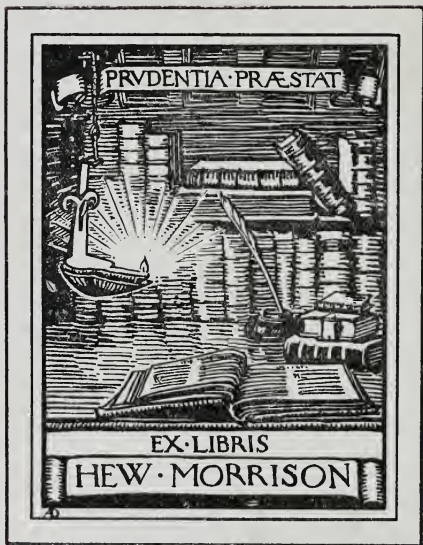




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LETTERS

AND

OTHER DOCUMENTS,

ON THE SUBJECT OF

A NEW TRANSLATION

OF

THE SACRED SCRIPTURES

INTO

Gaelic:

WITH NOTES;

BY THE

REV. DR THOMAS ROSS,

MINISTER OF LOCHBROOM.

EDINBURGH:

PRINTED BY JOHN MOIR, ROYAL BANK CLOSE.

1821.



LAURISTON CASTLE
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LETTERS, &c.

REPORT of the PROCEEDINGS of the GENERAL ASSEMBLY 1820.

Extracted from the Inverness Journal of 2d June 1820.

SATURDAY, *May 27,*

THE Assembly next took into consideration the overture from the Synod of Ross, requesting the Assembly to rescind the Act passed last year, prohibiting the use of any Gaelic Translation of the Bible, but that of the Society for Propagating Religious Knowledge, undertaken by Dr Stewart.

On the overture being read, a Clergyman of Ross-shire rose, and stated, that he had engaged to defend that overture before the House. He mentioned, that a great part of the people of Ross-shire could not understand Dr Stewart's translation, and that the type was so small, and the paper so coarse, that the generality could not read it. Lest the Assembly should be surprised why any of the Highlanders should not understand their own language, he informed them that almost every district in the Highlands had a separate dialect; and that were he, who had the Ross-shire dialect, to preach in Perthshire or Argyleshire, he would be unintelligible to the congregation who heard him. He told the Assembly, that Dr Ross had been for a long time employed in a translation of the Scriptures, adapted to the dialect of Ross-shire, and he read various recommendations of it from synods, presby-

teries, and individual clergymen. He thought, as we allowed those who promulgated the Scriptures in China and India to give to the inhabitants the Scriptures in all the separate dialects of their language, it was unreasonable to deprive any part of our own countrymen of the same privilege. That to indulge any body of men with a monopoly of translating the Scriptures, was as dangerous and hurtful as the monopoly of the trade to China and India. (*A laugh.*) He was a Highlander, and strongly attached to the Highlands; he loved the claymore too (*laughter,*) and that chiefly because it was double-edged, and cut two ways (*laughter;*) and that if he had used any weapon of argument in what he had said which they could turn against himself, he had no objections to them doing so.

Dr Irvine said, he thought a more unnecessary and improper overture was never laid upon the table. One even of that very Synod of Ross, and many eminent scholars in that county, had expressed their unqualified approbation of *Dr Stewart's* work, and of its being in every respect adapted to the dialect of the inhabitants. Were this overture listened to, what would be the consequence? Why, this, that as in the county of Ross various dialects prevail, and as this translation of *Dr Ross* cannot be adapted to them all, the same complaint would never cease to exist. The eastern Highlanders would complain that they could not understand the translation in the western dialect, and those of the west that they could not comprehend that in the eastern. He was certain that the *Rev. Gentleman* spoke erroneously when he said the Highlanders of Perth could not understand his Ross-shire dialect. Besides, it was totally impossible to accede to any such overture. If every one who thinks fit is allowed to make translations of the Scriptures, there is every danger of misleading and bewildering the people. (*Hear.*) There are many preachers in Ross-shire who can neither write nor read Gaelic; and perhaps the *Rev. Gentleman* himself is not so skilled in the language as to be capable of judging of the merits of any work in it. In this case what were they to do? How could they submit to their judgment an opinion of the orthodoxy and purity of any translation; and God forbid, said the *Rev. Gentleman*, that we should allow any translation to

go abroad in which there may be errors of doctrine or essential defects of any kind.

Dr M'Farlane observed, that the only reason why we were called upon to repeal the prohibition of last Assembly was, that this translation was unintelligible to a part of the county of Ross; and that it is so, because the type is bad and the paper coarse. It was well known, that there was not a great town in Scotland in which there was not a chapel where Gaelic was preached every Sunday, and which people attended who came from every quarter and district of the Highlands, and yet these congregations are well attended, and the people never complained of not understanding the clergyman. But granting the people of Ross had a difficulty in understanding that translation, was it possible they could allow a version to be made for every separate district or locality. Not to speak of the Highlands, would we allow the Bible to be translated into every jargon and provincial dialect of the Lowlands of Scotland. Besides, would it not be highly dangerous to permit any translation of the Scriptures to be circulated. Surely the best way to occasion the corruption of religious principles was to run the risk of poisoning the very source of them. And were there not many attempts made by preachers to gloss over and alter the orthodox meaning of Scripture; and yet will we suffer a version of these Scriptures, which can so easily be made a vehicle for heretical doctrines, to go forth to the world without being sifted and examined. He would therefore move that the Assembly do dismiss the appeal.

