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THE IRISH CHURCH QUARTERLY

APRIL, 1910.

CHURCH REUNION: THE PROSPECTS IN SCOTLAND.

It is at all times the blessed function of God the Holy Ghost, "not to speak of Himself," as by a continuous revelation of added information, but "to bring all things to our remembrance whatsoever" the Incarnate Son, whose Spirit He is, "hath said unto us." Looking back, as we now can do on His work on the Church in the nineteenth century we are can hardly fail to recognize, as one of its salient features, His recalling to the minds of Christians, both within and beyond the Anglican Communion, the Scriptural doctrine of the Church as the Body of Christ. It is impossible to apprehend this sublime conception without seeing that it involves at once the fact of the Church's unity, the "obligation on Christians to agree,"¹ and the sinfulness of schism. "There is one body, and one Spirit," says St. Paul: there cannot, by the nature of the case, be more. If, therefore, Christians, themselves abiding in Christ, draw apart from, and take up antagonistic positions to, each other, it is not their *objective* unity with each other that is lost: it is only subjective unity.² Together, and in the sight of God, they *are* one family—"all ye are brethren": it is their sin and their condemnation that, being brethren in Christ, they treat each other as strangers and as aliens. It is in vain to plead that "spiritual unity" is not broken: in point of

¹ Professor Milligan.

² Bishop A. P. Forbes, *Exposition of the Nicene Creed*.

fact it is just this that has been violated—with an infinitude of evils as its consequence, to the discredit of all our Churches, and the weakening of their witness to the one Lord.

All this was increasingly felt throughout Christendom, and particularly in Britain, as the nineteenth century advanced. Now, in the opening years of the twentieth, a further, and not less potent thought, involved in the “word which we had from the beginning,”¹ is being brought home to us by, as we cannot doubt, the same good Spirit—the doctrine, I mean, that the Church, Christ’s Body, exists, and has been constituted, for *service*—for the service of its Head, to do His bidding towards “His Father and our Father,” towards its own members, and towards those whom He wills, through it, to make His members. No pages in the records of the last Lambeth Conference are more striking, none more encouraging, than those which record in glowing language how “eager” at the Pan-Anglican Congress of 1908 “the spirit of service” was, and how “the genuine wish to work together swept away all thoughts of partizanship, and brought instead the reality of mutual understanding.”²

That this spirit of service is already victorious it would be too much to say. Feelings, visions, which at a congress are keen and clear, may easily grow dull and slack when men return to the isolation, the trials, the discouragements and irritations of every-day life. But the idea, at least, has taken possession of men’s minds: the vision has been seen, and it is not being forgotten. I remember the late Dr. Archibald Watson of Dundee, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1880, using a fine simile: “As the unity of the wide Atlantic is shown by identical swell and ebb in every creek among the Hebrides, so is the essential unity of the whole Church demonstrated by its sharing simultaneously, in its apparently separated parts, the stir of the self-same spiritual move-

¹ John ii. 7.

² *Conference of Bishops of the Anglican Communion*, 1908, p. 2.

ments.” His observation has been verified in the recent ecclesiastical life of Scotland. Its sturdy Presbyterianism might have seemed far enough removed alike from the influence of the Tractarians at Oxford in the last century, or that of the Pan-Anglicans the other day in London. Not so, however: Scottish Presbyterians—both in the Church of Scotland, and among those who lately gloried in their separation from her—have also begun to realize alike the Scriptural truth of the “One Body” and the call upon that Body to yield itself as one to its Divine Head as His organized instrument for service to mankind.

II.

