outset, upon anything like a rational inquiry after truth, whether in the field of science or scripture. If this assertion do not resolve itself into one of physical force, it certainly does place the subject on an arithmetical ground, while it is a painful exposition of that mental process by which those who employ it have reached their conclusion on this weighty and solemn question. It is a mode of reasoning the question which is not merely unphilosophic, but directly antagonistic to Scripture precept and fact, and palpably at variance with the clear deliverances of the Reformed Church of Scotland; while it precipitates the irrational conclusion *that truth and number are of equivalent import*. At the bottom of this popular assertion there will be found to lie much prejudice, pride of number, and a real distrust of God, with whom "is no restraint to save by many or by few." Nor does this mode of discussing the character of the Visible Church apply only to the multitude, but also to those who have exhibited no ordinary intellectual powers, and have reached no ordinary eminence, in the religious world. "In some little sub-section of some one or other of these Communion, narrow in spirit as *in size or numbers*, it is very possible that the opposite sentiment may exist; and that men can be pointed out among them, who monopolize for themselves, as being the only true Church upon earth, whatever of real piety or saving faith is to be met with in Christendom."* I have no intention of animadverting on this passage, which throws into complete confusion the distinction betwixt the Church Visible and Invisible, which

* Evangelical Alliance, by Dr Chalmers, p. 20.

puts the character of the former on the untenable ground of personal piety, and which, to say the least of it, is not certainly a very refreshing shower of love from the pure region of the Alliance; but simply to place side by side with it the judicial deliverance of the Reformed Church of Scotland. "The notes, therefore, of the true Church of God we believe, confess, and avow to be, first, the true preaching of the word of God, &c. Secondly, The right administration of the sacraments of Christ Jesus, &c. Last, Ecclesiastical discipline, uprightly administered, as God's word prescribeth, &c. Wheresoever, then, these former notes are seen, and of any time continue (be the number never so few, *about two or three*), there, *without all doubt*, is the true Church of Christ."* But this question requires to be delivered from another equally popular and fictitious adjunct, with that of number, to which I have now adverted. The question is very unceremoniously put, Do you really imagine that you alone are the true Church of Christ,—that your denomination is the Church, to the exclusion of all other denominations;—that you are warranted to excommunicate, to unchurch, all other branches and sections who happen to be without your self-erected enclosure? This has become, throughout Christendom, household phraseology; and any attempt to set it aside, as altogether irrelevant to the consideration of what and where is the Visible Church, is met by warm appeals to Christian feeling, and the somewhat ponderous epithets, Popery, Puseyism, and extreme High Churchism! "Such a pretension as this, save among Papists and Puseyites, and extreme High Churchmen of England, would be looked to in these days as a sort of curiosity,—perhaps with a mixed com-

* Scots Confession, Art. xviii.

placency of kindness and humour, because of the actual worth, or great strength or tenacity of principle, which are so often found in alliance with an intense confinement of view, that marks the straitest and most peculiar of our religionists."* It will not certainly be expected that, in arguing this question, any person is under obligation to repel a plea which has no terrestrial or celestial connexion with the subject; for what have the views of Papists, and Puseyites, and extreme High Churchmen of England, to do with a rational and scriptural discussion of the character of the Visible Church? But, after all, might we not learn some very important principles and facts of an ecclesiastical kind from the Popish Church, which the most learned Protestants have proved is a very close imitation of the true Church, in consequence of which it has so successfully imposed on the Western Empire? In illustration of this fact, I might hazard the assertion that it will not be easy to specify a single Popish dogma, especially on the externals of the Church, which did not bear a very striking resemblance to what the Church of Christ has declared in her symbolical documents. The fallacy lies not, as formerly hinted, in the Popish Church putting forth, but in applying to herself, the claim of only one Visible Church. The modern and popular mode of discussing this question, to which I have now alluded, is liable to numerous, grave, and serious objections. Besides confounding the distinction betwixt the Visible and Invisible Church, in assuming that man can exercise the prerogative of God, by "looking through the window of another's heart," that personal piety—not ascertainable because invisible—is the discriminating characteristic of this Church, and that "a profession of the

* Evangelical Alliance, Dr Chalmers, p. 21.

true religion" is equivalent to excommunicating others, whereas these others, by refusing to accede to that profession, voluntarily exclude themselves; besides all these most unwarrantable assumptions, the modern theory is liable to the capital objection of not distinguishing betwixt INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIANS *that belong to the Church Invisible*, and a properly constituted COURT, which is *essential to the Church Visible*. In point of fact, this highly interesting question has been sadly mystified by the introduction of much irrelevant matter bearing upon the piety of individuals, a mistake of the most fatal kind to a right consideration of that great institute, the Visible Church of Christ. Having, as I apprehend, disposed of some vulgar and unessential elements that have been mixed up with the consideration of the character of the Visible Church, I shall now state, and briefly remark on, those definitions given of her in the subordinate Standards of the Historical Church of Scotland. "The visible Church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel (not confined to one nation as before, under the law, consists of all those throughout the world *that profess the true religion*, together with their children; and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no *ordinary* possibility of salvation." Besides the comprehensive characteristic of this society, "the profession of the true religion,"—a phrase of no dubious import as found in "the National Covenant, and Solemn League and Covenant," which definitively fix its meaning, as used in the Confession of Faith,—the subordinate but essential characteristics are thus given:—"Unto this catholic visible Church Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints in this life, to the

end of the world.”* With this agrees the definition of the Visible Church, given in the Scots Confession, which I formerly cited. “The notes, therefore, of the true Church of God we believe, *confess*, and *avow* to be, first, the true preaching of the word of God, &c. Secondly, The right administration of the sacraments of Christ Jesus, &c. Last, Ecclesiastical discipline, uprightly ministered, &c. Wheresoever, then, these former notes are seen, and of any time continue (be the number never so few, about two or three,) there, without all doubt, is the true Church of Christ.”† In the phraseology, “out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation,” it is obvious, that individual Christians are without the pale of the Visible Church, and that such Christians have been brought to a saving acquaintance with Christ not by those means which are *ordinary* in the Church, but which are *extraordinary*, as being without it. These are definitions, in point of accuracy and fulness, which are indicative of peculiar clearness of head and largeness of soul, definitions which repudiate and frown down the modern theory, whose language is, “In some little sub-section of some one or other of these communions, narrow in spirit as in size or numbers, it is very possible that the opposite sentiment may exist, and that men can be pointed out among them, who monopolize for themselves, as being the only true Church upon earth, whatever of real piety or saving faith is to be met with in Christendom.” And in meeting such intelligible definitions, how irrelevant the question, Are there no real Christians save within the pale of your “two or three? Could you but look through the window” of the hearts of Moravians, Bap-

* Confession of Faith, xxv. 2, 3.

† Scots Confession, Art. xviii.

tists, Independents, Episcopalians, &c. ? The definitions of the Standards, and the modern theory, are irreconcilable ; both cannot be consistently or decently held, —the retention of the one is necessarily the abandonment of the other. From these definitions of the Visible Church given in the symbolic documents of the Reformed Church of Scotland, with which the Free Church claims, if not real identification, at least substantial agreement, it is clear that the Visible Church is characterised by—not the means of grace, as prayer, praise, and vowing, WHICH SPRING FROM THE NATURE OF GOD, AND BELONG TO MEN AS RELIGIOUS BEINGS, but—ordinances or positive institutions, as the preaching of the Gospel, the right administration of the sacraments of Baptism and the Supper, and polity, which, AS THEY SPRING FROM THE WILL OF GOD, belong to the Church as an ecclesiastical institute. Her distinctive and comprehensive character is *her profession*, whilst her notes, or marks, are the retention and observance of these ordinances or positive institutions. This was the scriptural and intelligible deliverance on the character of the Visible Church which was enunciated by the concurrent voice of the Reformation, a deliverance which the modern theory stigmatises as uncharitable, and as the essence of Popery, Puseyism, and extreme High Churchism. Without, in the farther prosecution of this subject,—confused views of which, it is apprehended, are at the bottom of Christendom's organic disorder,—broaching the reputed delicate question of *the regular ordination of Protestant ministers*, and the equally delicate one of *the mutual recognition of all the Reformed Churches* on the Continent and in Britain,—although it is believed that these questions admit of a satisfactory solution from *the plastic accommodations of Popery to distinctive national character*, which gave a distinctive

national phase to the respective testimonies lifted up against it,—I proceed to address, through you, to the Alliance and the Free Church, a few questions against the modern theory, and in vindication of the definitions stated above. 1. If the Scripture figures, illustrative of the nature and character of the Visible Church,—figures fixed on by all the Confessions of the Reformed,—be correct, then how reconcile with them the modern theory of different denominations as essential parts of her? The Church is represented under the figures of “the house, the family,” and most commonly, “the kingdom of God.” If a kingdom, which is made up of many *dependent and subordinate* provinces, be one, then how make *co-ordinate and independent* provinces, or hostile denominations, quadrate with this very intelligible figure? How make independent religious provinces essential parts of the one kingdom of Christ, whilst independent political provinces are obviously destructive of our commonest apprehensions of the unity of a political kingdom? In evading this question, it will not do to point to the loyalty of individual subjects under independent civil governments. 2. If, in the common acceptance of the terms, different denominations must be held as so many essential “sections, branches,” &c. of the one Visible Church, then what denominations does this theory exclude? What is the limit to the application of this principle? The Alliance excludes many, because they belong to certain denominations, as the Society of Friends,—although Dr Chalmers complains of this exclusion as quite beside the declared object of the Alliance,—from which it is manifest, that it cannot work out its own regnant principle. The very difficulty of attaching definite ideas to the vague term “evangelical,” any attempt to define which, as now used, Dr Chalmers has shrewdly said, “might prove

a Pandora's box that shall break up the whole enterprise,"* would, under the consistent application of this principle, be "a sliding scale" with a witness. May not the Morrisonians, who, although deposed by the United Synod, could equally well with Dr Brown subscribe the Basis, be admitted under the wing of this assumption? The question I propose is, If "sections or denominations" be really and essentially parts of the one Visible Church, what section can be excluded? 3. If the different, and of necessity conflicting denominations, called Evangelical, be all integral parts of the one Visible Church, then I do ask, *Where is the supreme Court of that Church?* That the society called the Visible Church has, and must have, a court, cannot be refused; and that she has a supreme court, whose decisions affect all her subjects—her integral parts—will be readily admitted by every professed Presbyterian. If then the Visible Church, according to the popular account of her—made up of different and hostile denominations—is *visible*, has any existence at all, where is her court, her supreme court, to be found? How, in point of fact, could such a Visible Church as the modern theory constructs have a court? This plain question, based on the first and most obvious principle of Presbytery, I humbly apprehend will not be readily answered; and if so, then the popular theory of the Visible Church must be discarded as destructive of the Standards of the Reformers, and of our first and commonest ideas of organized society, whether political or ecclesiastical. As a corollary from the above remarks, the modern theory of the Visible Church is a real concession to Independency; for assuming, as is done, that these denominations are essential parts, or mere sections of the Church, then it is

* Evangelical Alliance, Dr Chalmers, p. 28.

manifest, that *these denominations are but large congregations*, that denominations and congregations are convertible terms. These "sections" having their respective and independent courts, are yet declared to be integral parts of one visible organized society that has no supreme tribunal—no court at all—to which any appeal can be made! I admit that, in one point, the analogy fails, but it must be granted that the failure is not in favour of the popular theory of this novel and very ridiculous Independency; for whereas these "sections" resemble Independency in being distinct and not subordinate to one another, they are, over and above their independency, necessarily hostile—an inconsistency not attachable to the Independent form of Church government. How to reconcile the modern theory with Presbytery—with the idea of a Court—I do confess, exceeds my comprehension. 4. I have further to ask, How, in accordance with the modern theory, can provision possibly be made for "the upright administration of discipline—especially for excommunication and deposition? This objection to the popular theory has been anticipated by modern unionists, who have attempted to provide against it by the cant phraseology, "cast out of *our communion*." Our communion! Is not "our communion" an integral part of the one Visible Church of Christ? The excommunicated or deposed person is, notwithstanding the infliction of censure, still in the same Church—unless we except the momentary interval between being "cast out of our communion," and being received into the other communion, or part of the same Church. This is certainly an awkward and ridiculous predicament in which the modern theory places the visible kingdom of Christ; when, for her life, she cannot, in any scriptural or rational way, get clear of a heretical or refractory sub-

ject. If she push him out of "the house of God" by the Independent door, he is found, next day, within the same house by the Presbyterian; and if she thrust him out by the Presbyterian, in he pops by the Episcopalian. During all these shifts, still she must recognise him as one of her genuine sons. According to Dr Brown's account, there were Christians at the Liverpool Conference from seventeen denominations; and we are not beyond the mark in saying, that now the Alliance has members from thirty different sections; and thus the same person, after being successively excommunicated by twenty-nine of the denominational doors, may effect a lodgement in the same house—the Visible Church—by slipping in at the thirtieth. I have also to put the question, which is also of a corollary kind, How, according to the modern theory, can Free Communion, and that too in its widest sense, be opposed? It is not quite clear, and I fear it will require some new mode and kind of reasoning to shew, that if these denominations are integral parts, mere "sections" of the one Visible Church, they should not all declare the Free Communion principle, and observe the Free Communion practice. How should the *essential parts of the one Church* not observe *Church communion* in its freest and most unrestricted sense? Once admit, Sir, the regnant principle of the modern theory, and I humbly submit, you cannot stop short of declaring for the Free Communion principle, and plunging into the Free Communion practice. But whilst this theory assumes that these denominations are essential parts of the one Visible Church, the extraordinary conclusion is, that independent and necessarily hostile denominations are essential to the unity of the Church, and to Church communion. Surely the theory does not cast up what Dr Candlish calls "an undulatory surface, with

various tints to gratify the liberty-loving eye!" It is true that denominations, hostile because they are denominations, cannot consistently hold Church communion; but, on the other hand, it must be admitted, that to hold these denominations to be mere sections, and at the same time to refuse church communion with them, is not without sin, as well as manifest inconsistency. And if these sections can hold this communion, which Dr Candlish, Messrs Guthrie, Begg, and many others of the Free Church avow they should do, then, Sir, where is their consistency in being sections? 5. How, upon the modern theory of the Visible Church, explain the character and continuous testimony of the Two Witnesses? The designation Witness, which necessarily supposes a court, cannot surely comport with contradictory evidence; for what court could proceed with a case before which "seventeen" contradictory declarations were made by as many witnesses? This testimony of the Two Witnesses, with which they are said to "torment them that dwell on the earth," during the twelve hundred and sixty years of the dreary and severe domination of Antichrist, is described as always one and the same,—receiving of course additions from attainments made during their protracted ecclesiastical existence. The portion of Scripture to which I now allude, does not, for my present purpose, require a doctrinal exposition; for although Commentators and Expositors of reputed talent and orthodoxy are not at one as to who these Witnesses were, or are, yet clear it is, that their testimony was one and the same, shewing both their identity and continuity, far different indeed from the conflicting testimony given by present sections, or hostile denominations. These Two Witnesses are, during their long ecclesiastical existence in the Latin Empire, one in Profession, and are honoured by God,

in contradistinction to all others, to meet and rise superior to the two Beasts of modern Europe—a task for which the belligerent religious parties of *the modern Visible Church* are declared by God to be incompetent. I have dwelt upon this branch of the subject the longer, as I consider that the imprimatur of the Alliance to the false views of the character of the Visible Church of Christ, which have long been prevalent, lends them an importance which postpones a calm consideration of this interesting question, and renders a deliverance from our alarming crisis very dark, if not impossible.