Dr Cooke seconded the motion. He observed it must be known to every one at all acquainted with ecclesiastical history, that there has never been a more successful mode of propagating heresies than that of venting translations of the Scriptures. The motion was agreed to.

LETTER I.

To the Editor of the Inverness Journal.

June 25. 1820.

SIR,—The interest you always take in whatever regards the improvement of Highlanders, affords me the fullest confidence in your giving publicity to a matter that most deeply affects the best interests of our poor countrymen. There is no man acquainted with the Gaelic language, who knows not, that the dialect of the Gaelic language into which the Sacred Scriptures have been translated, is in a great measure unintelligible to the people who reside in the counties of Ross, Sutherland, and a great part of Inverness-shire. This induced some clergymen eminently qualified for the work, to direct a great part of their time and labour in the execution of a translation of the Sacred Scriptures into the language best understood in those districts; and the Synod of Ross transmitted the following overture to the last General Assembly:—

“ The Synod of Ross having observed, with much satisfaction, the anxious desire entertained by all descriptions of people within their bounds, for the knowledge of the Word of God in their native language, and the hourly increasing capacity which they are acquiring for the perusal of the Scriptures, with understanding and delight; considering also the generous and benevolent exertions made by all descriptions of Christians throughout the British Empire for the extension of the Gospel; considering also that many of the people in their bounds are removed at a great distance from places of public worship, and bereaved of every earthly means of enjoying the light and knowledge of the word of God in their own language; viewing also with great alarm, the exertions made by the enemies of religion, for the extension of infidelity, error, blasphemy, and irreligion, towards overturning the great foundation of the faith and hope of Christians, cannot now but lament, that any means, by which a knowledge of the word of God could be extensively and usefully promulgated, have been opposed by any of the friends of Christianity or of social order in this country; considering also, that from a variety of circumstances, as extraordinary as

they are unaccountable, various obstacles have been thrown in the way, to retard the publication of a translation of the Scriptures by the Rev. Dr. Thomas Ross, minister in Lochbroom, a man eminently qualified for translating the Bible into that dialect of the Gaelic language best understood in this district of the Church;---feel themselves called upon, by every legal and constitutional means in their power, to forward and promote the publication of a work so much wanted, so loudly called for, and so anxiously expected, by every considerate and impartial friend of the Gospel. Having also good reason to believe, that the wants of the Christian public can be supplied by this translation, within a much shorter period of time than by any other, the Synod therefore humbly overture the Very Reverend the General Assembly, praying that they may be pleased to express their approbation of Dr Ross's labours in this great undertaking, and give permission to all Ministers, Teachers, and private Christians connected with the Church of Scotland, to use this translation of the Bible, in those districts of the country where it shall be best understood, or otherwise preferred; provided always that the author shall be considered bound to submit his translation to the examination of persons properly qualified to judge of its correctness; and that these persons do report to the General Assembly, declaring that the work is executed in such a manner, in all respects, as shall render it deserving of the countenance and patronage of this Church."

When the overture was discussed before the Assembly, on the 27th ult. some clerical individuals spoke on the subject in a manner as disrespectful to the Synod of Ross as discreditable to themselves, by treating with total indifference the spiritual wants of the inhabitants of the North; and by expressing an avowed intention of countenancing that monopoly of translating the Sacred Scriptures into the Gaelic language, which has been recently made by a certain description of consecrated translators. The chief object of this communication is to state one fact—that the following motion which was made in the General Assembly on this subject, was withdrawn solely on the express stipulation, that as soon as a translation of the Sacred Scriptures into the Gaelic best understood in the northern district of the Church, should be executed

and laid on the table of the General Assembly, they would appoint proper judges to examine its execution ; and, on their report, give it that countenance it might deserve.

“ Moved—That it is inexpedient to impose any prohibitory restrictions on the zeal and talents of the Ministers of our Church : That there are in the Highlands of Scotland several provincial dialects of the Gaelic language, in a great measure unintelligible in other districts : That the Gaelic translation of the Holy Scriptures by the Society, &c. is highly deserving of commendation : That it consists, however, with the knowledge of several of the Members of this House, that there are several districts of the North, in which this translation is not generally understood. Be it therefore Resolved—That all Ministers of this Church be left at liberty to use that translation of the Holy Scriptures which, from their own personal knowledge, they find best understood in the district of country where they reside ; provided always that it be with the consent of the Presbytery of the bounds : And that such Translator be bound to submit his translation to the examination of persons properly qualified to judge of its correctness ; and that such persons do report to the General Assembly, declaring that the work is executed in all respects so as to deserve the countenance and patronage of this Church.”