The ideas, then—the spiritual forces—which make for reunion are at work in Scotland. And therewith the *desire for reunion* grows. One can hardly open a Scottish newspaper without finding evidence how strong and general the longing has become. It is, by its very nature, a desire that cannot be satisfied by reunions that are merely sectional or partial; for its aim is not the aggrandisement of a sect, but “the edifying of the Body of Christ” in accordance with His revealed will, for more powerful witness to Him, and the furtherance of the work He has given it to do. Thus those in whom the desire is strong are becoming increasingly conscious that, if their act is to be religious—an act of faith and obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ—it must contemplate more than a merely Presbyterian reunion. It must be a reunion in which the truly national episcopacy, “the suffering and episcopal Church of Scotland,”¹ as Sir Walter Scott affectionately terms it, is reunited with the Presbyterian Churches which form the great majority of the Scottish nation. “On what principle,” asked the late Professor Milligan in his remarkable address from the Moderator’s chair at the Assembly of 1882, “on what Christian principle can you talk of reunion [even for Scotland] and leave out the Scottish Epis-

¹ *Guy Mannering*, chap. xxxvii.

copalians?" There was a time, perhaps, when the Scottish Episcopalians would have left out the Presbyterians. But that time is past. As a matter of fact, the desire and the movement for reunion, in their present stage as a force in the Scotland of to-day, owe much to the action taken from 1896 and onwards by the late Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church, the saintly Bishop Wilkinson, reinforced as that action was in the spring of 1908 by the sermons and addresses of the Archbishop of Melbourne on the movement for reunion in Australia.

It is true, indeed, that the conferences on reunion which have been going on all the past winter between committees appointed by the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church of Scotland have been limited to the question of the reunion of these two Churches only, both of which are Presbyterian. It is true, also, that the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland of 1907, which took the initial step that has led to these conferences, rejected by a large majority an "overture" which in the preceding April I had persuaded the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr to send up, asking the Assembly

"to invite the various communions of the Reformed Church in Scotland to join in establishing a joint committee to confer, with a view of finding, if possible, an adjustment of the differences which at present separate us, and of ascertaining what modifications would require to be made on the settlement arrived at between Church and State in Scotland in 1690, in order that all might again be united in one National Reformed Church."

I thought, and I still think, that some such course as this would have been better in itself and more becoming an Established Church. But if I was over-ruled, and if the Assembly instructed its Committee on Co-operation and Reunion to confine its attention "in the meantime" to the other Presbyterian Churches in Scotland, that course was taken (as the late Dr. Theodore Marshall, Moderator of the General Assembly of 1908, told the

Lambeth Conference), not for a moment out of any hostility to the Anglican Church, or of unwillingness to consider reunion with it, but on the principles of "one step at a time," and of taking what was regarded at the shortest step at first. It was, moreover, the procedure recommended to us by influential Episcopalians both in England and in Scotland. On this understanding I had no difficulty in accepting a place on the committee, and I have been present at all its meetings. It has sat in private: it will make, I suppose, some sort of *interim* report to the two Assemblies which meet in May, and will ask to be continued—having hope of surmounting the difficulties, anticipated or unlooked for, which have been found of living force.

Meanwhile the result has not been to diminish, but rather to augment, and to extend to many Presbyterians who did not previously cherish it, the desire that approaches should in due course be made to the Episcopal Church. The Assembly's "meantime" need not be long. Nor ought it to be forgotten that among those who, in the eighteenth and in the nineteenth centuries, withdrew from the Church of Scotland and formed the non-established Presbyterian Churches of the country, there were very many who held what would now be considered extremely High Church—that is genuinely Presbyterian—views regarding the Church, the sacraments, the ministry; and, however association, political and other, with English Nonconformity may have since affected those Churches, this excellent leaven in part remains, and in the event of reunion may be trusted to assert itself. Further, the circumstances of the united Church, supposing this reunion to take place, would inevitably demand some modification, in the direction of Episcopacy, of the Presbyterian system. For example, the presbyteries, which at the larger centres are already overgrown, would be altogether unwieldy, or, if divided, would lose in power and influence; and some devolution of their function of superintendence over pastors and parishes would

be inevitable. In 1560, John Knox declared superintendents to be necessary.¹ As it is, both in the United Free Church and in the Church of Scotland, complaints are frequently heard, from men of varying schools of thought, concerning the prevalence of a kind of practical congregationalism—each congregation thinking solely of itself: again, the needs are being acknowledged for a better executive, to see that excellent injunctions of the General Assembly are obeyed, and for a functionary who should constitute a link between parish and parish, a visible impersonation of the Church's unity, and who might, in particular, preside when young people are "admitted to the confirmation of their baptismal vow and the participation of the Lord's Supper."²

III.