IV. The Alliance is impracticable, and consequently inadequate to reach its proposed object. If this charge against the Alliance can be substantiated, which I apprehend is no arduous task, then I submit, that it is worse than useless, as exposing to ridicule the so-called Evangelism of Christendom. To the proof and illustration of this grave charge I shall, in the few subsequent remarks, very briefly address myself. 1. The Alliance authoritatively declares that, in accomplishing its professed objects, it disclaims any particular organization of its own, and simply falls back upon and employs denominational organization already existing. “In professing these and similar objects, the Alliance contemplates chiefly the stimulating of Christians to such efforts as the exigences of the case demand, *by publishing its views* in regard to them, rather than accomplishing these views by any organization of its own.”* I have not, at present, to do with the profession, that the Alliance does not interfere with denominations, as such, or with its direct recognition and formal employment of denominational organization, but simply with the fact, that it will not, because it cannot,

* Minutes of Evangelical Alliance, p. 29.

command and work any organization properly its own ; a fact which announces its inadequacy,—its real impotency. Anything like organization which it claims as its own, is included in the dubious phraseology “ by publishing its views.” How publish its views? Not surely by the speeches of individual members of the Alliance ; for when these were alluded to as the exponent of the Alliance, Dr Candlish, with the approbation of the Assembly, refused to be bound by such speeches. Can this be accomplished by an official periodical ? This has been attempted, and has failed. The periodical, which from its name—“ EVANGELICAL CHRISTENDOM ”—naturally gave us reason to expect something official, thus introduces itself:—“ Evangelical Christendom comes before the public in a certain (!) connexion with the British Organization of the Evangelical Alliance. The relation between them we wish to define. It was natural that such an association should desire to possess its literary organ ; and, at an early period of its proceedings, the idea was suggested and discussed. Difficulties presented themselves ; and although at first it was hoped that they might be overcome, they rather strengthened and multiplied than diminished, until it became apparent that the design, however reluctantly, must be relinquished. *This work, therefore, is not officially the organ of that body.* It is an independent journal.”* I deem it superfluous formally to shew that this declaration is a direct admission of the inadequacy of the Alliance, even upon its assumed “ common ground,” and without organization of its own, to confront and successfully grapple with the adverse compact and wickedly consistent system of “ Infidelity, Romanism, and such other forms of Super-

* *Evangelical Christendom*, No. I. p. 3.

stition, Error, and Profaneness," as are sedulously at work. 2. As the Alliance professedly rests on common ground, so it must be inadequate to meet and successfully grapple with the adversary. What is the alleged strength is the real weakness of this association. Popery and superstition, as forming one compact system, are not opposed to the "common ground" ambiguously expressed in the Basis; and this confederated foe plays a deeper game far than to waste its energies in assailing such a non-descript kind of opposition; it sees in that Basis far too much of its own image to provoke its ire. Were Popery ever seriously to meditate coming down upon the Alliance, can any man, slenderly versant in the history of its long practice and eminent success in the game of *equivoque*, really believe that it would come off the loser? Popery must forget its cunning ere it leave its heights and descend to break a lance with the Alliance below. This "common ground"—a matter of indifference to Popery—is that which deprives the Alliance of the boasted "charm of its name," and renders it the most impotent of all instruments for withstanding a real assailment upon any one of the great national and constitutional questions at present engrossing the public mind, and which the characteristic motion of the age necessarily brings up. As illustrative of its inadequacy under this head, it is a matter of perfect indifference whether it be viewed as sustaining an *offensive* or *defensive* character. Suppose, then, that the Alliance army stands simply on the defensive—and I do not know that it professedly sustains another—how can it meet the adversary when charging against Voluntaryism? Are the Alliance Voluntaries at that critical juncture to rush out of the ranks and fight alone? or are the Establishment-principle soldiers to sink their peculiar principles and join

the Voluntary battalions? Where is the common ground to meet this charge? and how can the Alliance, in withstanding it, present an unbroken front? But although the charge against Voluntaryism were sustained,—which can alone be done at a palpable and immense sacrifice of consistency,—this is only one of a series of heavy rounds of fire from the same adverse and consistent battery. How stand a charge on the kindred national questions of the Sabbath and Education, in its various phases of “University Tests,” “Government Schemes,” and even “Ragged Schools?” Has the Alliance mounted upon its battery a single gun that can return the fire, or silence the opposite thunder, that now shakes the nerves of this country? Nor will it serve any good purpose to evade the force of these figures upon the plea of their ineptitude; for the questions specified above indicate the real causes of the war which Popery and Scepticism are now waging, and in which, for aught the Alliance can do, they will assuredly triumph. Should Europe, or this country, in the hour of trial, seek shelter behind the wall of the Alliance, the first round from the foe will leave them naked and defenceless; for surely the Alliance cannot believe that the experienced adversary will make a rush upon their “common ground,” when he can so easily worst them by using the ancient policy, “divide and conquer?” The Alliance is inadequate for weakening Popery and Scepticism, as it tolerates and sanctions Sectarianism. The charm, jet and wit, of the Alliance lies in its being a bold attempt to divert the eye of the adversary from off the fragmented, the denominational Protestantism of Evangelical Christendom, and keep it fixed on the union of this novel association. The strength of the popular pleading of the Alliance, and its individual members, is, that Popery and Infidelity have waxen

great and insolent, because of the divisions of Protestants ; and that the Alliance is a counteractive in presenting an amount of substantial, united Protestantism, sufficient to keep the adversary in check. This is, undeniably, the gist of all the pleadings of its advocates, which demonstrates, notwithstanding declarations to the contrary, that the Alliance is a substitute for the Church, if not an association that declares its competency for a task for which the Church, even according to their own view of the Visible Church, is thoroughly inadequate. This position, I presume, requires not to be formally established ; for it is extremely obvious, that were the Church—viewing it even as made up of all so-called evangelical denominations—fit for this work, the Alliance could not possibly have an existence. But if the Alliance has discovered that divided, denominational Protestantism, has encouraged Popery and Scepticism, how does it prove its adequacy in meeting such a case ? Does it make provision for healing the Protestant divisions, or reducing the number of them ? This certainly was to be expected. But strange to say, the Alliance has stereotyped these denominations, and made provision for their active operation.—“ Its simple and comprehensive object, it is strongly felt, may be successfully promoted *without interfering with, or disturbing the order of, any branch of the Christian Church* to which its members may respectively belong.—Carried.”* This very novel method of healing divisions, is defended in the public speeches delivered, during the meetings of the Alliance, by those whom the Alliance requested to address the people of London in Exeter Hall. These, designated by the Alliance “ the valuable speakers,” most certainly followed out the above resolution. “ The

* Alliance Minutes, p. 19.

Rev. E. Bickersteth, rector of Watton,—I testify that I have seen nothing of any design to injure any particular church, and still less my own church.—By God's blessing, we shall injure no particular church; by God's blessing, *we shall help all.*" * And is this healing the lamented divisions of the Church? Is it "common ground" to resolve, by the blessing of God, to help all the fragments of Christendom? Is this the exposition of Dr Candlish's "key-stone of the Alliance,"—the carried motion of Dr Symington, "That no compromise of the views of any member, or sanction of those of others, on the points wherein they differ, is either required or expected?" As the Alliance heals no existing division, and especially as it makes provision for their existence and operation, it proclaims its inadequacy for resisting the adverse system. This is not simply leaving those denominations on their own responsibility, to exist, but as soon as the Alliance interfered with them, that interference became the Alliance endorsement of them. While the Alliance has more than failed to heal those divisions over which it pours out its lugubrious strains, it cuts deeper *by creating new and very serious divisions* among formerly much attached brethren. In illustration of this painful fact, I shall not take advantage of the unseemly disclosures made among former brethren of the Free Church herself, during the discussion of this question in Presbyteries, Synods, and the Assembly, not to speak of subsequent printed epistolary bickering; but shall merely hint, that, although new allies warmly embraced each other in Freemason's Hall, London, precious little of the Evangelical unction was carried hither, to former honest friends in the same ecclesiastical connection. Instead of healing divisions

* *Witness*, Aug. 29, 1846.

then, the Alliance has sanctioned them, and created new and serious ones, while it will not be very easy to shew that the Alliance is not a new denomination itself. To the above I may add the fact, that the Alliance, feeling its impotency, has left, in many instances, its "common ground," and performed acts of a purely ecclesiastical kind. The arrangement made by ministers who are members of the Alliance for exchanging pulpits in Glasgow, about the beginning of this year, and the declarations in favour of Free Communion made in the meeting of the British Organization, in Edinburgh, in June, this year, are instances of this kind. "Rev. Mr Drummond invited the brethren of the Alliance to partake of the holy Sacrament, in St Thomas's Chapel, next morning, every one of whom, he assured them, would be most cordially welcomed. Rev. Dr Alexander made a similar announcement respecting the dispensation of the Sacrament in his chapel, Argyle Square; and several members of various denominations expressed the gratification they would experience in the participation of the communion." * It may not be pled, that this was the declaration of individual members of the Alliance only; for the meeting, as such, did not resist this very *uncommon ground*; and no member, although opportunities were afterwards granted, expressed his dissent, for this gross violation of "the common ground" of the association!!! Its common ground, stated in the equivocal Basis, its sanction and promise of help by the blessing of God to existing denominations, its creating of new and serious divisions of formerly attached brethren of the same ecclesiastical connection, and its departure from its boasted common ground by exchange of Pulpits and Free-Communion

* *Witness*, June 16, 1847.

principles and practices, besides many other of its felt weak parts, demonstrate the Alliance, notwithstanding its magnitude and pomposity, to be one of the most helpless and ridiculous of instruments for taking the Popish beast by the horns, and giving him an effectual shaking. In the hour of real conflict, this "rudis indigestaque moles" will experience a ready dissolution; and how compact soever it may seem in its corporate character, yet should the adversary ever condescend to make one fair rush against it, he will shew Europe, and Christendom too, its "membra disjecta." Protestantism, Sir, the Protestantism that is clearly and accurately defined in the Westminster Standards, and that fought and conquered in the persons and doings and sufferings of our fathers, is a very different thing indeed from that skeletonized system called the Evangelical Alliance; and had the nation abode upon and extended the ground staked off and solemnly ratified during the Second Reformation,—ground abhorred by the vast majority of the members, and repudiated by the Alliance as an association,—Popery and Scepticism had not been so influential in troubling Europe and this country, or been the occasion of bringing up an army of such raw recruits to meet the emergency. Even as matters are, the Visible Church of Christ, which depends not on number, "istis defensoribus non eget."

V. The order proposed and adopted by the Alliance for reaching union as its immediate object, is the real inversion of that which is accordant with sound reason and established by God. It may be laid down as an axiom, that union can be effected only upon the removal of the cause, or causes of division. A reconciliation of divided friends, simply on the agreement to bury their differences, is not only extremely precarious, but, as it lays a painful embargo on the elasticity of genuine

friendship, it lays open by unintentional words, and hints, and even looks, to a wider and more painful severance of the parties thus fictitiously brought together; and although by extreme and skilful manœuvring, the parties may sail long during a pleasure trip, yet they are scarcely to be trusted during a stiff gale. Such forced friendships are like an ill-set fractured leg, that always causes halting. The physician never prescribes cordials, until by a course of medicine, judged necessary to meet and eradicate the distemper, he has prepared his patient for their reception; and unless the superstructure, how regular and beautiful and gorgeous soever it appear, be laid upon a solid foundation, it will assuredly yield "when the rains descend, and the winds blow, and beat upon it." Scripture precept and example conspire in declaring, that divisions never were, and are not to be attempted to be healed, but by the rational mode of the parties meeting with a view to the discovery, honest discussion, genuine confession, and complete removal, of the sins or heresies that caused and kept up the separation; and this mode of proceeding, as it is established by God, and has his promised blessing, warrants to expect that the union reached will be honouring to the truth and comfortable to the parties brought together. This it is that secures a system, consistent in all its parts, and which, when worked by honest and sanctified adherents, will put Popery and Scepticism to the blush, as well as be invulnerable amid their keenest and heaviest shot. "For the divisions of Reuben there were great thoughts—searchings—of heart;" and to Israel of old, as well as to the New Testament Church, solemn and pointed addresses, injunctive of the duty of confessing *wrong done to the truth*, invariably preceded and paved the way for experiencing the promises of genuine and effective union,