It is hoped, therefore, that every member of the independent Church of Scotland will feel himself bound to resist the unjust and unconstitutional monopoly of the Word of God, now attempted, by a few chartered translators, into Gaelic ; that they will not allow themselves to be arrogantly dictated to, in a matter of such vital importance to the spiritual interests of the people committed to their charge—far less become the ignoble instruments, in the hands of hypocrites, to render rankling malice, and mortified pride, triumphant over truth and justice.

A MEMBER OF LAST GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

LETTER II.

To the Editor of the Inverness Journal.

SIR—As a friend to the Highlands of Scotland, and to free discussion, you will, no doubt, give a place in your Paper to the following remarks on the Report given in your Journal of the 2d June, of the proceedings in the General Assembly on the Overture of the Synod of Ross respecting the Gaelic Bible.

It would be justly considered as very gross affectation in me, should I pretend to deny that I feel a personal interest in the subject. Nevertheless I will say, without the fear of successful contradiction, that my reasons for troubling you at present are chiefly of a public nature, and arise out of measures which appear to me at least to have a tendency equally subversive of the liberty of the subject, as injurious to the best interests of religion and morality.—How far my views are correct or otherwise, it will be my duty in the sequel to shew.

About five years ago, being extremely desirous, for reasons fully explained to the public, to see an Edition of the Sacred Scriptures, on a larger type, and finer paper, and in a more convenient and respectable form, than any yet in existence, and also purified from some corruptions, and freed from other exceptions which might be charged against the present translation—I formed the resolution of publishing an Edition in a Quarto form, and possessing all the advantages by which, with the experience of above 20 years in studying, transcribing, and printing the Gaelic language, I could distinguish it. Having also learned some years before, from Dr Stuart, that he was anxious to revise his admirable translation, I wrote to him on the first of January 1816, intimating my intention, and soliciting his concurrence and co-operation.

Dr Stuart thought it his duty to consult the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, before he would answer my letter. The Society instantly took the alarm, and, fearing that the publication of my edition would diminish the demand for their Bibles, they put an Advertisement into the Newspapers, to intimate their

intention of publishing a Quarto Edition of the Bible, and to bespeak the public favour exclusively to *their* Translation; and finding that I was still determined to go on with my Work, they threw themselves into the arms of the General Assembly, and obtained, from that Supreme Ecclesiastical Court, an interim Act, which has been since renewed annually, prohibiting the use of any other version of the Scriptures in any Church, Chapel, or School, within the Church of Scotland, but that of the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge.

This Act gave great offence to many respectable individuals, and Presbyteries, in the Highlands, as an arbitrary encroachment upon their liberty, which was equally ill judged as it was uncalled for—an assumption of right on the part of the General Assembly which was equally partial in its object, as it was rash in its adoption, and hurtful in its tendency and operation—and it produced a variety of public and private testimonies in favour of my undertaking, among which was the Overture from the Synod of Ross, which was the subject of discussion at the last General Assembly, by which the overture was dismissed, and the prohibition continued.

It is not my intention at present to engage in any laboured exposure of the partiality of this decision, though it is notorious that the Book in favour of which it was given has never been examined by the General Assembly or by a Committee appointed by them—that it does not indeed exist—and that it may contain blasphemy when published, for aught that the last General Assembly can know; neither do I mean at all to dwell on the harshness of opposing so rudely an attempt to promote the diffusion of useful knowledge among any class of human beings, by a critical and practical exposition of the Sacred Scriptures, although a measure equally unexpected and unprecedented in the annals of our Church; neither is it by any means necessary for me to shew the perfect harmlessness of the Act in regard to my intended Work—both because it is a thing altogether unusual to carry Commentaries to the Pulpits of our Churches or Chapels, or to study them in the classes of our literary seminaries, and because it is a thing completely *ultra vires* of the General Assembly to prevent the publication. The *attempt*, indeed, is sufficiently frightful; but, we have cause to be very thankful, the power does not exist.

My present object is to make some remarks upon the argu-

ments by which the opposers of the Overture succeeded in gaining over the most dignified, the most learned, and the most intelligent Court upon earth, to so extraordinary a decision.

The speakers on the occasion were, Dr Irvine of Little Dunkeld, Dr Macfarlane of Drymen, and Dr Cooke of Laurencekirk.

Dr Irvine began his speech by an averment of so very strange a complexion, that it is necessary to quote *his words*, for fear of misrepresenting him. He said “ he thought a more unnecessary and improper overture was never laid upon the table. One even of that very Synod of Ross, and many eminent scholars in the county, had expressed their unqualified approbation of Dr Stuart’s work, and of its being in every respect adapted to the dialect of the inhabitants.” Now, if this statement be correct, the conduct of the Synod of Ross must appear to be extremely improper and inconsistent, in bringing forward the present overture. But how stands the fact? Why, in direct opposition to the averment; and Dr Irvine has ultroneously brought upon himself (from what motive he knows best) the awful responsibility of having ventured an assertion in the face of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and of the whole world, which is in direct opposition to truth! I have the best authority to say, that no overture of the Synod of Ross ever expressed an unqualified, or a qualified approbation of Dr Stuart’s Translation. Let Dr Irvine extricate himself as he best can.