It is surprising, too, how in the silent providence of God, barriers that seemed to stand like mountains forbidding even the thought of union have, like those which confronted Zerubbabel, suddenly "become a plain."³ In regard, for example, to episcopacy. No Presbyterian need quarrel with Anglicans for valuing an institution which it "is evident unto all men diligently reading the Holy Scripture and ancient authors" has been in Christ's Church—at least in some parts of it, as, for instance, at Jerusalem, and Antioch, and Smyrna—"from the Apostles' time." But the doctrine that episcopacy is essential to the very being—and not merely to the well-being—of a Church could not but present a formidable obstacle to reunion between Anglicans and Presbyterians who, like those of Scotland, are profoundly convinced that the succession of their own ministers through presbyters is valid, and their form of Church government in accordance with primitive and undisputed precedent. Yet, though Newman himself had explicitly distinguished between the principle of succession, and its necessary derivation

¹ See the *Booke of the Universal Kirk of Scotland*, vol. i., sub annis 1560-1572.

² The title given to this service in *Euchologion* (Church Service Society).

³ Zech. iv. 7.

through a bishop,¹ his distinction was lost sight of, and the high Caroline view, accepted in its extremest form, "without examination,"² did appear to have obtained absolute possession of the entire Anglican Communion. Those of us in the Church of Scotland who hoped and laboured, and still hope and labour, for reunion with episcopacy knew that this extreme position was not, and never had been, universally held by Anglican divines. We remembered that twice over in the history of Scotland—in 1610 and again after the Restoration of Charles II.—a way had been found for giving us bishops without the reordination of our ministers in Presbyterian orders. We were convinced that our contention as to the nature of the distinction between presbyter and bishop had more support in primitive antiquity than the rigid Caroline view allowed. What has happened within the last few years? Three Church historians of the highest eminence—to mention only these—all believers in episcopacy, the Roman Catholic Duchesne, and the Anglican Professors Bigg and Gwatkin, allow the gradual development of the monarchical episcopate in Churches not less notable than those of Corinth, Philippi, Rome, and Alexandria; while on our side of the Border learned divines of the Church of Scotland, Dr. Sprott, Dr. Leishman, Dr. Donald Macleod, and Mr. H. J. Wotherspoon, and the Free Churchman, Mr. Alexander Wright, have been demonstrating that the principle of a succession through presbyters duly ordained from the Apostles downward is the true Presbyterian doctrine, and exhibiting the fact of the great care taken by the Church of Scotland to maintain this succession. Steps were taken by Scotsmen to bring these things, along with what had been done in 1610, before the Lambeth Conference of 1908; and that body, on the report of its Committee on Reunion and Intercommunion, unanimously resolved:—

"That, in the welcome event of any project of reunion

¹ *Tracts for the Times*, no. 2. ² *Saturday Review*, 5th Feb., 1910.

between any Church of the Anglican Communion and any Presbyterian or non-Episcopal Church, which, while preserving the Faith in its integrity and purity, has also exhibited care as to the form and intention of ordination to the ministry, reaching the stage of responsible official negotiation, it might be possible to make an approach to reunion on the basis of consecration to the episcopate on lines suggested by such precedents as those of 1610. Further, in the opinion of the Conference, it might be possible to authorize arrangements (for the period of transition towards full union on the basis of episcopal ordination) which would respect the convictions of those who had not received episcopal orders, without involving any surrender on our part of the principle of Church order laid down in the Preface to the Ordinal attached to the Book of Common Prayer."