To this mode, and the success of its observance, there are, in Scripture history, no exceptions. Although what was commendable in the seven churches of Asia was first specified by Christ, because he delighteth in mercy, yet, in the form of a solemn warning, he invariably points out the wrongs inflicted on the truth, and which were obstructive of harmony and efficiency, as well as the remedy; by turning a deaf ear to which, these churches wrought out their own destruction. “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember, therefore, *from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works*, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” What thus characterised Christ’s epistle to the Church of Ephesus, characterises his epistles to the other six churches of that district; and as these precepts and promises had special point when addressed to those who were under the same profession of religion, they surely lose none of their point when addressed to the staunch adherents and determined defenders of hostile denominations. Whereas the Word of God uniformly prescribes, as essential to the attainment of Christian union, the ingenuous confession of the heresies and sins that drove and kept asunder the parties,—not a confession of *mere personalities* in conducting the defence of the truth, as was attempted at the Alliance, and which was undoubtedly due to the respective courts to which the defaulters belonged,—the Alliance sets itself to effect Christian union, not merely by smothering and covering these “causes of the divine wrath,” but by a formal toleration and promise by the blessing of God to help them. These two modes for reaching professedly the same object—Union—are

obviously and formally antagonistic; and that adopted by the Alliance being in direct contravention of that established by God, must eventually, and it may be, at no great distance of time, find its place among the preceding abortive speculations about union by the concealment of truth. These divisions so much mourned over by the Alliance, but not distinguished from those separations which are commanded and commended by him who says, "Think not that I am come to send peace on the earth; I am come not to send peace, but a sword," are *not the causes*, but the mere *effects*, of these heresies and apostacies which have incurred the divine displeasure, and brought us into our perilous condition; and it is infatuation itself to conclude, that by tolerating or covering up these causes, we can remove or effect an escapement from the effect. To attempt by any artificial process to sweeten the bitter stream without purifying the fountain, is folly in the natural and madness in the religious world. The question then to be considered, and especially to be considered by the Free Church, is, Was the public profession of religion delineated in the Westminster Standards not based on the divine Word, and sufficiently broad and clear for securing and exhibiting Christian and Ecclesiastical Union? And did not that Profession declare, in a clear and authoritative tone, for all ascertained truths, together with the attainments of the Church in their defence, and against all confronting heresies, even to their extirpation? Now, Sir, can any man, even slenderly acquainted with that Profession, honestly say that the Alliance has adopted, or attempted to prosecute, the method by which it was reached, or can be consistently maintained; and can he deny that the Alliance has inverted that method, and by at least cold neglect de-

graded that Profession itself as altogether unfit to meet the adversary which it formerly terrified and overthrew, even when defended by the Court and patronized by the Throne? I would fain hope that no Free Churchman will attempt to disturb the position I thus lay down; for should such an attempt be made, it must be at the manifest expense of his Free Churchism. It is not easy, if indeed possible, to conceive how any man who professes admiration of, and attachment to the Reformed Profession, which not only projected, but, by the signal blessing of God, secured Christian Union on pure and extensively liberal principles, can consistently adopt another means for reaching the same object; and especially to pour upon that professedly honourable mean, and its comprehensive glory, UNIFORMITY,—the only rational as well as scriptural exponent of unity,—unmeasured abuse. Verily, these strokes of Evangelical wittings betray not only a cold neglect of, but a studied heart-hatred against that by “the magic” of whose name the Free Church was born and reached its eminence. This modern mode of effecting Christian as well as Ecclesiastical Union, is a painful illustration and example of that *disorder* which, in both the political and religious world, has been *the order of the day*. It has never heretofore succeeded, and from its daily running us deeper into the mire, it requires not the gift of prophecy to predict its failure.

VI. The unconstitutional and dangerous character of the Alliance may be safely argued from its Tendency. By the application of this common and legitimate mode of testing the true character of any system or association, it is presumed that there will be small difficulty in shewing to the unprejudiced that the Alliance, as superseding and running counter to the di-

vinely instituted and appropriate instrumentality for reaching Christian and Ecclesiastical Union, is the most objectionable religious association in Christendom. This admits of painfully ample illustration, not only from what the Alliance has projected, but also from what has already been done under its eye and auspices. It will certainly be granted that many circumstances conspire to render this association an instrument of either immense good or evil to the religious world. In point of number it bulks in the eye of Christendom, whilst it also embraces a fascinating galaxy of the first names in Science and Theology to be found in the kingdoms of Europe, the continent of America, and the British isles. Such an association, therefore, and having as its professed and leading object Christian Union, and resistance to the advances of Popery and Scepticism, becomes not only a formidable rival to the Church,—even although composed of the conflicting denominations,—but her apparent, if not her real dictator. No man need hesitate to conclude, when contemplating such a gigantic and imposing association, that its very existence is a proclamation of the inefficiency of any one, and of all the Evangelical denominations, for reaching its professed object. The Visible Church of God,—in whatever sense we use that phrase,—is viewed by the Alliance as in a torpid state, and requiring stimulants, which it undertakes to apply; it stands in the attitude of acknowledgment of past misconduct, and present submission to this stimulating association; it is made to express its thankfulness to the Alliance,—this association but of yesterday,—for exercising such a vigilant care over it, as now in great weakness and decrepitude, although a divine institution. This is the upstart human association which all the denominations

must delight to honour, and before which they must lower their respective flags! Now, Sir, is this degrading position in which the Alliance places the Church likely to make the adherents of the respective denominations warmly respect those peculiarities for which they have rent, and still keep rent, the Church? Is it likely to attract and secure the regards of a sceptical age to religion, either in form or in reality? or likely to induce any to take up and honestly carry out a distinctive profession of the faith? But how formidable to the Church is this association, when viewed in the light of that character with which its admirers have invested it! They have given it a Pentecostal character, have devoutly affirmed that the Spirit of God was signally present during their deliberations and supplications, that impressions of a heavenly kind were so clear, so deep, and so ravishing, as to leave under obsuration anything of the kind heretofore experienced by them, and that the scenes on these occasions were worthy living for, and being eternally remembered in heaven. Without assigning my reasons for refusing to give credence to these impressions so warmly expressed, I do submit that they throw most serious reflections on the Church; for, if the Alliance field was so signally refreshed from on high, how withered and sterile the Church of God! Does not such language virtually, if indeed not formally, declare that the Spirit of God has gone from his Church, and taken up his special residence in the Evangelical Alliance? And if the Alliance field was so fresh and fair and fruitful, how irrational, how irreligious, to leave it, and return to the waste howling wilderness of the Church! But in addition to the above, the manifest tendency of the Alliance is to throw into disrepute, if not to expose to contempt, the

primary and comprehensive duty of the individual and the Church—the making and “holding fast the Profession of the Faith.” This eminent duty is spoken of by the Alliance as the mainspring of sectarianism, and the great obstruction to Christian union. It is very obvious that were the Alliance to admit for once the free exercise of distinctively professing and urging for acceptance the denominational faith of its members, in point of fact and because of its constitution, it would by spontaneous combustion speedily perish. Some of its ablest defenders and warmest eulogists have placed a distinctive profession on the same level with the various dispensations of God’s providence. Dr Chalmers, after specifying the various bodies of Independents, Baptists, Presbyterians, Quakers, Episcopalians, and Methodists, gravely affirms that, “He who assigns to all men the bounds of their habitations, has dispersed the natural family of man over the world; yet, though living in different and far distant countries, all the nations are of one blood. And so, too, of the spiritual family selected from among men—though the Churches be of diverse name to which their nativity or their neighbourhood, both overruled by the absolute power of God, may have determined them—they are yet, if indeed members of the great spiritual family and Christ’s peculiar people, all of one faith. Are there any now so singular as to deny this?”* To the same effect have we the deliverance of the Alliance itself. Rev. Dr Wardlaw moved, &c., “That this Conference, composed of professing Christians of many different denominations, all exercising the right of private judgment, and, *through common infirmity*, differing among themselves in the views they severally entertain on some

* Evangelical Alliance, pp. 20, 21.

points, both of Christian doctrine and ecclesiastical polity, &c."* Thus hostile professions are placed in the same category with God's providences in assigning us the boundaries of our habitations, for which we are not responsible, and the sin of endless schism is called by the amiable name of "common infirmity." Such phraseology is sufficient to stamp the Alliance as the most dangerous religious association in existence, and as fitted, if not designed, to offer upon the altar of the scepticism of the age the primary and cardinal duty of publicly professing the truth, and pointedly testifying against all that is opposed to it. This barefaced attack upon a distinctive profession of the truth has a native and strong tendency to represent a religious profession as a solemn farce, and thus to confirm the very scepticism it laments and professes to remove. But the Alliance engine has reached farther stations than even this, on the line of latitudinarianism. It is a notorious fact, that the great majority of the members of the Alliance, as well as the denominations to which they severally belong, are undisguised advocates of FREE-COMMUNION, in its most unrestricted sense; and it is equally notorious, that some of the leading ministers of the Free Church, and members of the Alliance, are in the same predicament. Dr Candlish, Messrs Guthrie, Gray, and Begg, glory in avowing this tenet; and the last named gentleman urges it with acclaim in the Assembly, *as the best ground upon which to defend the Alliance.* "In Mr Bonar's Narrative of the journey of our deputation to Palestine, we read that when they reached Jerusalem they celebrated the Lord's Supper *in an upper room*, along with a godly minister of the Church of England. 'We had agreed

* Alliance Minutes, p. 9.

beforehand to meet together this day, and join in the communion of the Lord's Supper. It was, therefore, with feelings of sacred interest that we saw the dawn of a sacrament Sabbath in Jerusalem. The solemn scenes which we had witnessed during the week—Calvary, Gethsemane, Bethany, and Jerusalem—were well fitted to attune our hearts to partake of the sacred ordinance..... We met in the same upper room where we had met the last Sabbath. There were fourteen gathered together, including two converted Jews and a Christian from Nazareth, who had been brought to know the truth under the American missionaries. It was a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. After the usual morning prayers of the Church of England, Mr Nicolayson preached, &c. What was this, I ask, but the very individual and unauthorized Christian fellowship *which is now so much deprecated?* And is all this, I again ask, to be brought to an end by the strong hand of ecclesiastical authority? ”* Without animadverting on this extraordinary defence of an association which the speaker is endeavouring to shew has nothing at all of an ecclesiastical character or complexion! the gist of which is an ill-disguised attachment to Popery, by glorying in “the beggarly elements” of a mercifully abrogated dispensation, it is sufficient for my purpose to hold up to merited reprobation the tendency of the Alliance to Free Communion, as already avowed and gloried in within the walls of the Assembly of the Free Church, which is all the while preparing a Testimony to shew her identification with the Covenanted Church of Scotland!!! The climax was reached by Mr Gray, Perth, in his Assembly speech, which was reputed the “*chef d'œuvre*” of the

* Assembly's Discussion, pp. 38, 39.

evening, and in which there was a most laboured attempt to squeeze out of the Confession of Faith the same anti-reformation dogma of Free Communion. But I am not under the necessity of arguing the dangerous tendency of the Alliance from its constitution, its heterogeneous composition, or that species of impolitic declamation on Free Communion to which I have now alluded; I have merely to point to the fact that members of the Alliance have, in its Conferences in Edinburgh, given and accepted invitations to partake of the Supper on that principle; and that, in America, the Supper has been thus observed on what are called "the principles of the Alliance." Rev. Dr Emory, President of Dickinson College, writes thus to the Editors of *Evangelical Christendom*:—"The most gratifying feature of the whole is the disposition manifested to carry *the principles of the Alliance into practice*. . . . The first step in this work was the appointment of a common communion service, the hint for which was taken from Mr Noel's inviting the members of the Alliance to commune together at his church. It has long been customary, in many churches in this country, to invite *the members* of other churches, who may happen to be present, to commune with them. But, on this occasion, invitations were sent to *the different churches*, and arrangements were made, that the Pastors of each should participate in the exercises. The result exceeded our most sanguine expectations." This is "carrying out the principles of the Alliance;" upon which the Editors of *Evangelical Christendom* make this remark—"It is gratifying to learn, that arrangements are made for similar united celebrations of the Lord's Supper, at stated periods during the year, to be held in the several churches successively."* This is surely doing work;

* *Evangelical Christendom*, Jan., pp. 28, 29.

and it is a self-damaging plea that these are the doings of individual members, and not of the Alliance itself—for these doings are immoderately lauded by the only public organ of the Alliance, such as it is, and have never been dissented from, nor protested against, by a single conference of the Alliance, or a single Free Church minister, at any of these conferences. These facts, together with some others of a kindred kind that might be specified, shew the soundness of Mr Gibson's main position, and the shrewdness of his predictive remarks on the Alliance as a kind of substitute for the Church. But to return, for a short time, to the damaging tendency of the Alliance in keeping out of view the eminent duty of making "and holding fast," not only the faith, but "the profession of the faith," I deem it an expenditure of reasoning to shew, that the imposing magnitude of this association very naturally throws into the darkest shade the distinctive profession of its several members, and especially that profession which is held by those who are little known in this, and certainly less known in any other country. Without meaning any offence, what a sorry figure does the Cameronian flag cut in the presence of this mighty Alliance? But many an *ism* besides Cameronianism is engulfed in the Alliance, although its respective adherents solemnly declare it to be essential to the glory of God, to the welfare of His Church, and to the liberty, civil and sacred, of Britain and the world. As illustrative and corroborative of this seriously detrimental tendency of the Alliance, some of its most forward defenders have felt and keenly expressed their fears, lest—not Free Communion, but—ordinary religious intercourse with the ministers of the Established Church of Scotland, would obscure the distinctive standing of the Free Church, and induce a return of her members to the Established Church.

The Rev. Mr Gray of Perth delivered before his Presbytery a speech, now published at their request, “on public religious intercourse with the office-bearers of the Establishment.” The objections to holding this intercourse—“by appearing with them on the same missionary platform, and co-operating for the support of Christian institutions” for common objects,—which this gentleman propounds, are the three following:—“The abandonment of their principles by a large number of the office-bearers; the grievances which the Free Church has suffered, and is still suffering, at their hands; and the injury *that might be done* to our Testimony for the headship of Christ.”* I have no intention of analyzing the reasoning of Mr Gray in support of these positions, for his object, especially as I shall have a small account to settle with him on his Assembly speech on the Alliance; although it may not be out of place to drop the following hints. Does Mr Gray really refuse to co-operate on “common ground and for common approved objects,” with the office-bearers of the Establishment, simply because some of them have, in his apprehension, abandoned their principles? Is Mr Gray certain that none of the members of the Alliance, and the denominations to which they respectively belong, have abandoned their principles? He surely has not forgotten that, during the Voluntary agitation, the Established ministers were in the habit of directly charging the Relief and United Secession Churches with a shameful abandonment of their principles? And is Mr Gray ignorant of the notorious fact, that all modern Independents have abandoned the principles of their fathers—their covenanted fathers—who were members of the Westminster Assembly? And Mr Gray will surely admit, that if abandonment of

* Published Speech of Rev. A. Gray, Perth.

principle be a valid reason for refusing to co-operate "on common ground" with the Established clergy of Scotland, consistency requires that he should refuse to co-operate with any member of the Alliance who has abandoned the profession and distinguished principles of the Second Reformation. Upon Mr Gray's second reason for refusing this co-operation—"that the Free Church suffers grievances at the hands of the Establishment,"—I shall not hazard a single remark, for reasons not necessary to be assigned. To the third—"the injury that *might be done* to our Testimony for the headship of Christ,"—as it constitutes the *primum mobile* of the speech, and shews where the shoe pinches, I shall advert for a little. In illustrating the tendency of such "public religious intercourse," Mr Gray reasons that the very spectacle is fitted to obscure a distinctive testimony; and I think he reasons soundly. He says, "I believe that, with the less observant and less informed part of our adherents, it might promote their design (the Established ministers), give some colour to their assertion, and help it to go down, if we were *often* to join them in evangelical and missionary fellowship. . . Thus our conduct would be quoted to the discredit of our Testimony, and it would *most surely* become a stumbling-block in the path of *the weak*."* This reasoning upon the tendency of missionary co-operation to cast into the shade, and induce indifference to denominational profession, is invulnerable; but the wonder is that Mr Gray, in his Assembly speech on the Alliance, set himself to overthrow and expose as bigotry the very same reasoning which he employs before the Presbytery of Perth, and which, at their request, he publishes. So much alive is Mr Gray himself to this awkward di-

* Rev. A. Gray's Speech, p. 7.

lemma in which the two speeches have placed him, that, like an unskilful novelist who cannot get clear of some of his troublesome characters without abruptly murdering them in a scuffle, he makes the one speech negative the other. Mr Gray concludes his speech at the Presbytery in these remarkable terms:—"But the Evangelical Alliance! (aye, there's the rub.) Have not some of us approved of that movement, although office-bearers of the Scotch Established Church are embraced in it? We have approved of that movement so far as it has gone. And we have not been repelled from great meetings in *the sister kingdom of England*, although a few of our own Established clergy have attended them. Our consistency in this has been questioned, *and I shall not stop to defend it.* (Why not?) At the same time, the every day religious fellowship *in our own land, and in the midst of our own flocks*, to which alone my present observations are directed, is something very different from *an occasional attendance at the Catholic assemblages in Liverpool and London.* And I declare for myself, I had much rather err by overleaping the obstacles which have been spoken of (the Testimony of the Free Church?) when they really stand in the way, than keep aloof from the brotherhood of the followers of Christ, when there is reason to think that they do not demand it."* I humbly submit, that if ever a special pleader broke down in his attempt to reconcile his own contradictory assertions, it is Mr Gray in his speech "published at the request of the Perth Presbytery." His reasoning on the "religious intercourse" he alludes to, is an admission and illustration of my position against the Alliance—that it has a tendency to discredit a peculiar testimony, and induce

* Rev. A. Gray's Speech, p. 8.