That eminent scholars in that and other counties should have talked favourably of it, is a matter of no surprise at all; but it has nothing to do with the present argument. Every competent judge must think and talk of Dr Stuart’s translation of the Scriptures as a work of extraordinary merit; none can think more highly of it than the writer of these strictures. As the work of an individual, or rather of three individuals, it is a wonderful performance—a performance which has laid the Highlands of Scotland under unspeakable obligations to Dr Stuart, and which will hand down his name to posterity with immortal honour—a performance, from the merit of which I should be the last to detract, and the first to promote its usefulness, or proclaim its praise.

At the same time, it is not a perfect work—it is not such a work as is unsusceptible of improvement—it is not such a work as supersedes the propriety of all further examination or review—

and it is certainly not such a work as will justify the binding of men's souls and consciences exclusively to its dictates by a law.

To talk indeed of perfection in a translation, is the height of absurdity and folly; and should be the exclusive privilege of that Church in which ignorance is esteemed the mother of devotion. All translations are necessarily imperfect—all translations differ in less or more from each other, and from the original from which they are made. All, therefore, that any reasonable man can expect in a translation, is the nearest attainable approximation towards perfection. Now, that such an approximation should be made in a first attempt to translate the whole Sacred Scriptures, is an idea, the absurdity of which can be surpassed only by the wickedness of preventing it by any subsequent attempts. I speak these things as to wise men; and I call upon every candid, pious, and independent member, not only of the General Assembly, but of our Church and nation, to judge what I say. There is no cause so bad, but it will find advocates in some men. But the reproach will not rest on our venerable Church, of supporting a doctrine so pernicious and so horrid.

On this point I cannot appeal with greater confidence to the bosom of any human being, than to that of the respectable author of the translation before us; a man whose learning and correctness are exceeded only by his modesty and diffidence of his own talents. Candidly will he confess the imperfection of his favourite and important work; deeply did he lament, and bitterly did he complain (*audivimus ipsi*) that he would not be allowed by the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge to introduce the many alterations and corrections into the second edition of that work, by which, no doubt, it would have been greatly improved. That edition, however, (as well as the first,) with all its confessed and lamented imperfections, is the only Gaelic translation of the Words of Eternal Life which the General Assembly will allow to be put into the hands of persons who understand only the Gaelic language; or it is a translation not yet executed, and of which, consequently, no human being can know the import or the merits.

I have only to add on this head, that Dr Stuart's translation (I say not whether it is more faithful or otherwise,) differs in many instances from the English authorised version; so that the arguments used in favour of it in the General Assembly, possess the

amusing properties of the claymore, alluded to by the Ross-shire Member—that they cut with two edges; for if our English translation keeps the good Christians of the South orthodox, the Gaelic translation must make us Highlanders of the North heretics; or if the Gaelic translation makes us sound Christians, (which is surely the argument of its supporters,) the English authorised translation, which differs from it, must endanger the orthodoxy of the people of the South!

Dr Irvine proceeds to depict the consequences of attempting any other translation besides that which he approves of, by stating, that a translation which is adapted to one district of Ross cannot be adapted to another; how much less to all the other parts of the Highlands. And Dr M'Farlane follows in the same strain, by insinuating, that a Gaelic translation of the Scriptures which could be understood (for this is, to be adapted, though not *peculiarly* adapted to a district) in Ross-shire, could not be understood in any other part of the Highlands; and if one translation differing from the present were to be allowed, there must be also a separate version made for every separate district or locality; and this he compares, in manifest ridicule, to the absurdity of translating the Bible into every jargon and provincial dialect in the Lowlands.

Now, the answer to all this is extremely simple: It is perfectly possible to execute a translation of the Scriptures, which shall be adapted, though not adapted solely to every district of the county of Ross, and at the same time be intelligible wherever the Gaelic language is known. Such does the translation profess to be which was the subject of the overture of the Synod of Ross. Such is not the translation by Dr Stuart, published by the Society. One of the greatest objections to that translation is, that it is into Gaelic of a much too local nature,—that it is peculiarly adapted to the Highlands of Perthshire, while it is but partially intelligible in other parts of the Highlands. To the existence and weight of this objection, you have already recorded the testimony of the Synods of Ross and of Glenelg. Let us now fetch a witness from the Synod of Argyle, and we shall find that a three-fold cord is not easily broken. Of these, a most respectable one is furnished by Dr Samuel Johnson, in his *Journey to the Western Isles*, p. 360. (see Murphy's edition of his Works, 1801, Vol. VIII.) Speaking of Mr Hector M'Lean, the minister

of Col, he says : “ Mr M'Lean has the reputation of great learning; he is seventy-seven years old, but not infirm, with a look of venerable dignity excelling what I remember in any other man. His conversation was not unsuitable to his appearance, &c. Mention was made of the Earse translation of the New Testament, which has been lately published, and of which the learned Mr M'Queen of Skye spoke with commendation; but Mr M'Lean said he did not use it, because he could make the text *more intelligible* to his auditors by an extemporary version.”—(Mark the inference of this great man)—“ FROM THIS I INFERRED THAT THE LANGUAGE OF THE TRANSLATION WAS NOT THE LANGUAGE OF THE ISLE OF COL.”