It may be convenient here to insert the account given by Archbishop Spottiswood of "the precedents of 1610," in which, be it remembered, he himself played no unimportant part. It was not (let us premise) till 1592—thirty-two years after its Reformation—that the Church of Scotland formally received a Presbyterian constitution: the Act of Parliament of that year is known among us as "the Charter of Presbytery." It did not work smoothly: by 1606, bishops were again making their appearance; and in 1610 a General Assembly at Glasgow resolved, without one dissenting voice, for the restoration of episcopacy on the lines which, at the Convention of Leith in 1572, had received the assent of all the Scottish Reformers including Knox. The ecclesiastical courts of 1592 (which are still the courts of all the Scottish Presbyterian Churches), kirk sessions, presbyteries, provincial synods, and general assemblies, were to remain: the bishops were to moderate in, and rule through, these courts; they were themselves to be subject to the General Assembly, and, "taking to them a competent number of their presbyters," they were to ordain all future ministers. There was only one bishop alive in Scotland who had received any consecration. The question arose, How were the new bishops to be consecrated? Consecrated they must be by the terms agreed on at Leith, and now afresh

ratified by Parliament. But the General Assembly had said nothing on the subject; whereupon King James, in his capacity as a "nursing father" of the Church, took it upon him to arrange as follows:—

"Shortly after the Assembly dissolved the Archbishop of Glasgow (Spottiswood) was called to Court (at London) and commanded to bring with him two others such as he thought fit. The Archbishop, taking with him the Bishops of Brechin and Galloway, came to Court in the midst of September. At their first audience the King declared what the business was for which he had called them, speaking to this purpose: that he had to his great charge recovered the bishoprics (their lands) forth of the hands of those that possessed them, and bestowed the same upon such as he hoped would prove worthy of their places; but since he could not make them bishops, nor could they assume that honour to themselves, and that in Scotland there was not a sufficient number to enter on that charge, he had called them to England, that being consecrated themselves they might at their return give ordination to those at home, and so their adversaries' mouths be stopped, who said that he did take upon him to create bishops, and bestow spiritual offices, which he never did nor would presume to do, acknowledging that authority to belong to Christ alone, and those He had authorized with His power.

"The Archbishop answering in the name of the rest, that they were willing to obey his Majesty's desire, and only feared that the Church of Scotland, because of old usurpations,¹ might take this for a sort of subjection to the Church of England. The King said, that he had provided sufficiently against that; for neither should the Archbishop of Canterbury nor York, who were the only pretenders, have hand in the business, but consecration should be used by the Bishops of London, Ely, and Bath. The Scots bishops, thanking his Majesty for the care he had for their Church, and professing their willingness to obey what he would command, the 21st of October was appointed to be the time, and the Chapel of London House the place of consecration.

"A question in the meantime was moved by Dr. Andrewes, Bishop of Ely, touching the consecration of the Scottish bishops, who, as he said, 'must first be ordained presbyters, as having received no ordination from a bishop.' The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr.

¹ In the eleventh and twelfth centuries when Canterbury and York claimed metropolitan jurisdiction over Scotland.

Bancroft, who was by, maintained 'that thereof there was no necessity, seeing that where bishops could not be had, the ordination given by the presbyters must be esteemed lawful; otherwise that it might be doubted if there were any lawful vocation in most of the Reformed Churches.' This applauded to by the other bishops, Ely acquiesced, and at the day and in the place appointed the three Scottish bishops were consecrated."¹

These three bishops, on their return to Scotland, consecrated, without reordaining them, the occupants of the other sees: the parish clergy were all left in possession, without reordination, and continued to take part in all subsequent ordinations, the bishops in each case presiding. This went on for twenty-eight years; and thus were rectified any irregularities which may, between 1560 and 1610, have crept into the presbyterial succession.