Christendom to treat such a thing with marked indifference, if not with scorn. And Mr Gray's sorry effort to reconcile himself by attempting to shew that the extraordinary Evangelism of the Alliance flourishes only in Liverpool and London, but evaporates when introduced "into the midst of his own flock" at Perth, is the concentration of selfishness, and all the more clearly shews, and firmly establishes, my argument against the Alliance as having a most dangerous tendency. Without insisting upon other and cognate arguments against the Alliance, I flatter myself that I have shewn from Scripture, the Symbolic Books of the Historic Church of Scotland, and upon rational and politic grounds, that the scheme is a misrepresentation of Christian union; that it assumes that there are more systems of divine truth than one; that it confounds the distinction betwixt the Visible and Invisible Church; that it is impracticable, and consequently inadequate, to reach its professed objects; that it is a real inversion of the divinely instituted order; and that its tendency, as its history has already shewn, is most dangerous, as encouraging Free Communion, and frowning down, as the cause of all our evils, a distinct Profession of the Faith. Any of these charges individually, and especially all of them combinedly, when substantiated, demonstrate the Alliance to be a most presumptuous rival of the Visible Church, and the most dangerous religious association in existence.

Although, in the preceding remarks, I have hinted at the mode of defence adopted by the Alliance itself, as well as by some of its individual advocates, by urging which it has got, to a great extent, the public ear, yet I propose a brief consideration of some of the alleged strongholds, or favourite Pleas, of its more notable defenders.

A FEW OF THE FAVOURITE PLEAS IN DEFENCE
OF THE EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE.

I. A favourite plea in defence, if not commendation, of the Alliance, is drawn from the constitution and conduct of the Westminster Assembly of divines. Very many circumstances conspire to throw a charm around this Assembly in the eyes of Protestants, and especially of Presbyterians, in this and other countries. The time at which it was called together was eminently critical; the authority calling it—the Parliament of England—had taken the field against the Royal forces; the members of which it was composed were men of first-rate abilities, and varied and extensive acquirements; the great aim and object of both the Parliament and the Assembly were the liberties, civil and religious, of the three kingdoms; the fruits of its labours were the books called the Westminster Standards; and its effects more remote, as well as more immediate, were the overthrow of the Stuart dynasty, and the civil ratification of a system of principles which many laud, few adopt, and still fewer consistently practise. From the place which this Assembly holds in the annals of this country, and especially from the professed affection with which it has been regarded by all the so-called evangelical denominations, it was natural enough that all projectors of schemes of Christian union, since that time, should shew, or attempt to shew, their agreement with the scheme proposed by this Assembly of Divines. It is, therefore, “passing strange,” that all unionists, especially in this country, since 1649, should have set themselves to shew the close resemblance of their schemes to that of this Assembly; whereas, on the other hand, all anti-unionists have resisted these schemes

as at variance with and subversive of that proposed by the very same Assembly. Surely the solution of this problem is not to be found in any vagueness about the constitution, or obscurity about the leading object, of this Assembly,—a very serious charge ; but *from confounding the isolated speeches of some of its members with its clearly defined constitution and plainly expressed main object*. By adopting the former mode—taking the individual acts and speeches of the members of the Westminster Assembly as its true exponent—no man could get at the constitution of the best organized and regulated societies, political or religious, under heaven. And it is not to be much wondered at that such a mode of reasoning should involve in inextricable confusion, and furnish a plea for proving that the General Assembly of the Free Church herself is no court at all. Not so much, therefore, for the purpose of disposing of the Plea for the Alliance which its advocates urge from the Westminster Assembly, as for shewing the scheme which that Assembly proposed, it may not be improper, in a brief narrative of this Assembly, to shew its real constitution, and its leading and distinctive object.

In consequence of the petitions and remonstrances of the Puritans, the English Parliament, and sounder part of that nation, were kept tremblingly alive to the protracted and severe struggle of the Scottish Church and nation against regal and prelatic despotism, which was crowned with signal success by the General Assembly held at Glasgow in the year 1638. The decided victory on that occasion excited his Majesty to levy an army, with the view of quelling “the northern rebellion.” Finding that the banner for “Christ’s Crown and the Covenant” was fully a match for “the Royal Standard,” the king proposed an armistice, when articles of peace were drawn up and mutually agreed to,

which he soon after unscrupulously violated. After repeating this faithless policy, the negotiation for peace was transferred, about the end of 1640, from Ripon to London. For some time previous to this, the English Parliament, smarting under the lash of the arbitrary proceedings of the Court, awoke from their mere sympathy with the sister covenanted kingdom of Scotland; and, being now made fully sensible, that unless both countries leagued together, their common adversaries would subvert their common liberties. The Scottish Commissioners at the London Treaty having discovered the deep discontent of the English nation, and knowing well its real cause, presented to the Lords of the Treaty, as they were called, in the beginning of 1641, about two years and a-half before the Assembly was called, a paper drawn up by Alexander Henderson, and called, "OUR DESIRES CONCERNING UNITY IN RELIGION AND UNIFORMITY OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT, AS A SPECIAL MEAN TO CONSERVE PEACE IN HIS MAJESTY'S DOMINIONS." This valuable document, which was published about the same time, plainly set forth the comprehensive object of the Church and nation of Scotland, and modestly suggested the special means for reaching it, as the following brief extracts will shew. "We do all know and profess, that religion is not only the mean to serve God and to save our own souls, but that it is also the base and foundation of kingdoms and the estates, and the strongest band to tie subjects and their prince in true loyalty, and to knit their hearts, one to another, in true unity. Nothing so powerful to divide the hearts of people as division in religion; nothing so strong to unite them as unity in religion; *and the greater zeal in different religions the greater division; but the more zeal in one religion the more firm union. In the paradise of nature the diversity of flowers and herbs is*

pleasant and useful ; but in the paradise of the Church different and contrary religions are unpleasant and hurtful. It is therefore to be wished that there were one Confession of Faith, one form of Catechism, one Directory for all the parts of the public worship of God, and for prayer, preaching, administration of sacraments, &c., and one form of Church government in all the Churches of his Majesty's dominions." . . . "But since all the question is, Whether of the two Church governments shall have place in both nations ? (for we know no third form of government of a *National Church* distinct from these two), &c."—the Episcopal and Presbyterian. . . . "The Reformed Churches do hold, *without doubting*, their Church officers, pastors, doctors, elders, and deacons, and their Church government by Assemblies, to be *jure divino*, and perpetual, as is manifest in all their writings."* There can be no doubt that this paper, and the preaching in London by the Scotch Ecclesiastical Commissioners during the same period, prepared England for the Parliamentary Ordinance that called together the Assembly of Divines, and contained *the basis*, in point of principle, of the Solemn League and Covenant. From intelligence received through the Puritans, who kept up a close correspondence with the Covenanters, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland learned that the English Parliament were resolving upon calling an assembly of divines to reform religion, by bringing the three nations to the nearest conjunction of uniformity in Church government ; and accordingly, so early as 1642, it (the General Assembly) appointed a Commission to be ready against any deputation that might come from England. During the in-

* Paper presented by the Scotch Commissioners to the Lords of Treaty at London, in 1641.

terval, the civil war raged in England, when the prevalence of the royal arms threw into imminent jeopardy the nation, and brought the Parliament to issue its ordinance calling together the Assembly of Divines, and to solicit, in the juncture, the aid of the nation and Church of Scotland. This ordinance, calling the Westminster Assembly, was issued June 12, 1643, and, among other things, sets forth, "And whereas it hath been declared and resolved by the Lords and Commons assembled in Parliament, that the present Church government, by archbishops, bishops, &c., is evil, and justly offensive and burdensome to the kingdom, a great impediment to reformation and growth of religion, and very prejudicial to the state and government of this kingdom; and that therefore they are resolved that the same shall be taken away, and that such a government shall be settled in the Church as may be most agreeable to God's holy Word, and most apt to procure and preserve the peace of the Church at home, and nearer agreement with the Church of Scotland and other Reformed Churches abroad," &c.* The Parliament, and the Assembly of Divines now sitting, knowing well the mind of Scotland, sent down their respective Commissioners to the Convention of Estates, and the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. When the English Commissioners arrived, committees appointed both by the Convention of Estates and by the General Assembly, agreed upon the draught of the Solemn League and Covenant, which was the echo of the paper given in at the London Treaty in 1641, alluded to above, and constituted the solemn pledge, on the part of Scotland, of her union with England in the hour of trial. This document had for its matter, "*the preservation* of the

* Ordinance calling the Assembly of Divines.

Reformed religion in Scotland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government;" for its end, "the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion, confession of faith, form of Church government, directory for worship, according to the example of the best Reformed Churches;" and as to the means to be used in reaching this end, it specifies, not the toleration, but "the extirpation of Popery, Prelacy, Superstition, Heresy, Schism, Profaneness, and whatsoever shall be found contrary to sound doctrine and the power of godliness." Although Scotland had thus plighted her faith, yet ere she could feel herself at liberty to appear by representatives, politically and ecclesiastically, she insisted that both Houses of the English Parliament, and the Assembly of Divines, should adopt and swear that solemn document. Hence we find, on the authority of Dr M'Crie, that "the Solemn League and Covenant was cordially sworn and subscribed, in Scotland, by all ranks of persons; and in England, by *the members* of both Houses, *and of the Assembly of Divines.*" This is the document that shews the constitution of the Westminster Assembly, that clearly specifies its leading objects, and in the light of which we can alone and consistently expound the fruit of its labours—the Westminster Standards. I am fully aware of the ill-judged defences of some of the professed friends of the Scottish Commissioners in endeavouring to repel the charge of bigoted attachment to uniformity of Church government, argued not only by Erastians and Independents, but also by modern liberal Presbyterians. The modern defence set up to deliver them from this fictitious charge, is made to turn upon their paper given in to "the Lords of Treaty" in 1641. "But since all the question is, Whether of the two Church governments shall have place in both nations? (for we have no third form of

government of a national Church from these two); *we do not presume to propound the form of government of the Church of Scotland as a pattern for the Church of England, but do only represent, in all modesty, these few considerations, according to the trust committed unto us.*" Now, what our Commissioners did in 1641, and when not vested with a negotiating character for *Church Government* in England, behoved to be simply a *recommendation*—a *modest* suggestion; but when Commissioners from both Houses of Parliament and the Assembly of Divines sought a formal alliance with them, our Commissioners sustained a very different character indeed. Their "modest" suggestion in 1641 became, in 1643, a formal and solemnly sworn resolution. To speak, therefore, as Dr Hetherington does, of "shewing the utter groundlessness of the accusation that the Scottish Commissioners attempted *to force their own system* upon England,"* is a defence at the expense of their well-known principles, consistent conduct, and terrible struggles,—at the expense of resiling from their "covenanted uniformity,"—at the expense of the plainly expressed matter, and clearly defined ends, of their Solemn League and Covenant,—a defence of the Covenanters at the expense of their fidelity as Christians, and their honesty as men. What has thus been often and vehemently charged against these men because of their attachment to, and struggles for Uniformity, proves, from the after bloody reign of *multiformity*, that they clearly perceived what would save or wreck this country, and displayed pre-eminent patriotism for averting the one and securing the other. They who think themselves called upon to vindicate the nation and Church of Scotland against this wretch-

* Hetherington's History of Westminster Assembly, p. 375.