The argument of Dr Irvine and of Dr M'Farlane on this point, therefore, amounts exactly to this, that if a translation of the Bible into English had been executed by a Minister of the Synod of Moray, in the peculiar dialect of that county, though possessing uncommon merit in every other respect, and if a very general desire should be expressed to have that translation altered, so as to free it from some local phrases, some obsolete, barbarous, or unintelligible vocables, or other peculiarities, which rendered it much less acceptable and useful than a translation of the Bible in such a country as this ought to be; and if a motion were made upon an overture from the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale in the General Assembly, to that effect; two ministers of the Synod of Moray should get up to defend their own translation, in these words: “ Were this overture listened to, what would be the consequence? Why this, that as in the county of Lothian, and even in the city of Edinburgh, various dialects prevail, and as one translation cannot be adapted to them all, the same complaint would never cease to exist. The eastern inhabitants of the county, or of the city, would complain that they could not understand the translation in the western dialect, and those of the west that they could not comprehend that in the eastern.” Or in these words: “ But granting that the people of Mid-Lothian had a difficulty in understanding our Morayshire translation, is it possible we can allow a version to be made for every separate district or locality? Will we allow the Bible to be translated into every jargon and provincial dialect of the kingdom of Scotland? The thing is impossible: the worst conse-

quences would arise out of such a measure. I therefore move that the Assembly do dismiss the appeal."

Would not the answer to all this be as simple as language could make it from the movers of the overture? We are far from wishing to have many translations of the Scriptures into our native tongue, we want only *one* translation. But we wish that that one translation should be executed in the best and purest possible English; in that style which is on all hands allowed to be the most correct, the most classical, and the most generally understood over the whole nation, particularly in the best circles. We know that there is such a thing as classical English,—that there is such a combination of articulate sounds as is, or ought to be, understood by every individual to whom the English language is the mother-tongue,—such as a native of this kingdom would blush to betray his ignorance of. We know that the present translation of the Scriptures, with all its merits, and these are many and great, is not done in that classical language,—that it contains many obsolete, foreign, barbarous, and obscure vocables and expressions, which offend the ears of the English scholar, and are unintelligible by the vulgar beyond the limited spot within which it was composed.

We wish, therefore, to have these defects remedied,—to have these objections removed,—we wish to have our translation of the Bible executed in the best possible style,—brought as near perfection as the nature of our language, and the talents and labours of our countrymen entitle us to expect,—that, as in every other respect, the Bible has the pre-eminence over all other books, it should also possess the peculiar distinction of being the **STANDARD OF OUR LANGUAGE**. We know that this can happen only by the united efforts of persons whose favourite study is the Bible, and who not only possess sufficient enthusiasm to spur them on, but also, from other circumstances, enjoy peculiar facilities for prosecuting such an undertaking. If such persons are happily found,—if such persons voluntarily come forward, and offer us their labours, their time, their talents, and all the fruits of many years experience and application, without fee or reward,—let us avail ourselves of so desirable an occurrence,—let us profit by every hint which such persons may suggest for the improvement of our version of the Scriptures. Let us at least throw no discouraging obstacles in their

way; let us refrain from aggravating the unavoidable difficulties which the ardour of their minds, and the importance of the object which they have in view, will have to surmount; and if we will not vouchsafe them our active assistance, let us not deny them our God speed in the glorious undertaking.

I will not, Sir, encroach any farther on your patience, and that of your readers, on the present occasion; but if you will indulge me with a corner, I shall endeavour to meet the other and more serious arguments of our Rev. Doctors against the improvement of our Gaelic Bible as soon as a leisure hour shall permit me.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

THOMAS ROSS.

Lochbroom-Manse, 15th July 1820.

LETTER III.

To the Editor of the Inverness Journal.

SIR,—Some kind friend has sent me your very useful paper of the 21st ult. for which I beg leave to return my sincere thanks.

In this paper is a letter addressed to you, dated Lochbroom Manse, 15th July, and signed THOMAS ROSS—that is, I presume, the Rev. Doctor Thomas Ross, Minister of Lochbroom. I happen to be but imperfectly acquainted with the Doctor, though our acquaintance began many years ago. I always, however, thought his talents above mediocrity—I respected his industry and assiduity as a scholar—I never doubted his piety and zeal, and philanthropy, though a little tinged with conceit, and perhaps disturbed by ambition. I am bound to consider him as a faithful Minister of the Gospel; and in all these respects worthy of some notice. *Sed nemo omnibus horis sapit*—that is, he is a good horse that never stumbles.

How my old friend came to write, and request of you to publish such a letter, would be altogether inexplicable if he himself had not unfolded the mystery. He says, “his reasons for troubling you at present are chiefly of a public nature.” They are then chiefly of a public nature, and their public nature follows—“and arise out of measures which appear to me at least to have

a tendency equally subversive of the liberty of the subject, as injurious to the best interests of religion and morality." Now, these reasons are weighty indeed; and these measures, though I know not where he found them, are formidable in the extreme. I can hardly persuade myself that the Doctor could be serious when he stated them. I strongly suspect that he has been playing a little upon the fears and credulity of his brethren of the highly respectable Synod of Ross.