The restoration of episcopacy was much disliked by an important party in the Scottish Church, and perhaps was not enthusiastically loved by many; but no secession whatever took place on account of it. Every minister in Scotland submitted; and the system would no doubt have continued to the present day had it not been for the illegal proceedings of James I. and Charles I. who (even when the things which they proposed were good in themselves) acted so as gravely to discredit and compromise the bishops, and make the entire system wear the appearance of a scheme for utilizing the most independent Church in Christendom as an instrument of arbitrary power. But, as the Bishop of Salisbury has been careful to point out, those "precedents of 1610" which the Lambeth Conference deemed might be allowable were not the actions of the king, but only the steps taken for the closer union of the two National Churches by such stout champions of episcopacy as Archbishop Bancroft and Bishop Andrewes. The Lambeth Conference pronounced only on the action of the *English Church*, which really stretched a good many points to secure a result which even then was felt,

¹ Spottiswood, *History of the Church of Scotland*, anno 1610.

in the interests of both Churches and of both nations, to be desirable.¹

The Lambeth Resolution (No. 75) is the voice of the whole Anglican episcopate; but it must not be forgotten that the branch of the Anglican Church most immediately concerned, the Scottish Episcopal Church, has been moving too. So early as 1884 the Episcopalian synods of St. Andrews and Aberdeen expressed themselves favourable to the consideration of terms of reunion with the Presbyterian Churches of their country. The late Bishop Ewing, of Argyll and the Isles, and still more perseveringly and powerfully, the late Bishop Charles Wordsworth, of St. Andrews, looked forward to a National Church combining the best features of both systems. The late Bishop Wilkinson took up Bishop Wordsworth's mantle; the whole Scottish episcopate anticipated, as well as followed, the advice of the Lambeth Conference to cultivate friendly relations with Presbyterians; all the bishops are members of the Scottish Christian Unity Association, which consists of eminent ministers and laymen of the Church of Scotland, the United Free Church of Scotland, and the Scottish Episcopal Church; while agreement to treat the pulpits of the four Scottish Universities as open ground has enabled the bishops, and other eminent Anglican divines of all schools, to come into a kind of contact with the Scottish Presbyterian to which he is peculiarly susceptible. Moreover, the very poverty of the Scottish Episcopal Church,² the non-existence in her of those practical abuses under which the Church of England groans, her admirable system of lay representation, the development of diocesan synods, their independent spirit, the activity of her boards, her zeal for higher as well as for elementary education, her ever-growing fervour for missions to the heathen abroad and for social work at home, her high-souled determination not to take any step that might either help on disestablishment or retard

¹ Bishop of Salisbury, *Unity and Fellowship*—Home Reunion (Scotland), 1910, pp. 33-54.

² Professor Milligan, *Moderator's Address*, 1882.

Presbyterian reunion (though she might easily have made capital for herself in both these ways), and along with these things the beauty of her worship and the general moderation of her ritual, are all helping in the same direction. Of course there are extremists on both sides, and quite lately some very regrettable things have been said and published, as if on purpose to make mischief and check that growth of mutual amity which is the proper precursor of reunion; these, however, are but pin-pricks, irritating for the moment, but not sufficient to impair the growing strength of a wide-spread movement. The experience of the writer is that Mr. Hannan's paper in the January number of the *Church Quarterly Review* is a much truer expression of the view in the Scottish Episcopal Church. From the Church of Scotland there have emanated, within the past few months, three theological works of unusual interest, Dr. McAdam Muir's *Modern Substitutes for Christianity*, Dr. Andrew Miller's *Problem of Theology*, and Dr. Donald Macmillan's *The Aberdeen Doctors*; and all three, as they come from earnest, though not "High Church," advocates of the wider reunion bear witness, more or less direct, to the cry for it. This is naturally less direct in Dr. Muir, owing to the nature of his subject, but one hears its undertone in all his glowing periods. Dr. Miller states in powerful terms the fundamental principle:—