ed charge are in a serious mistake respecting the distinctive object of the Solemn League and Covenant, and are the real, although it may not be the intentional, adversaries of the Church of Scotland in her highest, purest, and most solemn efforts for civil and religious liberty in these kingdoms and throughout the world; and apostasy from which has rendered us so fearfully divided as to be an easy prey to Popery and Scepticism. These Patriots knew not, and repudiated the damaging and popular policy of Merle d'Aubigné, and the Alliance; for in their paper of 1641, they declare, "In the paradise of Nature the diversity of flowers and herbs is pleasant and useful, but in the paradise of the Church, different and contrary religions are unpleasant and hurtful;" and in perfect accordance with this they swear, in the solemn document oft referred to, that "they shall endeavour to bring the Churches of God in the three kingdoms to the nearest conjunction and *uniformity* in religion; and without respect of persons, shall endeavour the extirpation of Popery, Prelacy, Superstition, Heresy, Schism," &c. In assuming this position—in swearing to endeavour reaching uniformity by the extirpation of whatever was contrary thereto—the Church and nation of Scotland may have been right, or they may have been wrong, but that such was their position and their main object, I believe no candid man will be inclined to deny; and it is therefore a wretched pandering to the prevailing liberalism of the age to attempt—what is but a sorry attempt after all—to represent these men as resiling from their principles, plainly stated, vigorously defended, and solemnly sworn! If Dr Hetherington, and others who follow in his wake, honestly think, that as to their distinctive, and leading, and comprehensive policy on uniformity, and extirpation of the contrary, was unscriptural and impolitic, let

them distinctly say so, and give up at once their claim of identification with the Historic Church of Scotland; let them proceed in a public and formal way to arraign, and condemn, and proscribe this regnant policy of the Covenanters, and not carry on a secret and dishonourable process of Burking it. Although the narrative of the proceedings of the Church and nation of Scotland from 1641, to their representative appearance in the Assembly of Divines, and the English Parliament, is extremely important, yet the above brief account warrants the few following remarks bearing on the constitution and leading objects of the Westminster Assembly of Divines:—1. The Ordinance of the English Parliament calling the Westminster Assembly contemplated chiefly the establishing of a *national uniformity* in Church government, in place of the Episcopal hierarchy, which it had *already abolished*. Independency, therefore, as obviously inconsistent with a national Church, was not specified, and consequently not formally condemned in the Solemn League and Covenant. As the object by the Solemn League and Covenant was a National Church in his Majesty's dominions, conformity was indispensably necessary for gaining that object; and thus the question resolved itself into Episcopacy or Presbytery. In the paper of 1641, the Scotch Commissioners say, "But since all the question is, Whether of the two Church governments shall have place in both nations? (for we know no third form of government of a National Church different from these two); we do not presume to propound the form of government of the Church of Scotland as a pattern for the Church of England, but do only represent, in all modesty, these few considerations." 2. The constitution, character, and leading object of this Assembly are alone consistently ascertainable from the Solemn League and Cove-

nant. The “modest representation” of the Scotch Commissioners in 1641, the English Parliament adopted in 1643, by abolishing Episcopacy, upon the abolition of which, inserted in their Ordinance, the Church and nation of Scotland drew up and swore their Solemn League and Covenant. And as both Houses, and the Assembly of Divines, had sworn that same document, it was the true *basis* of the Westminster Assembly; every member of which had, upon oath, declared that he would endeavour not only to extirpate Popery, Prelacy, &c., but “to preserve the reformed religion in the Church of Scotland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government.” To this was the Assembly, and every member of it, solemnly and voluntarily bound, notwithstanding the speeches of some few of its members to the contrary. 3. Whereas it is clear beyond reasonable contradiction, that every member of the Assembly of Divines was taken bound “to preserve the reformed religion in the Church of Scotland, and to endeavour the extirpation” of all that was opposed thereto, it is pled that there was a qualifying sentence in the Solemn League and Covenant, which allowed great latitude on the head of UNIFORMITY. “And shall endeavour to bring the Churches of God in the three kingdoms to *the nearest* conjunction and uniformity in religion.” Some advocates of the Alliance, and who have actually sworn this solemn document, appear to find in the term *nearest*—and they must, in giving it currency, add the apocryphal term “*possible*”—“nearest *possible* conjunction”—these advocates plead that this qualifying term was so stretchable as to embrace as many different and contrary denominations within the Westminster Assembly, as within the Alliance itself! Whilst such an exposition of the Solemn League and Covenant exhibits it as a most vague and aimless production—a poor compliment

to the heads and hearts of the Covenanters—it betrays no small amount of ignorance of the object plainly stated, in these terms—“ The preservation of the reformed religion in the Church of Scotland, *in worship and government.*” The meaning of the phrase, “nearest conjunction and uniformity,” obviously is, not that the Church of Scotland made provision for measures of an accommodating character as to the uniformity she herself had reached, but that she did not reckon she had attained herself, as yet, the uniformity given in the Divine Word, and after which she aimed. She had at this time, notwithstanding her late advances, to contend with some serious legal restrictions against her independence, which, six years after, as the Act abolishing Patronage shews, were repealed. Whereas these advocates represent her as desirous of lowering her ground by seeking “the nearest possible conjunction in religion,” in the way of accommodation to sectarians, she was in all humility acknowledging her defects, and seeking after stricter conformity, according to the Word of God. Why not add, as explanatory of this phrase, “nearest conjunction and uniformity,” what the Covenanters themselves added,—“the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion, according to the Word of God,” and not the views of different sects? Although I might confidently expect that the above brief narrative, and the inferential remarks—both of which are taken from the authenticated and judicial documents of the Church of Scotland—would, without all reasonable controversy, shew that there is not, in point of constitution, organization, or objects, a single vestige of resemblance betwixt the Evangelical Alliance and the Westminster Assembly of Divines, yet I shall briefly animadvert upon the Plea in defence of the Alliance, drawn from this Assembly.

It is pled that, with the exception of a very few, the members of the Westminster Assembly sustained *no representative character*. "I would like to know on what possible plan, according to the rule now so strictly laid down, the Westminster Assembly could have been got together. I wish to know how many members of that Assembly sat there in an official capacity, as delegates from, and representatives of, their respective Churches. . . . My mind is strongly impressed with the idea that, *with the exception of the Scotch Commissioners*, who were present from our own Assembly, very few sat there as representatives and delegates from other churches."* Surely it was requisite, before hazarding this statement, considering especially the purpose for which it was made, to have inquired a little into the state of parties in England when the Parliament issued its Ordinance calling the Westminster Assembly; for it is not easy to see how the Episcopal Church, which the Parliament *had already abolished*, was in a condition to send representatives! And as to the Independents, how was it possible, considering their endless divisions, not to speak of their *peculiar constitution*, that they could send representatives? But besides all this, whereas the Parliament, and Assembly of Divines already sitting, sent Commissioners to the nation and *Church of Scotland*, as such, the English Parliament, in their Ordinance, nominated all the other members of the Assembly of Divines. Thus, the Ordinance runs: "Be it therefore ordained, by the Lords and Commons in this present Parliament assembled, that all and every the persons hereafter in this ordinance named, that is to say" (here follow the names), "and such other persons as shall be nominated and appointed by

* Gen. Ass. Discussion. Speech by Dr Candlish.

both Houses of Parliament," &c. This nomination precluded the possibility of churches sending representatives, and shews the different position and character of the Scotch Commissioners who were, as the designation imports, delegates and representatives. But after all, the declaration that the Scotch Commissioners were delegates from, and representatives of, our own Assembly," is fatal to the object for which Dr Candlish makes it. Although the Westminster Assembly was composed of men of eminent abilities and of acknowledged piety; and although all its members had sworn and subscribed the Solemn League and Covenant; yet the Scotch Commissioners refused to take a seat in the house, except as representatives. "When our Commissioners came up, they were desired to sit as members of the Assembly, *but they wisely declined to do so*; but since they came up as Commissioners for our National Church, to treat for uniformity, they required to be dealt with in that capacity." * In order to put the question on a proper footing, I would ask, Whether the Alliance, which, by its fundamental law, excludes all systems, and consequently all representation, would possibly receive Dr Candlish, or any minister of the Free Church, in the capacity in which the Scotch Commissioners sat in the Westminster Assembly? What these Commissioners "wisely declined" to do, the Free Church, by a grave deliverance of her General Assembly, *unwisely resolves to do*; and this is all the more extraordinary, as the Free Church claims identification with the Reformed Church of Scotland of that period, and on that occasion. If ever a case of *the Free Church versus the Reformed Church* was, or could be made, patent, it is undoubtedly this,—a case,

* Baillie's Letters.

too, drawn up by the Free Church herself. Without dilating upon "this lame and impotent conclusion," considering the object for which it is advanced, I shall now briefly animadvert upon the other and more vulgar form which some friends of the Alliance have unhappily given to the Plea drawn from the Assembly of Divines. Mr Begg said, "The Westminster Assembly was referred to by Mr Gibson, and an attempt made to refute what was stated by Dr Candlish, and what has been stated before on that subject; *but it was notorious*, that although the delegates from the Church of Scotland represented the views of that Church, that body was likewise composed of Erastians, Episcopalians, and Independents. Selden was as objectionable as any man who sat in the Conference at Liverpool, on the ground taken up by Mr Gibson." * This declamatory statement is not entitled to any grave consideration from any real weight it possesses; but because of the extreme confidence with which it has been often put forward, and the popular purposes it is fitted to serve, and especially as throwing light upon the constitution and composition of the Westminster Assembly, it may be worth while to attend to it. Although, then, it is admitted, that there were two, or perhaps three, Erastians, and nearly a dozen of Independents, in that Assembly, does this prove it bore any resemblance to the Alliance? Were these parties prevented from stating and defending their respective systems, as the Alliance professedly does? Did the Scotch Commissioners and the English Puritans, who formed the great majority of that Assembly, allow these parties to retain their systems, as the Alliance does? Did not the Assembly expose and refute the arguments adduced by these

* Gen. Ass. Discussion on Union, p. 36.

parties, and formally by vote condemn them? Were the Scotch Commissioners and the English Puritans willing to tolerate denominational peculiarities by meeting on *common ground*, and prosecuting *common objects*? Where, in point of constitution, organization, or objects, is there any resemblance betwixt the Alliance and this Assembly? But is it still insisted, that the Scotch Commissioners sat in that Assembly which “was composed of Erastians, Episcopalians, and Independents.” To this it were a sufficient reply, that they sat there, *not as members, but as Commissioners*; and does Mr Begg mean to say, that the Free Church ministers sit in that capacity in the Alliance? and that, like these Commissioners, they insist on uniformity, and endeavour to extirpate what is opposed to the Free Church? This must be shewn, otherwise the parallel is a mere imagination. There are many who have suffered most severely at the hands of their over-zealous and imprudent friends. If the question be pushed, Was not the Westminster Assembly composed of Erastians, Episcopalians, and Independents? then the formal and direct answer is far from honourable to these parties whose defence is so hastily taken up. If Independents and Erastians were in that Assembly to propound and attempt to defend their respective systems, who, Sir, were to blame for their appearance and conduct there? Are we to suppose that men of such clear heads, and accurate and extensive information, did not, and could not, understand the main object of the Scotch Commissioners? Did they slip into the Assembly upon an equivocal Basis, or on the intelligible document of the Solemn League and Covenant, after the Scotch Commissioners appeared? Were not measures, sufficiently exact and definite, taken to prevent such persons and conduct? Did not these Erastians and Inde-

pendents solemnly swear and subscribe that Covenant before the Scotch Commissioners stood up in person for their uniformity? I frankly admit that the charge is serious,—is the very reverse of what this ill-judged question was intended to serve, and is extremely uncharitable, in the judgment of this age of love, but nevertheless it is a true, an un rebuttable charge, that the Independents and Erastians of the Westminster Assembly “violated the brotherly Covenant,” by propounding their systems. Although this is obvious from the Solemn League and Covenant itself, which these men took and subscribed, yet I have the greater confidence in adducing this charge, that Dr M’Crie has done the same in most explicit terms. “The Divines in the Assembly who belonged to the first of these classes (the Independents), were men respected for their piety and soundness in the doctrines of the gospel, but who had become enamoured with a form of ecclesiastical government unknown to the Protestant Churches, and irreconcilable with the idea of national uniformity; and they persisted in defending it at the expense of defeating the Reformation which had been undertaken, *although they had sworn*, along with their brethren, to ‘endeavour the preservation of the Reformed religion in Scotland, in discipline and government,’ and to ‘bring the Churches in the three kingdoms to the nearest conjunction and uniformity in form of Church government, according to the Word of God, and the example of the best Reformed Churches.’ ”* But apart from this grave charge, is it really meant by those who urge this Plea, that the Erastians and Independents of the Westminster Assembly constituted its glory, contributed to its harmony, and were mainly instrumental in forwarding the clearly

* Dr M’Crie’s own Testimony, p. 31.

defined, much desired, and earnestly prayed for Reformation cause? Who requires to be told that these were the very men who constantly disturbed the peace of the Assembly, pertinaciously clogged its philanthropic labours, and gloried in defeating, by sinister influence, its distinctive object. Who were the men that, when worsted in debate in the Assembly, fell back upon the sectaries under Cromwell,—who were the men that produced the horrific revulsion of public opinion in England,—who were the men that summarily dissolved the two Houses of Parliament, and the Assembly of Divines—that constituted themselves a novel court, by which they imprisoned and beheaded the King—that invaded Scotland with “Toleration” in their mouths, and a naked sword in their hands,—who were the men that perpetrated these deeds in the face of the faithful and repeated remonstrances of the Presbyterian ministers in England and Ireland, and by the Church and kingdom of Scotland? Who were they, but the sectaries under the Independent flag, having inscribed on it—Toleration!!! This was the theatre on which these men flourished, while the effect of their dreadful Toleration was to make the country glad of the Restoration of the King, that was followed for twenty-eight years by the legal overthrow of the Reformation, and the cruel butchery of its warmest and most intelligent friends. “It is notorious,” says Mr Begg, “that the Assembly was composed of Erastians and Independents!” True it was notorious! notorious in reading a lesson of great and awful import to this country, to the Evangelical Alliance, and also to the Free Church. But the defenders of the Alliance in using this Plea, either from ignorance or from design, overlook the very important difference of views entertained by modern Independents and those who sat in the Westminster Assembly. The

Independents of the Assembly were, in point of doctrine, thoroughly Calvinistic. Can this be said of modern Independents—of all the members of the Alliance? They were sound on the scripturalness of Creeds. Are modern Independents like-minded?—are all the members of the Alliance like-minded? They declared for not only *Consultative*, but *Judicial* Church Courts. Do modern Independents so declare? and how many in the Alliance make a similar declaration? But the Independents of the Assembly of Divines held the morality and continued obligation of National and Ecclesiastical Covenants; and they not only held this speculatively, put practically, as their swearing and subscribing of the Solemn League and Covenant unequivocally shews. Where is the modern Independent that so thinks, and is prepared so to act? How unlike the father is the son! “Quantum mutatus ab illo Hectore!” But the above questions, and especially the last one, cuts more members of the Alliance than the Independents; and it is not very clear that the Free Church herself could bear to be very hard pressed upon its import, not to speak of—for perhaps that would be a crime—practically engaging in the duty.