Though my Rev. brother has not been more than polite to the venerable Assembly, and to me and my two worthy friends, I believe him to be a courtly well-bred man, though, like many good men, a little irritable, who would not say in presence what he writes in absence: and therefore I shall treat him as a Gentleman, not rendering railing for railing.

I must, then, first say, that I think he would have been better employed in the duties of his extensive parish, to which no man is more attentive, or in preparing his quarto edition of the Gaelic Bible, or in weighing the advice I formerly gave him, than in helping to fill the columns of your paper, perhaps to bring his knowledge, his judgment, his attainments, and his motives, into jeopardy.

I must, secondly, tell him, and his Clerical friends, that I disown the report of my speech on the occasion alluded to, as any thing like even the substance of that speech. I never said that "Dr Stewart's work is in every respect adapted to the dialect of the inhabitants" of Ross-shire. Had it been adapted to some of the Ross or Perthshire dialects, I would be the first man to withhold or withdraw my approbation. But I said, that it is capable of improving the language of Ross-shire.

My reasons for troubling you are not the necessity of rectifying the mistakes of my friend Dr. Ross; for his own letter might do that. It is positively a *felo de se*. It exhibits inconsistencies and wonders which I would not expect from the Doctor, but which, in the judgment of every intelligent reader, furnish a complete antidote to any acid it may contain. My reasons are chiefly to justify the resolution of the General Assembly, even upon the authority of Dr. Ross, and consequently to vindicate myself on a subject so interesting to the Highlanders, whose friend I have been as long and as faithful as he, and whose good opinion I am anxious to deserve and to cultivate.

I do not like the idea of being classed with those who oppose so rudely "an attempt to promote the diffusion of useful knowledge among any class of human beings,"— "a measure," I certainly agree with the Doctor, "equally unexpected and unprecedented in the annals of our Church."

If I well knew where to begin to dissect this singular production from Lochbroom, I would now descend to the operation, determined to keep clear of private reasons, confining my remarks "chiefly" to those of a public nature. But I honestly confess, that though I have been accustomed to examine various works, in various languages, for some years, I feel myself sadly at a loss, where or how to commence my labours in the present case.

First, however, let me say of the General Assembly and myself, that we have done all in our power to diffuse useful knowledge through the Highlands; that we have encouraged directly every legitimate measure for the attainment of an end so desirable; and that, for this purpose, we have watched with incessant care every attempt, under whatever colour, to propagate delusion or error among so interesting a portion of our countrymen, whether by translations or otherwise. In proof of which I appeal to our records, both before and since the Revolution. I refer particularly to the pastoral admonition of the Assembly 1799; to the 16th Act of Assembly 1699, and 17th Act of Assembly 1704, anent Irish Bible and other translations; to the various Acts from 1646 to 1726; to the Acts for establishing Libraries in the Highlands, from 1699 to 1709; to the measures adopted for erecting new Parishes, for establishing Schools, for employing Missionaries and Catechists, for encouraging translations of the Scriptures, Confession of Faith, and Catechisms, and other pious books. In short, I would astonish your readers, were I to recite even the titles of the Acts, and means employed by the Assembly, from the Reformation downward to the present day, to diffuse the Gospel, with all its blessings, civil and religious, through the Highlands and Isles. The Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian knowledge was reared under its nurturing care. It embraced with open arms every man and every measure qualified or calculated to promote the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom.

Dr Ross is either misguided by his passions, or discovers culpable ignorance of the constitution of the Church of which he is a member. He seems to think himself of such importance, (let

him remember the fable of the poor frog,) as to excite the suspicions of the Society and the General Assembly, that he may run away with all the honours of the day. He seems to think that the prohibition of the Assembly respects his non-existent edition or translation of the Gaelic Scriptures exclusively. He has thrown his judgment into a ruinous mistake, that the Society, by some mighty force, moved the Assembly to interdict *his* work. Little does he know the Assembly, or the influence of the Society upon some of its "rocky" sons.

The General Assembly has legally and constitutionally, as I shall just now shew, given its sanction to a Gaelic translation of the Sacred Scriptures, and has permitted it, and it alone, to be employed in the public worship and seminaries of education under its jurisdiction, and prohibited all others to be so employed, till so sanctioned; and it could not do less.

Does he not know, that there is a Confession of Faith and Polity, establishing a certain form of doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, for the Church of Scotland, sanctioned by law, after an arduous and deathful struggle; that its Judicatories have the sole guardianship of religion, morals, and education over all the kingdom; and that, therefore, no translation of the Sacred Oracles can be legally used in public worship without their authority, or that of the State, concurred in by them? If they allow imperfect or improper translations of the Scriptures to be used, against which Dr Ross, except in the case of his own offspring, would be the first to blow the trumpet, they would desert their duty, and violate their oath.