"The Church, in its ideal, is a visible body, united and organic, the incarnation of the Spirit of Christ in a material world. The Church in its actuality, in the process of evolution, has become divided into sections: but in each vital section the Spirit is working, and each section, so far as it is true to its function, retains the implicit ideal, and is striving, consciously or unconsciously, after that ultimate unity which alone can secure the fulness of the Divine blessing. The function of the Church is the evolution of the spiritual man, which can only be done in community, for the individual severed from the community is cut off from the influence of the Spirit, who alone giveth life. The truths. . . wrought out through the spiritual struggles of the early centuries,

are accepted by every one of the severed sections of the Church, and these doctrines lie at the basis of the highest man has attained, or can attain, in every phase of the rich variety of his spiritual life."¹

The "Aberdeen doctors"—of whom the most celebrated was Dr. John Forbes, the pioneer labourer in the field of historical theology, and the author of a very notable *Irenicum*—were a group of Royalist divines who illustrated the University and City of Aberdeen in the reign of Charles I. Accepting, and adorning, the episcopacy established by "the precedents of 1610" under James I., they objected to its overturn by the true Covenanters—the powerful men of 1637, who persecuted their king and their bishops rather than were persecuted by them—and on the triumph, for a season, of the Covenant they were deposed and scattered. It is significant to find so stout a Presbyterian as Dr. Macmillan pointing out now that, in the positions which they held alike on doctrine, worship, and government, the Aberdeen doctors were right and their opponents wrong, and roundly declaring that they (and not either the extreme Laudians or the Covenanting zealots) "really expressed the national spirit, and embodied the leading characteristics of the Scottish people."² This is a remarkable admission, and not the less remarkable that it gives a frank and popular expression to views which have been held by all the greater historians of Scotland, but which neither the cultivated Moderates of the eighteenth century, nor even the potent spell of Sir Walter Scott—whose *Scottish* novels are as accurate as they are delightful—have hitherto seemed able to instil into the mind of the ordinary Scotsman.

Alongside of such books as these, and indeed anterior to them by more than a generation, has been the notable leavening of Presbyterian worship in Scotland with elements which were formerly regarded as prelatic and unlawful. The use of instrumental music has become only too universal. Hymns threaten to oust the old-

¹ pp. 172-3.

² *The Aberdeen Doctors*, p. 84.

fashioned Psalms in metre. The chanting of the Psalms in prose, the congregational saying or singing of the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, and the Ten Commandments with their responses have all been authorized. Prayers are read in many of the chief churches. Both in Edinburgh and Glasgow several parish churches are open for private prayer: in some there is daily service. The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland at its celebration of Holy Communion in St. Giles's, Edinburgh, stands up and professes its faith by reciting the Nicene Creed. The observance of the Christian year is fairly common, and hymns suitable to its chief festivals are provided in the hymn-books authorized by both Assemblies. Greater attention is paid to the architecture and interior arrangement of churches: almost all the new churches are provided with a structural chancel. The Scottish Ecclesiological Society draws its membership, the largest of any such Society in the British Isles, from all the Scottish Churches, and discusses what might have been expected to be burning questions in the steady light of historical research. Recent years have seen its theory become accepted practice alike in the new churches and in the restored cathedrals of Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dunblane, Brechin, and Dunkeld, and in the fine old parish churches of Linlithgow and St. Andrews. These things are not reunion, but they have removed difficulties out of the way to it, and they predispose men's minds towards it.

IV.

It is too soon to pronounce what the results may be of the conferences on reunion now going on between the United Free Church and the Church of Scotland. The Scottish Episcopal Church has wisely resolved to do nothing that might hinder an amalgamation. As between the two conferring Churches, the differences are at once less and greater than those which till recently divided them. They are less. The bitterness engendered by the disruption, and more recently by agitations for disestablishment, have in large measure died away. In

the Church of Scotland, patronage, which for a hundred and fifty years was an occasion of division, was abolished in 1874; and a long series of judicial decisions have declared the freedom and independence of the Church courts within their own sphere. There is no longer any Presbyterian Church in Scotland which is bound, as the United Presbyterian Church was bound, to the voluntary principle. In the United Free Church the lawfulness of Church establishments is an open question; nor can this Church continue to call for disendowment. It has received from the State, through a Royal Commission, a considerable amount of property which in one sense was its own but which the House of Lords had declared to belong legally to the Free Church remnant. It has found, moreover, by hard experience the impossibility of providing, with all its splendid liberality, for the spiritual needs of the country districts. Neither for disestablishment nor for disendowment does there appear to be any strong desire on the part of the Scottish people. From this point of view the time might be considered favourable for effecting a settlement acceptable to all parties on the basis of a National Church on the lines laid down in the great statutes of 1567 and 1592, and accepted by the ancestors of both the conferring Churches in 1690, with extended liberties more amply guaranteed.