Before leaving this Plea as now put forth in vindication of the Alliance, I deem it of no small moment to allude to the solemn judgment given by the nation and Church of Scotland, of their respective Commissioners while in the English Parliament and the Westminster Assembly. As the Solemn League and Covenant was the clear exponent of Scotland's position and comprehensive object, it is rather unfair to substitute for this some dubious and isolated parts of the conduct of her Commissioners, especially when their scriptural and patriotic efforts were thwarted by the sinister influence of the Independents upon the As-

sembly, upon the Sectaries in the army, and upon the members of Parliament. The Scotch Commissioners had most serious difficulties to contend with, and no doubt ran their engine upon some offsets *from the main line*. But when the nation and Church of Scotland saw the fearful effects of this policy, very seldom practised by these men, in what manner and terms were they dealt with? Did Scotland approve of these somewhat eccentric motions? Most certainly not. In the year 1648,—famous on account of what is called the “Duke’s Engagement,”—the nation and Church of Scotland resolved to renew the Solemn League and Covenant, accompanying its renewal with a confession of public sins. This document, headed, “A SOLEMN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF PUBLIC SINS, AND BREACHES OF THE COVENANT,” shews that what the defenders of the Alliance glory in, the nation and Church of Scotland deplore as a fearful sin, which had provoked the Most High God, and had brought the three kingdoms to the brink of ruin. In this document they say, in the act of swearing to God, “We have reason to acknowledge that most of us have not endeavoured with that reality, sincerity, and constancy that did become us, to preserve the work of reformation in the Kirk of Scotland. . . . *The tamperings and unstraight dealing of some of our Commissioners, and others of our nation, in London, the Isle of Wight, and other places of that kingdom, have proved great lets to the work of reformation and settling of kirk-government there, whereby error and schism in that land have been increased, and sectaries hardened in their way.*” When they come to specify those sins with which they acknowledge themselves to be chargeable, they put at the head of the list their late winking at Independency,

&c. "Because religion is of all things most excellent and precious, the advancing and promoting the power thereof against all ungodliness and profanity, the securing and preserving the purity thereof against all error, heresy, and schism, namely, *Independency*, *Anabaptism*, &c., and the carrying on the work of *uniformity*, shall be studied and endeavoured by us before all worldly interests, whether concerning the King, ourselves, or any other whatsoever." Without making any remarks on these extracts from this most important document, I shall simply say that the Plea in defence of the Alliance, and all similar heterogeneous associations, drawn from the Westminster Assembly, augurs ill for the Visible Church of Christ, and the liberties of our own country.

II. It is rather a popular Plea, That every member of the Alliance has a right not only to keep, in their entireness, his denominational principles, but also to recommend them *within the Alliance itself*. In discussing this question in the Free Assembly, Dr Candlish complained that Mr Gibson, and those who acted with him, misinterpreted the character which the members of the Alliance sustained; and in order, therefore, to remove their misapprehensions, delivered himself in the following terms: "The first is the idea which has gone abroad among many of our friends, that in the Alliance itself, our lips are closed on all points except those upon which we have declared our agreement. . . . So far from that being the understanding of the Alliance, we have already, on more than one occasion, discussed points on which we are not all at one. But at any rate, I have to say, that if it should turn out that I have joined an institution in which I am not at liberty to open my lips in behalf

of anything that I hold to be the truth of God, I would at once abandon my position as untenable. (Loud cheering.) I speak of the liberty I may be allowed *within* the walls of the institution. . . Why, Sir, we are not by any means tied up from seeking to recommend, in a suitable way, our own principles upon all points of Calvinistic doctrine, Presbyterian discipline, and Free Church polity. (Loud cheering.) We are at the fullest liberty to take opportunities within the Alliance itself, of testifying for every iota of the truth of the living God. Otherwise, undoubtedly, the Alliance must be indefensible, and our continuance in it must justly subject us to the censure of the Church.”* It was deemed a sufficient security against denominational inconsistency, “That in this Alliance it is distinctly declared that no compromise of the views of any member, or sanction of those of others, on the points wherein they differ, is either required or expected;” but Dr Candlish would insinuate that a firmer security is allowed within the Alliance by the exercise of “a liberty to recommend his own denominational principles upon all points of Calvinistic doctrine, Presbyterian discipline, and *Free Church polity*; the *fullest liberty* of testifying for every iota of the truth of the living God! otherwise, undoubtedly, the Alliance *must be* indefensible!” What more could the General Assembly of the Free Church desire, or even grant to its own members? It is very true that this fullest liberty within the Alliance, “for which Dr Candlish pleads, and which, if not allowed him, would place him in an untenable position, which he would at once abandon,” must be exercised “in a suit-

* Ass. Discussion, pp. 15, 16.

able way," and must be reserved "for time and place convenient," and exercise itself "in recommending" and "in testifying *for* the truth of the living God!" This extraordinary liberty of testifying for every iota of the truth of the living God, will not be very easily defined, or understood by ordinary and plebeian minds, even although its exercise on one memorable occasion *within the Alliance* was displayed "in discussing (discussing!) points on which all were not at one." It has, therefore, been boldly affirmed as enough to silence the very breath of suspicion, that this "fullest liberty" has been fully exercised. "So far from that being the understanding of the Alliance, we have already, on more than one occasion, discussed points on which we are not all one." Perhaps the allusion here is to the youthful frolic of the Alliance in allowing every member when his name was called, to stand up and tell that he belonged to such a denomination! Some liberty I grant was allowed on that occasion, when a certain Covenanter gave such an exquisitely droll account of the Solemn League and Covenant, as to convulse the whole Alliance with laughter! That review day being over, the Alliance, advancing in days and in wisdom, framed its deed of constitution on "common ground," and excluded all such gambolling in time to come. What a strange looking thing is this "fullest liberty" when viewed in the light of the constitutional deed of the Alliance! "Rev. Dr Buchanan moved, &c., That, therefore, the Members of this Conference are deeply convinced of the desirableness of forming a Confederation, on the basis of great evangelical principles HELD IN COMMON BY THEM, &c.; and they hereby proceed to form such a Confederation, under the name of "THE

EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE.”* The Alliance then rests on “principles held in common” by its members ; and to declaim away about “fullest liberty to testify for every iota of the truth of the living God, and to recommend Presbyterian discipline, and Free Church polity,” is obviously beside, as it is completely eversive of, “common ground.” On the one hand, “common ground,” and on the other, “fullest liberty,” form one of the strangest contrasts ever presented to mortal man. But to a proper disposal of this favourite Plea, which was received by the Assembly with “loud applause,” it is requisite that we ascertain the definite sense attached to the phrase, “fullest liberty to testify *for* every iota of the truth of the living God.” Is it to be understood by this phrase that a Free Churchman has the liberty of telling the Alliance that he belongs to the Free Church ? Is this the liberty meant and applauded ? Or is the meaning that the Alliance grants the Free Churchman the fullest liberty to press upon it the adoption of “Calvinistic doctrine, Presbyterian discipline, and Free Church polity ?” If the latter be the meaning, then I scruple not to affirm that the Alliance does not, and, from its constitution and composition cannot, grant any such liberty. The fallacy of this Plea—a fallacy too transparent to require a formal exposure—lies in not distinguishing betwixt testifying *for the truth*, and testifying *against ascertained and acknowledged heresies against that truth*. This, Sir, is the capital flaw in this popular Plea, a flaw which is destructive of the nature and ordinarily received meaning of the phrase “testifying for the truth of God.” To talk of merely “recommending the

* Alliance Proceedings, p. 10.

truth, in a suitable manner, at time and place convenient," with many such diluted and vague terms, as equivalent to the well understood and *bona fide* duty of "testimony bearing," augurs ill for a projected testimony claiming identification with the Witnessing, Historical Church of Scotland, and is certainly imposing too much upon the credulity of the religious world. Such a mode of "testifying for the truth of the living God" would have saved the heads of "our Fathers," about whom so much has been chivalrously said of late. But should Dr Candlish, or any Free Church minister, still insist, that fullest liberty, and in the proper and well understood meaning of it, is granted *within the Alliance*, to testify for every iota of the truth of the living God, by honestly condemning all that avowedly confronts it, then I venture to affirm, that should he ever make the experiment, *the testimony* will, as in another case, be received with roars of laughter, or the display will be voted down, as in direct contravention of the clearly expressed constitution of the Alliance. What a sight! Dr Candlish, with the Free Church Claim of Right and Protest in his hands, urging upon the Alliance its adoption of these denominational documents!

III. Another favourite Plea is, It is visionary to expect that the religious world will be brought to *entertain the same views of revealed truth*. This Plea of the friends of the Alliance and all kindred associations is always urged to shame out of countenance Uniformity, as the great practical and damaging blunder of the Reformers. With oracular voice it pronounces against the practicability, and even the possibility, of any two individuals of the same denomination taking precisely the same views of the doctrines of Scripture. Divine injunctions to aim at unity of sentiment are

expounded of unity of affection ; and promises to the effect, that this unity of sentiment shall be reached, are either received with Attic salt, or thrown forward upon the millennial age, as what should not now distress our minds, or disturb our harmony on "common ground." Of late this Plea has been pushed further by such popular writers as Merle D'Aubigné—who insists that the diversity in the natural world is in harmony with diversity in the Church—than by the olden latitudinarians. This Plea has been made to play its part by representing those, who cannot relinquish the ancient dogma of Unity, and its proper exponent Uniformity, as ignorant of human nature, unacquainted with the history of the Church, and inaccurate in their observations upon providential arrangements. Hence the flippant questions, Have not the most eminent saints and gifted servants of Christ differed, and differed seriously, as to their views of divine truth ; are not such differences manifest in the present critical state of Christendom ; and are you, simply because these saints cannot see with your eyes, to remain a fixture for uniformity, and allow Popery and Infidelity to sap the very foundations of Protestantism ? In detecting and exposing the fallacy of this pet Plea, under cover of which so many heresies have been introduced within Protestant walls, I shall not insist on shewing, that no intelligent friend of Unity and Uniformity ever held, or was consistently bound to hold, that all the members of the same ecclesiastical association *should entertain precisely the same views of divine truth*,—a dogma at obvious variance with the merciful diversity of gifts and attainments of the members of the Church ; nor shall I stand upon shewing, in the light of their own practice, that the term "diversity," as used in this

Plea, is manifestly and unfairly substituted for avowed *hostility* and stated contradiction,—for there is among the numerous and several essential parts of the one divine system very great, and pleasing, and beneficial diversity ;—I say, I shall not stop formally to shew, that this Plea, unfairly put as it is, assumes what has not, and what never had, either as to theory or practice, any existence among the advocates of Unity and Uniformity ; but I shall content myself with affirming, without much fear of the affirmation being fairly controverted, that if unity of sentiment, and uniformity in practice, be not enjoined in Scripture as a duty and attainable, it must follow, that the Visible Church of Christ never had, and never could have had, a distinctive profession,—any proper symbolical documents,—any Judicial Standards. How there possibly could be any Judicial Confession of Faith, any Judicial Standards at all, without Unity and Uniformity as its proper exponent, I do fear will not be an easy task to shew. It cannot certainly be held, in any proper or honest sense, that Judicial Standards could allow their professed adherents to express views, and practise conduct, not only “different” from, but palpably at variance with and contradictory to, the Standards themselves ! And yet such is the exact position in which this Plea puts him who employs it,—a position not only equivocal, but destructive of our commonest ideas of Tests, whether of a civil or ecclesiastical kind. A Judicial Confession of Faith, and, side by side with it, a dispensation or allowance to its professed adherents to act in contravention of its contents, is, beyond all controversy, a “felo de se.” The point of this objection is in no way blunted by the common assertion, that the members of those denominations which have Judicial

Standards have not precisely the same views of divine truth. Who denies this? and what earthly connection has such an assertion with the position, that Judicial Standards necessarily imply Unity and Uniformity? Among these members it is readily admitted that there are different views; but the question is, About what do they entertain different views? Is it about these Standards themselves, or *the mode* of illustrating and defending them? Different views, in the latter sense, about the doctrines specified in these Standards, is a benefit to the association. Is it not a benefit to all the members that some see the truth more clearly and more fully than others? that some see more than their fathers who compiled, and the Church which authoritatively sanctioned, these Standards? When this additional light is got, then let it be stated to the Court, judicially investigated, and when ascertained to be really additional light, let it, *in accordance with the progressive character of the Church*, be inserted in her symbolical books as one of her attainments, and a part of her special work "in finishing the testimony," that all the brethren may receive the benefit of its gracious discovery. This is the characteristic duty of the Church, the order of her procedure, and, I apprehend, an intelligible and consistent exposition of a grossly perverted and murdered passage of Scripture, "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." Was not this the way in which the Church of Christ always acted, the way in which the Reformed Church of Scotland advanced? And, unless we admit this, how could any man possibly discover the Visible Church of Christ—how could there be a Historical Church at all, either in name or in reality? Once admit the Plea of "different views of divine truth" in

the lax sense, and as a thrust at Unity and Uniformity, and it becomes a sword, which, in the hands of a child, goes to the heart of the doctrine of a Profession of the Faith, of Judicial Standards, of the continuity and identity of the Church of God. The public Profession of the Church exhibits, and secures, and transmits to posterity, what God has given her in trust ; and instead therefore of lowering, or folding up this banner, in accommodation to those among her members who are but babes—*yet not enemies*—and to those who are without, and under hostile flags, she “displays it because of the truth.” What then the friends of Unity and Uniformity mean, and always meant, is, that all the members of the Church should give, according to their light, a *bona fide*—an honest—accession to her Judicial Standards ; and that she cannot, without manifest inconsistency, give allowance to the weakest TO EXPRESS OPPOSITE VIEWS, AND JOIN IN CONTRARY PRACTICE. This is true liberty within the ample and sanctioned ecclesiastical enclosure, the security against latitudinarianism, and the rational, as well as scriptural, stimulus to progressive attainments. But over and above this, this popular Plea cannot be urged but at the expense of the doctrine of faith, which is essential to acceptable worship. The modern complimentary and much lauded phraseology of making religion rest upon honest and conscientious, but withal human opinion, cuts away the certainty that essentially belongs to faith. Hence the *sang froid* with which denominational peculiarities are spoken of by the denominational leaders ! “ It is my view—my opinion ; it is my conviction, and I worship accordingly ; but after all, great and sainted names are enrolled on the other and opposite side, and I may be wrong—I must not judge.” In this form, Sir, I be-

lieve, I express the real spirit of the age against Unity, and especially against Uniformity, which manifests itself in the sceptical question to which I have formerly adverted. Do you really imagine you are in the right, and all others are in the wrong? This other phase which this popular Plea is made to assume, shews that it is liable to the grave objection of setting revealed religion adrift upon the shoreless and bottomless sea of uncertainty. Insinuations, under this form of the Plea, are dark and direct against the sufficiency of the Scriptures; against faith as not having assurance essential to it; against an oath, which, although a part of natural and revealed religion, and necessarily implying certainty, is a clearly revealed duty of the Church and individual believer; against the Church under both dispensations, and the Reformed Church of Scotland with which you claim identification, ever being able to plead higher authority than human opinion,—than her opinion of the mind of God revealed in His Word. This conclusion may appear gross; but I hold that the modern Plea against Unity and Uniformity forcibly shuts up to it; for if any ever had *faith*, which has assurance,—certainty, as distinguished from the uncertainty that belongs to *opinion*, then it is utterly impossible that they could have escaped the charge of rigid bigotry which this Plea pronounces against all those who presume to affirm that, in point of system, they are undoubtedly in the right, and those opposed to them undoubtedly in the wrong. Their attempts to exhibit their ascertained system, *which cannot be exhibited without unity and uniformity*, this Plea visits with marked punishment as presumption and fanaticism; and it is a Plea, Sir, which condemns as a parcel of fools or presumptuous bigots, those whom the Free Church calls

“our Fathers,” who were the preserving salt of our country from the Restoration to the Revolution, and who lived and died in the expressed assurance of the scripturalness of the “Covenanted Uniformity.”