I am not to tell Dr Ross, that there was no translation used in public worship in the British isles, since the Reformation, I might say, before it, without such authority. He knows that our excellent English translation, with all its imperfections, is authorized by Act of Parliament; and that notwithstanding the admission of these imperfections, and the various attempts made to remove them, such is the veneration in which it is justly held, that it still keeps its place in our religious assemblies, and I hope shall do so until the end of time. He knows that various new translations into English, in whole or in part, have been in our own day offered to the public, and are at this moment in our hands, and yet, though some of these are confessedly nearer the originals, and

more consistent with present manners and present language, not one of them has yet found their way into our pulpits.

I shall mention only two of them—that of the four Gospels, by Dr Campbell of Aberdeen ; and that of the Epistles, by Dr Mac-knight of Edinburgh—with both of which, Dr Ross is, I presume, well acquainted. They freely and honestly pointed out the imperfections of our present English version of the New Testament ; but did they abuse the Assembly or the Parliament, because their Acts prohibited their valuable translations from being used in our public worship ? No such thing—they had more sense, more piety, more obedience. Here, I may say, let Dr Ross follow such an illustrious example, and then we shall judge of his performance. He has not, like them, to contend against the habit of two hundred years.

But my present object is to shew, that no Gaelic, or Irish, or Welsh, or Mankish translation of the Scriptures ever was, or ever can be used in our public worship, without proper authority. This is a right inherent in the very essence of a Christian community, whether called an established Church or not.

Though I am aware that my letter is even already too long, yet such is the importance of the subject, in every point of view, that I hope you will allow me to state a few facts, for the satisfaction of my brethren and friends in the Synods of Ross and Glénelg, in the hope that they may set the matter for ever at rest.

It was only in 1543, then, that an Act of Parliament was passed, allowing all persons to read the Old and New Testament in their mother tongue. “ Then,” says Knox, “ might have been seen a Bible lying on almost every gentleman’s table : the New Testament was borne about in many men’s hands.” This is more than can be said of the present generation. The first printed Bible in Scotland was an edition of the Geneva, in folio, by Thomas Basingdyne, Edinburgh, 1576. Three years after, an Act was passed in the sixth Parliament of James VI. subjecting to a penalty every man who had not a Bible and Psalm Book in *the vulgar tongue* ; and shortly after the Lowlands of Scotland became a land of Bibles. On the 27th March 1563, a bill was brought into the English Parliament, to provide that the Bible and the Divine Service might be translated into the Welsh or British tongue, and used in the churches of Wales. In 1567, the New Testament was printed by Henry Durham, a London printer ; and three

years after, the whole Welsh Bible appeared in folio ; a new and improved edition, called Parry's Bible, was published in 1620 ; another, called Bishop Lloyd's Bible, came out in 1690—all under the authority of said Act of Parliament ; and the Bishops of Hereford, St David's, Asaph, Bangor, Landaff, were specially appointed to superintend the translation, and attest its faithfulness. In 1602, when the King of Scotland became the King of England also, the New Testament was then translated into Irish by Dr Daniel, afterwards Archbishop of Tuam, in quarto, and published at the expence of Sir William Usher and the province of Connaught. This edition was persecuted and speedily destroyed by the Popish priests. In 1681, however, a new edition was published at the sole expence of the Hon. Robert Boyle, a name dear to piety and to literature. In 1640, the Old Testament was translated by Bishop Bedell of Kilmore ; but it remained unprinted and unpublished for 40 years ; in 1685, it was published by the exertions of Mr Boyle, who expended L.700 sterling upon such a pious work.

As yet, there was no Highlander to take pity upon his perishing countrymen, who despised the men of books.

Mr Boyle enquired whether the Irish Bible could be understood in the Highlands and Isles, and finding it could, he sent two hundred copies, chiefly to the Highland Clergy, few of whom could read their own language ; and, I am ashamed to say it, some of whom can neither read nor write it yet.

This edition being in the Irish or Celtic character, it was in 1690 re-printed and published in London, in the Roman. This translation from the Irish into the Roman, was done by the best Gaelic scholar of the day, Mr Robert Kirk, minister of Aberfoil, in Monteith.

This was the translation by which I and many others were first taught to read Gaelic ; and, notwithstanding the difference of spelling, is at this moment understood in the Highlands, and even in my neighbourhood, though not so well as Dr Stewart's translation.

Now, this Irish translation came out under the authority of the Irish Church, in the face of the strongest opposition from the Irish and Scottish Priests. It soon received the sanction of the Church of Scotland. In 1699, by an Act of Assembly already noticed, confirmed by another Act passed five years after, a Com-

mittee was appointed to distribute the Irish Bibles, to enquire anent the L.1000 Scots given by the Treasury for binding them, recommending that a fund be provided for publishing a new edition, also for publishing the Irish Psalms in metre, and the Larger Catechism,—that the Synod of Argyle translate the Confession of Faith and the said Catechism into the Irish (i. e. Gaelic) tongue, and exactly notice any typographical errors in the late impression of the Irish Bible, that they may be amended in a new impression. Thus, at the very outset, the General Assembly watched every movement to translate the Scriptures into the language of the Highlands; and it is curious to remark, that, 120 years ago, the language of Ireland and of the Highlands was called Irish, or Erse, being nearly the same, or supposed to be the same.