The differences are less: but they are greater too. The question is forced upon us, Do the two Churches—or does the United Free Church—occupy anything like the old positions? The “subordinate standards” of both are still the same—the Westminster Confession, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, the Directory for Public Worship, the Form of Church Government. In both Churches these documents are held with a large measure of freedom. But the United Free Church, in both its constituent parts, has been for a long time in separation from the State, and in more or less intimate alliance with English Nonconformity. Its Presbyterian constitution has in no way been impaired, its documents

still declare ordination to be "the act of the presbytery," and that "they allow no power to the people, but only to the pastors of the Church to appoint or ordain Church officers"¹; but one of its most eminent ministers, the principal of a theological college, has recently elaborated the Independents' theory that the ministerial authority belongs in the first instance to the community of Christians, and to the ministers only by delegation from the general body, and moreover that each local Church is, or originally was, independent of the main body.² These views are not carried out in the practice of his Church, but the fact that they are thus disseminated from the high places of the United Free Church may well occasion some alarm among those of us who desire to stand by the genuine Presbyterian doctrine, and "continue to exhibit care as to the form and intention of ordination to the ministry."³

Nor is this all. In 1905-6, the United Free Church, under the pressure of the adverse judgement of the House of Lords, and thinking chiefly how it might protect itself against another of the kind, enacted,

"as a fundamental rule of this Church, that in dependence on the grace of God, recognizing the authority of the Word of God contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the supreme and unchangeable standard, and looking to the Head of the Church for the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, *this Church* has the sole and exclusive right and power from time to time to *alter, change, add to, or modify* her constitution and laws, subordinate standards and formulas, and to determine what these are, and to unite with other Christian Churches; always in conformity with the Word of God, and also with the safeguards for deliberate action and legislation provided by the Church herself—of which conformity the Church herself, acting through her courts, shall be the sole judge—and under a sense of direct responsibility to the ever-living Head of the Church, and of duty towards all the Church's members."

¹ Acts of Assembly, 1698, sess. 5.

² Dr. T. M. Lindsay, *The Church and the Ministry*. See Bishop Gore's use of it in *Orders and Unity*.

³ *Conference of Bishops of the Anglican Communion*, 1908.

"All the members" of what Church? Of the United Free Church only, or of the Church Catholic? Has any one branch of the mystic Vine a right to disregard all the other branches? Is it as against the interference of the Law Courts only that this Act is to be read? Does it extend to the doctrines of the Nicene Creed, every one of which, with the determinations of "the first four and most excellent councils,"¹ is embodied in the Westminster Confession? It is obvious that explanation and assurances are needful if the conferring Churches are to "preserve" as hitherto "the Faith in its integrity and purity."² But here comes Professor Denney, one of the foremost theologians in the United Free Church, dismissing as "the doctrinal basis of reunion," not only the Nicene Creed, but even that core of all the creeds, the Threefold Name in which we were baptized, and suggesting "that the symbol of the Church's unity might be expressed thus: I believe in God through Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Saviour!"³ This suggestion was made in the autumn of 1908: it was not dreamt of in May of that year when the General Assembly invited the United Free Church to the conferences now in progress. It can hardly render their task easier.

JAMES COOPER.

¹ *Second Helvetic Confession*—accepted by the Church of Scotland in 1566 and 1638.

² *Conference of Bishops of the Anglican Communion*, 1908.

³ *Jesus and the Gospel*, pp. 391-398.