But is the question put, Admitting the scripturalness of seeking Unity, and, as its true exponent, Uniformity, still, as in the mysterious providence of God the religious world is rent into conflicting parties, as real saints of God deploring the wretched state of fragmented Christendom are to be found in very many, if not in all, of the religious denominations, and as the Antichristian system, leagued with Scepticism, is leavening society, has removed many of the outworks, and knocks menacingly at the citadel of British Protestant liberty, is it duty to enclose yourselves within your circumscribed walls of Unity and Uniformity, to fold your hands and look on, and above all to oppose an association like the Alliance, which takes the field against the adversary as Christendom’s Forlorn Hope? To this question, Sir, I have various replies. If the Alliance be what its own authoritative language and unchallenged conduct declare, then it is a scheme which, although under different names in former ages, never for once succeeded in meeting, far less in checking, Popery; as it sanctions Sectarianism, it is the same scheme which, by resisting Uniformity—a distinctive Profession,—encouraged the growth of Popery in this country; and as it is a scheme which rests upon the avowed burial of that which, in this country, made Popery and Infidelity tremble under its consistent operation, I judge that, by joining or abetting the Alliance, any man who claims identification with “our Fathers” acts most ungenerously to their memories, and traitorously to their cause. But what is to be done in the crisis? That question, Sir, has been distinctly an-

swered by God in his Word, it has been practically answered by the Historical Church of Scotland in her Judicial Standards, and in her fiery struggles “for the extirpation of” not only “Popery and Prelacy, but also Superstition, Heresy, Schism, Profaneness,” and whatever she had ascertained and judicially declared to be against the “Reformed religion in the Church of Scotland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government.” That question thus answered by the Reformed Church of Scotland, should in all honesty be responded to by the Free Church, considering her reiterated Claim of Identification. Most undoubtedly, the Historical Church of Scotland demands, with unfaltering tongue, that her professed descendants should hold aloft her honourable and formerly much honoured Standards of Unity and Uniformity, for rallying what of real and undisguised attachment to them is still left in these “last and perilous times,”—Standards to encourage the weakest of the friends, but firmly to exclude the most potent of their *systematic* and deliberate adversaries. But what security is there that the adoption and prosecution of such a mode of “testifying for every iota of the truth of the living God” would be crowned with success, now that the adversary has assumed such a menacing attitude, and has acquired such extensive influence? What security that such tactics would not thin our Free Church ranks, would not again throw us upon the arena of sore controversy, would not stultify us in dissolving strong and sweet associations formed within the Alliance? As to controversy it will, it must come,—it has already come, and ranged on conflicting platforms the leaders of the Alliance; as to security for success, I point to the Reformed Church of Scotland, in whose footsteps the Free Church professes to walk, which

carried the day, until the Sectaries reared their Toleration—their Alliance standard; but, Sir, God himself is the security, who has declared that in the last days which immediately precede the closing struggle with Antichrist, his Witnesses—and *in the Alliance no man can sustain this character*—“his Witnesses shall overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and *the word of their testimony,*” the testimony with which “they tormented them that dwelt on the earth.” This is the instrument of divine appointment which, to the exclusion of all others, when worked by the Witnesses, how few, and feeble, and personally faulty soever, will lend a blow at the heart of the adverse confederacy, and usher in the predicted glory of the latter day. If the Scriptures specify, or even hint at any other instrumentality, the Alliance is certainly bound to tell us in what passages we may find it.

IV. Christian love is the most common as well as successful Plea urged in defence of the Alliance and all similar associations. Under the wing of this royal grace of the Spirit of God a very numerous class of arguments is taken, which, when dexterously played off, are well-fitted to tell upon the warm-hearted but less-informed portion of the religious community. In conducting this department of the liberal oratory, all the passages of Scripture that are injunctive and commendatory of the grace of love are warmly commented upon; warmest appeals are made on the eminent and delightful duty of holding union and communion with those on earth with whom we shall hold it in heaven; and some have got so enamoured with the subject as to throw out the insinuations, that sticklers for a religious profession are more concerned about their denominational crotchets than the conversion of immortal souls.*

* Evan. Alliance. Dr Chalmers.

In giving the finishing touch to this Plea, it is usual to furnish the audience with a well-accredited list of eminent adherents of the conflicting denominations, who are declared, with undoubted certainty, to have now reached heaven, or to be on their way to that holy and happy country. That the Alliance has been mainly indebted to this species of pleading is not only freely admitted, but gloried in; and that it is not very safe to attempt, in the present state of feeling, to question its scripturalness, has been painfully felt by some who would fain lay claim to at least a portion of love to God and their fellows. For myself, Sir, I confess, I feel ashamed to think that a formal defence against the charge implied in this Plea is at all expected;—and that it more than implies charges amounting to lack of both head and heart, will not be denied,—charges or insinuations that surely are ill accordant with the freely-conceded “right of private judgment,” and especially that boundless Christian love which the Alliance professes to exhibit and recommend. In stripping this Plea of some of its attractive plumes, I might advert to the fact, that it has been, and still is, the favourite plea of the world against the Church, of the Infidel against the Christian, of the Papist against the Protestant, of the professed Latitudinarian against every species of non-conformity,—against everything that has the name or the shape of a Disruption. Without pressing arguments of this kind into my service—arguments that were unsparingly flung at the Reformed Church of Scotland—I conceive I would be warranted to meet the popular use of this Plea by retorting on the Alliance that its exercise of Christian love is very restricted, and more anti-catholic than that of those who are so summarily condemned. The Basis of the Alliance excludes many individuals be-

cause they belong *to systems*, declared to be heretical ; and this restricted basis is not only thus grossly at variance with itself, seeing it professes to discard *systems, and embrace individuals*, but it pronounces sentence of non-sainthood against these individuals. Why should this Basis exclude Quakers, or even individual Papists ? Does not such exclusion interfere with systems, and formally pronounce the highest sentence against their every individual adherent ? Without, however, prosecuting this line of remark, it is clear, that the Alliance and its advocates who use this Plea in its defence, have taken upon them the heavy responsibility of passing sentence—not against adverse systems, but—against the state of individuals,—a responsibility from which the opponents of the Alliance would shrink. It is the Alliance, Sir, that pronounces on the state of individuals,—a prerogative which does not belong to the Church of God herself, a prerogative which the most rigid sticklers for Covenanted Uniformity never could assume. But while this Plea, more amiable in speechification than in reality, brings up a list of venerated names selected from various and conflicting denominations, it also either casts into the shade, or commends the denominational peculiarities which they held as “essential”—for rending the Church. “The true disciples of Christ, whether Presbyterians or Episcopalians, Methodists, or Independents, or Baptists, form one indivisible brotherhood, notwithstanding the diversities by which they are distinguished. There was unity between George Whitefield and Ralph Erskine, between James Harvey and Thomas Boston, between Andrew Fuller and Richard Cecil, between Robert Hall and Thomas M’Crie, between John Newton and John Love, between Thomas Scott and John Balfour. There is unity now be-

tween Bickersteth and Wardlaw, Haldane Stewart and John Brown, Angel James and Thomas Chalmers."* This river of contrast flows well. Why stop it? Why not add, there was unity between George Cook and Thomas Chalmers; and there is unity now between James Robertson and William Cunningham, between the Strathbogie deposed ministers and Andrew Gray? I hope Mr Gray, in reading this additional list, will make as strong an effort as he can to forget his "speech published at the request of the Perth Presbytery." But why not pass from the men to the systems, and complete the contrast? Are not these men claimed by the adherents of the systems to which they respectively belonged, as their greatest and most talented defenders? I submit that all such contrasts, considering especially the purpose for which they are made, are complimentary to the systems themselves, in defence of which those contrasted lived and died; or if this be too strong, such contrasts lead the great bulk of the people to care little or nothing about systems, provided they find a popular teacher. That this is the native effect,—and, in the present state of matters, it is, in point of fact, the practical effect,—appears from Mr Gray's preface to the contrast quoted above. "There is a unity, real, essential, indestructible among all the people of God. *Denominational differences have a tendency to hide it, but they cannot annul it.*"† How easily the tongues of some men get about the phrases "our Fathers," and "Denominational differences!" And what about these "denominational differences?" They "have a tendency to hide the real, essential, and indestructible unity among the people of God!" Of course Mr Gray includes

* Ass. Discussion, p. 53.

† Ibid.

Free Churchism, being denominational, and must be understood as gravely affirming that Free Churchism "has a tendency to hide the essential unity of the people of God!" So much, by way of compliment, to the Disruption.* It is evident that the most successful declaimers on this subject assume that love to Christ is not the exact rule and proper measure of love to the brethren; and that love to Him may consist with silence in regard to the infraction of some of his laws, and the contravention of his example, by his professing disciples. This, however, is not merely fallacious reasoning, but a virtual denial of his own clearest test and evidence of genuine love,—a direct violation of his plainly expressed mind on this interesting subject. "The first and great Commandment is love to God,"—to his person, character, and truth; and this evidences itself by love to the brethren. But the real proof of love to Him is "love to his Commandments." "If ye love me, keep my Commandments." Of course this would lead us to inquire, what are His Commandments? and surely it will be readily granted that none of these, especially on the subject of Christian love, is more prominent than "Thou shalt *not hate thy brother* in thine heart; thou shalt in any wise *rebuke thy brother*, and not suffer sin upon him." This Christ exemplified himself in all

* For a clear view, and very successful exposure of the serious injury which divine truth sustains by the flippant phraseology, "denominational differences," I would refer the reader to a pamphlet entitled "Objections to the Principles of the proposed Evangelical Alliance, stated in the Speeches of the Rev. Andrew King and Rev. James Gibson, in the Free Presbytery of Glasgow. February 1846." It is refreshing to find such clear-headed men honestly and ably expounding the distinguishing principles of the Reformed Church of Scotland, and especially at a time, and in a place, when and where they are much obscured.

his discourses to the people, and in all his dealings with the disciples. Was there lack of love in exposing the Rabbinical expositions of the law ; in rebuking Peter before restoring him to office, and communion with the Church ; and in threatening to remove the candlestick out of its place, unless the seven Churches of Asia repented, and did the first works ? But apart from Scripture altogether, does any intelligent man hold it to be of the nature of brotherly, of Christian love, to be silent as the grave on those sentiments, and those parts of conduct that are ruinous to his friend ? It has been held as axiomatic in morals, that it is not love but selfishness, or something worse, to dwell on what is amiable about our professed friend, and wink at his pernicious principles, and consequent improper conduct ; and were not conscience debauched, it would respond to the justness and generosity and utility of the divine sentiment, that "faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." Reason, corrupted as it is, scruples not to admit at once, and without hesitation, that friendships formed upon the distinct understanding of complete silence on what is felt to be dishonouring to God, and pernicious to the parties, are not only unscriptural and unkind, but positively cruel. I submit, therefore, that the popular Plea of Christian love, as used in defence of the Alliance, and consisting, as it does, in an agreement to conceal much of both heresy and truth, is against the character of God, supposes limited views of the glorious person and work of Christ, and a comparatively weak sense of our obligations to commend his truths to our fellow-men. Such a Plea is not love either to God or man.

In conclusion, Sir, all the Pleas, and especially that of Christian love, assume, that not only alleged Chris-

tians of the various denominations, but that these denominations themselves, may hold occasional communion with one another in all ministerial and ecclesiastical acts of Divine worship. The defenders of the Alliance know well that in this lies the strength of their cause; and accordingly cases of such communion among individual Reformers, and those of other denominations, are carefully selected, and pompously paraded, as decisive of the question. This system has been vegetating for some years in the religious world, and has lately shewn its blossom and fruit in the defunct Synod of the United Secession Church. Whereas formerly the Free Communion scheme was defended by isolated instances of it among the Reformers, of late, and in connection with the defence of the Alliance, the Free Church, or at least her leading members, solemnly affirms that this scheme is in perfect accordance with the Westminster Standards; and that the opposite is a contravention of these Standards. In the Free Assembly, Dr Gordon said that "he would feel that the finding of this Assembly, by adopting Mr Gibson's motion, would be a contravention of the Standards of the Church themselves; for a glorious portion of the Standards of the Church, as had been referred to this evening, was, that the communion of saints should be sought after and maintained, as the providence of God offered opportunities for so doing among all in every place who called upon the name of the Lord Jesus. That was the extensive and broad recognition of Christian character among men who belonged to different communions, which he, for one, could not give up. If he could be forced to relinquish that position—if he were to give his consent to that, he would feel that he was betraying a portion of the Standards to which he had solemnly put

his hand.”* The reference in these words is to the speech of Mr Gray, which professedly bears upon ministerial and Christian intercommunion in the largest sense. “The repeal of the law of 1799, in 1842, was universally understood to open our pulpits to Evangelical Dissenters who differ from us about Church Establishments, to Evangelical Episcopalians, to Evangelical Baptists, and Independents, &c.” It is matter of deep regret that a man of such sound sense as Dr Gordon should have so solemnly given such an exposition of the Confession of Faith; and especially that the Free Assembly should have sustained it as the correct one. Should it turn out that Dr Gordon’s exposition is exactly the reverse of the true one, his solemn affirmation places him in a most painful predicament. Without formally discussing the question of Free Communion, ministerial and Christian, I shall simply advert to *a fact or two*, to shew that Dr Gordon’s exposition of the Confession of Faith is not only incorrect, but the very opposite of that held by the Reformed Church of Scotland. It is a fact too notorious to be denied, that the Westminster Standards were drawn up in prosecution of the Solemn League and Covenant; these Standards must then be expounded in accordance with the expressed principles and leading object of that solemn document. Now, is Dr Gordon, or any other man, prepared to shew that “extirpation of Popery, Prelacy, Schism, Independency, Anabaptism, &c.” is reconcilable with Free Communion? Is it not too well known that the avowed advocates of this kind of “Communion of Saints” have objected to that document, because of its alleged intolerance and bigotry on the head of Com-

* Ass. Discussion, pp. 70, 71.

munion? How many of late, like Mr Gray, have indulged in verbal criticisms on the Confession of Faith in regard to Voluntaryism, as well as Free Communion, by overlooking the distinctive principles, and one great object of the Reformed Church of Scotland, as plainly expressed in the solemn document alluded to? Another fact of essential importance for reaching a safe conclusion on the correct meaning of the Confession on the occasional communion pled for is, that the Assembly of Divines were extremely annoyed by the Independents, who insisted on Mr Gray's view of "the communion of saints," which they include under "their toleration." Baillie tells us that Mr Thomas Goodwin, one of the most eminent Independent ministers, by formally declaring his mind on this subject, excited the opposition of the Presbyterians. Goodwin said, "that he could not refuse any to be members, nor subject them to any censure, when members, for Anabaptism, Lutheranism, or any errors which are not fundamental, nor maintained against knowledge." Of this mere accidental profession—formal and decided, however, in the case of Mr Gray—Baillie quaintly says, "it has much allayed the favour of some to their toleration."* But as conclusive on this subject, beyond the possibility of refutation, I shall here give the formal and written deliverance of the Sub-Committee of the Assembly of Divines on the question at issue. Because of the opposition of the Independents to the Presbyterians, a Committee, consisting of several members of the two Houses of Parliament, a number of the English divines, and the Commissioners from the Church of Scotland, was appointed to deal with them. To this Committee the Independents presented a paper, which they called

* Baillie's Letters, vol. ii., p. 172.

“Desires of the Dissenting Brethren.” On the subject of communion this paper says, “Holding and retaining communion with neighbour Churches in baptizing our children (as occasion may fall out of absence of our ministers) in their Churches; and by *occasional* receiving of the Lord’s Supper, and receiving members of theirs into communion with us also *occasionally*; also, *our ministers to preach in their congregations, and receive theirs to preach in ours as ministers of the Gospel, as mutually there shall be a call from each other.*” A reply to this proposal, or “Desire of the Dissenting Brethren,” was laid by the Committee upon a Sub-Committee, having no doubt the confidence of the Committee. And what was the reply to this proposal? “If they may *occasionally* exercise these acts of communion with us *once, or a second or a third time without sin*, we know no reason why it may not be *ordinary* without sin too; and then separation and Church gathering would have been needless. To separate from those *ordinarily and visibly*, with whom *occasionally* you may join without sin, seemeth to us *a most unjust separation.*” In reply to the Desire for exchange of pulpits—on which Mr Gray waxes eloquent—they say, “No need then of separate Churches for the exercise of their ministry.”* I would deem comment on this intelligible and able reasoning quite superfluous, as not merely expository of the Confession of Faith, but as putting Mr Gray and Dr Gordon in a position which I have no pleasure in characterizing. If Mr Gray will debate, let him try his strength to controvert the reasoning of this Sub-Committee’s reply to the Dissenting Brethren; but, in the name of the Historical Church of Scotland,

* Desires of the Dissenting Brethren, and Answer of the Sub-Committee to the same.

let him forbear trying to make it appear that the Confession of Faith allows his lax views of "exchange of pulpits and Free Communion." Such a contrast, The Solemn League and Covenant, and Free Communion!!!

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

I shall not adduce other and similar Pleas urged in defence of the Alliance, which is a visible concentration of the spirit of the religious world, especially as I am fully aware of the unpalatable nature of the above Remarks in elucidation of that system which the Free Church acknowledges God signally honoured in this country, "in troublous times," and which the operation of the present lax views on Free Communion, Toleration, and Liberty of Conscience, overthrow. In consideration not merely of these loose principles, but the advance made in that direction, by not simply tolerating, but granting sites for—not dwelling-houses* but—religious temples to Papists, Mahometans, and Heathens, in which to *worship God*; and that upon the ground that "they have a right (who in heaven, or upon earth, can grant such a right?) to *worship God* according to *their consciences*. (*Their* consciences! and what about the conscience of *him* that admits and grants such a right?)—In consideration of such a wretched state of things passed off and pled for in the sacred name of "Christian love," I submit the above thoughts to the prayerful consideration of the few who are alarmed "at the signs of the times," and know not

* Rev. Mr Guthrie, in his Examination upon Sites.

well "what Israel ought to do." Without attempting to specify all that is symptomatic of some organic disease, it is too obvious, from the favour with which the adversary is received in the high places of the country, the fierce divisions that afflict, not only the State and the religious world, but almost all the families of the land, and, in particular, from signal and acknowledged judgments of God, that the Most High is pleading a controversy with these isles of the sea, because of SOME CAPITAL, SOME MASTER SIN. Not a few of those who were men of highest intellectual calibre, and of undoubted spiritual patriotism, were clear in affirming that this master sin is apostacy from Britain's Covenanted Uniformity—a system that is the ridicule of the present age—that is disowned by the vast majority of the members of the Alliance, and the denominations to which they belong, and that is fruitlessly complimented by those who are loudest in the cry, "our Fathers." Judging from the past dealings of God with apostate nations, it is apprehended by some that, at no remote period, we shall be brought to our senses in the settlement of the quarrel with God upon another arena than a public platform, and by other weapons than pamphlets. Jehoshaphat was the most potent king under the Judean dynasty, until "he joined affinity with Ahab" king of Israel; and Samson was a strong defence against the adversary until he laid his head on the lap of her of Timnath. Then Samson lost his two eyes, became weak and like another man, and closed his career by falling in the wreck which himself had made. It would be some small comfort, in this last hour of Britain's Protestantism, and the Divine forbearance, were "a Forlorn Hope" to make its appearance under the old and honoured, and—*not tentative*, but—well-proved Banner of

the Covenant. This appears to be the last ray of hope, the last door of escape, for a sinking country. The last words of the Marquis of Argyle had a warning voice, which is still addressing the inhabitants of this land—" We are tied by Covenants to religion and reformation; those who were then unborn, are yet engaged; and it passeth the power of all the magistrates under heaven to absolve from the oath of God."

A FEW EXPOSTULATORY HINTS TO THOSE WHO
WOULD DARE TO BE FAITHFUL TO GOD AND
THE TRUTH.

Although I am fully sensible that the foregoing remarks on the Evangelical Alliance will not suit that part of the religious public who are intoxicated with any scheme that professes to accomplish good, irrespectively of the means divinely appointed, and the ordinances divinely instituted, yet I would fain indulge the hope, that there are a few in the Free Church, and in other denominations too, who are desirous of "knowing what Israel ought to do," and who long for an opportunity of displaying, in its entirety and purity, the long and well-tried and signally honoured Standard of the Second Reformation. To such I would, in this extraordinary state of affairs, both in the political and religious world, most earnestly address the few following hints, in the hope that they will be impartially weighed in the balance of the sanctuary.

After the patriotic Nehemiah had reached Jerusalem, and rested three days from his fatigue, he thus describes his moonlight survey of "the city, the place of his fathers' sepulchres:"—"And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem." Having satisfied himself of the reproachful desolation of the city, he called

together "the Jews, the priests, the nobles, and the rulers," and addressed them. "Then said I unto them, ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire : come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach." That the New Testament Jerusalem, the Visible Church of God, as delineated in the Westminster Standards, and expounded in the Solemn League and Covenant, is in a desolate condition, is too obvious to be denied ; and that the present denominational builders can repair *her* wall, is a pure impossibility. The wall in which they have, for many years past, been engaged in rearing, has not been found sufficient for meeting the arrogance and arresting the progressive assailments of the Sanballats, the Tobiahs, and the Geshems. By their views of Toleration, which they still retain, Popery has reached a position in this country in consequence of which the British Parliament is next to compelled to grant its gradually-increasing and clamorous demands ; while the very existence of the Alliance proclaims the impotency of the religious community to stem the advancing tide which is threatening to swamp not only our covenanted, but our vague common Protestantism. At the era of the Disruption, the Free Church by the cry "Our Fathers, and Christ's Crown and Covenant," gave promise that she would occupy and extend the ground upon which the Reformed Church and this country repulsed Popery and its common associates. At that time Dr Candlish declared in the Free Assembly, that it would be inconsistent in any of the adherents of the Free Church to worship God even occasionally in any of the Established churches. Since that time the tide has fairly turned ; and Dr Candlish, as well as other leading members of the Free Assembly, have declared for freest exchange of pulpits, for Free Communion, and the employment of the Alliance for resisting Popery, Error, and all Superstition. As these tenets are not whispered in a corner, but proclaimed from the house-top with the approbation of the Assembly itself, and as in very many instances they have been put in practice, it is notorious that the Free Church has abandoned the position for which she

once declared, and cannot consistently hold up to this country the Reformation cause. Can the plea be sustained that she still professes to hold the banner of the Second Reformation, and that she has a Testimony to that effect in the shape of an Overture? Do not her avowed tenets, and the uncensured practice of many of her ministers, on Free Communion, Toleration, and such associations as the Alliance, completely negative such a profession? If the Second Reformation bound all its professed adherents "to extirpate heresy, schism," &c. then, "what meaneth the bleating of the sheep, and the lowing of the oxen?" Is it not essential to the Church's testimony that it have a CONDEMNATORY as well as a DECLARATORY character? It must not only declare doctrines, but also condemn whatever is opposed to them in point of tenet and practice. To those who have been observant of the direction, and have taken note of the increasing rapidity and depth of this latitudinarian tide, I would say, in the words of Nehemiah, "Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire." In such an alarming state of matters, the serious and solemn question is, WHAT IS TO BE DONE? That Popery is rapidly advancing, all admit; that the country, in as far as the Free Church is concerned, is without a full, consistent, and practical display of the Reformation banner, her most intelligent ministers know well and hesitate not to declare; and that she, as a Church, will not retrace her steps, is, from her accommodation to the spirit of the age, all but certain. What, then, are her ministers, few in number, and painfully alive to these startling facts, now to do? Are they prepared to secede under the Reformed banner, or are they resolved to run all hazards by cleaving, a little longer, to the Free Church ship, displaying a latitudinarian and anti-reformation flag? This is the question to which they must, in honesty to God and this country, now address themselves.

I can understand, and in some measure sympathize with, various replies which the fears of some will suggest to this question. Believing that these ministers, who have stood

in the breach on the comprehensive and testing question of Union, would not be deterred from making a secession because of the lack of a Sustentation Fund, which, however, the Most High can readily and effectually provide, yet the making of another secession—the small number that would at first join their ranks—the consequent narrowing of the sphere of ministerial usefulness, and the misrepresentation of motive, as well as misconstruction of conduct, to which such a bold step would expose them, might suggest the precarious mode of living under Dissents and Protests with their present brethren, I would deem it out of place, formally and *seriatim*, to combat these separate suggestions; and would therefore simply hint, that if they are to be held valid as binding us to a ship with an anti-reformation flag, there could have been no Reformation cause in this or any other country; there never could have been any Secession, any Disruption. The Disruption itself, then, is a formal answer to all these suggestions.

As to narrowing the sphere of usefulness by a mere handful of such Seceders, it may be safely affirmed, that the usefulness of such ministers is less within than it can possibly be without the pale of the Free Church; and their pleadings in ministerial connection with her, whether in the form of Dissent or Protest, whether in the Pulpit, the Church Court, or from the Press, will be viewed and eventually stigmatized as factious and vexatious; and by the counter pleadings of popular, because liberal brethren, will be neutralized. This mode of remonstrating will undoubtedly, if persisted in, expose to ridicule from those without and those within, and render the remonstrant very uncomfortable to himself, and those with whom he must associate, but with whom he cannot co-operate. How painful the position of an honest man, and especially a man in office, who must, from a regard to duty, act as the opponent of public measures introduced and triumphantly carried by brethren who are popular at the expense of their distinctive profession! In such a position the remonstrant, although he be listened to in discussing questions of a secondary character, yet when invariably foiled in defending those that are constitu-

tional, feels himself, as he will be, *a marked man*, gradually loses heart for the combat, yields when yielding is ungracious, becomes useless to himself, and to the flock over which he is appointed.

It is apprehended that such a remonstrant as I have alluded to above, will not succeed in satisfying a scripturally enlightened conscience by pleading that the Reformation cause is *by profession* with the Free Church; for admitting, although not granting in point of fact, that she has the Reformed constitution, yet if that constitution be contravened—negatived—by her judicial deliverances and the applauded tenets and practices of her avowed leaders, of what avail to herself or to others is her profession? Israel had in their possession the ark of the living God, and shouted until the earth rang again, when they placed it on the battle-field; yet because of contrary tenets and practices, Israel lost the battle, and the ark fell into the hands of the Philistines. The mistake into which such remonstrants are naturally liable to fall is, that by seceding from the religious association with which they conclude the true profession is, that profession is left; but by their secession they carry that profession with them, and clearly exhibit it for the information and rallying together of those who otherwise could not distinguish it because of dubious and contrary opinions and conduct. For illustration, What would a few such Seceders from the Free Church do? Would they not honestly take up the Reformed profession, for which they painfully and fruitlessly contend within the Free Church, and by a few judicial statements, make provision for honestly and intelligibly working it? Scripture, reason, and the history of the Reformed Church of Scotland, would furnish with ample encouragement, and sufficient matter for reply to all pragmatic adversaries, especially to those who claim to be descendants of “our Fathers,” but refuse to work out their cause. Such a Secession, although it could not command an array of names and number, would beyond all contradiction lay claim to Identification with the Martyr Church of Scotland, would be an act of mercy to the Free Church herself, would set “a bow in the cloud”

of our country's calamity, and might yet be a mean of "God's repenting himself of the evil which he hath said he will do" against apostate kingdoms. One half dozen of such Seceders putting hand and heart to the royal standard of the Second Reformation, would furnish this country with a special instance of purest patriotism, would gladden many hearts that sigh for such a visible rallying flag, would warrant the expectation of the blessing of the martyrs' God, and if not honoured to be instrumental in saving these isles of the sea from the present surcharged cloud of wrath, would constitute a platform which the saved remnant after the storm might occupy in happier and purer days.

In conclusion, many circumstances that need not here be specified, but which will readily suggest themselves to reflecting minds, conspire to shew, that **NOW IS THE TIME** for the real friends of the Reformation cause to display decision of character, which can alone be done by first taking a right judicial position, giving it a consistent visibility, and, in conjunction with humble dependence on Him whose it is, to use most strenuous efforts for rendering it glorifying to God and attractive to men. It requires no sagacity to predict, that they who now refuse the call "to come to the help of the Lord against the mighty" may be refused the honour when crushing necessity shall render all proffered help unacceptable and of no avail.

May the Lord himself arise and plead the cause which he has proved to be his own: Grant a little reviving in the midst of this bondage: Regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer: Turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers: and appear in his glory and majesty to men by building up His own Zion.

I am, Reverend Sir, with all respect, yours, &c.

A FREE CHURCH PRESBYTERIAN.

EDINBURGH, *August* 1847.