It was not till 1767 that the New Testament was translated by James Stewart, minister of Killin, father of the present translator, and printed at the expence of the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge, aided by several eminent Gaelic scholars, in different parts of the Highlands, *one of whom was the best Gaelic scholar in Ross-shire, the Minister of Alness, who revised every sheet before publication.* This I state upon the best authority. This translation, though it contained, as might be expected, some Iricisms, and in some instances adhered to the Irish orthography, gave great satisfaction to all who were qualified to judge of its merits.*

It was 1802 before the Old Testament was completed by Dr Stewart, aided, as his father was, not by three, as Dr Ross asserts, but to my knowledge, by all the best of known Gaelic and Hebrew scholars, in the Highlands and Western Isles, from Lewis to Tarbetness, and from Uist to Dunkeld. Every one, indeed, was solicited to lend a helping hand. I myself revised some of its sheets, with a most respectable Clergyman in Mull.

I need hardly observe, that this admirable translation, which took a long time in preparation, much longer time, indeed, than some of our Missionaries would take in learning six foreign languages, and making so many translations of the Scriptures into

* See Historical Sketch of Transactions, &c. by Rev. Mr Johnson and Mr Orme, Secretaries to Perthshire Bible Society.

them, was sanctioned by the General Assembly, that is, by the Church of Scotland. Then was the time for Dr Ross and others to come forward with their objections, if they had any. However, I do not say that they are precluded now.

Here I may add, that in 1745 an overture was laid before the Assembly, anent Translations and Paraphrases of several passages of the Sacred Scriptures, in verse. This matter was also referred to the several Presbyteries for their opinion, before they could be authorised in public worship. And it was long before these, or translations of them into Gaelic, were duly authorised, as may be seen by the 18th Act of Assembly, 1745, and subsequent Acts.

Here I may notice, that the only other dialect of the Celtic in the British Isles, is that of the Isle of Man. The Scriptures were translated into it by Bishop Wilson, in 1763, and published at the expence of the Society in England for Propagating Christian Knowledge. The Church Catechism Explained was published in the same dialect at least in 1769, and two other editions of the Scriptures were published in 1773 and 1775, all under the care of the Bishop, that is, the church of Sodor and Man.

Thus, Sir, the General Assembly, and every other ecclesiastical authority, superintended and permitted every Celtic translation of the Scriptures now in use in the British Isles; and no man ever considered their doing so as an injury or encroachment upon our rights and liberties, till the days of Dr Ross, except the Popish Hierarchy, who accordingly published translations and other books consistent with its own tenets, and to prevent the heresies of our translations.

The reason of this is obvious: A translation is a kind of preacher, moving from place to place, or rather, which may speak at one and the same time all over the world. The Church is bound by every tie to see that it speak the truth, and nothing but the truth. I need not tell your readers, how different our liberty is in this respect, from that ever yet enjoyed under Papal domination. There is no more restraint imposed upon it, than what is imposed upon Dr Ross and every minister in the Church of Scotland, that they speak or preach sound doctrine according to the standard agreed upon, and solemnly sworn to. The Doctor cannot consider it a grievance to fulfil his sacred obligations. He may labour night and day to improve our present Gaelic tran-

lation ; he may publish as many editions with notes and commentaries as he pleases, at his own peril. But let him remember, that his translations, and notes, and comments, and himself, are under the jurisdiction of that very Assembly, whose power to regulate, or rather preserve, the purity of our faith and worship, he most unaccountably denies. The Assembly, he may rest assured, will not prevent the publication. "The attempt, indeed," says the Doctor, as if there were any made, "is sufficiently frightful : but, we have cause to be very thankful, the power does not exist."

If he will consult our records, he will find that the power to prevent error and blasphemy from being propagated by any Minister in our Church does exist, and has been more than once exercised. There is no accounting for his logic. The very reasons which he gives against our prohibition are just those which I would give in its favour. After mentioning the prohibition, he has this very strange paragraph : "It is not my intention (he says) at present to engage in any laboured exposure of the partiality of this decision, though it is notorious that *the Book, in favour of which it was given, has never been examined by the G. A. or by a Committee* appointed by them,—that it does not exist,—and that it may contain blasphemy, when published, for aught that the General Assembly can know." Though I do not pretend to understand this singular paragraph, I would ask, is the prohibition *in favour* of a book that does not exist, or that may contain blasphemy for aught we know ? If it does not exist, our prohibition has no reference to it, and the very reason why we prohibit any book from being employed in our public worship, or in the education of our youth, is, that it may contain blasphemy, and therefore cannot be permitted till we are satisfied that it does not. We do not doubt the orthodoxy of Dr Ross, though we have some cause to doubt his wisdom.

I must now dismiss this part of our subject, and speak a little of our admirable translation, to extricate myself from the hose-net in which the Doctor thinks he has got me entangled. Let me observe, that the Doctor, speaking, I presume, the sentiments of his brethren in the Synod of Ross, has rendered my extrication very easy. He has given me the clue, and I shall presently make use of it. I must first, however, protest against ascribing to me what I never said nor thought. I never said nor

thought that the translation was *perfect*; the best translation is a mere human work, and therefore perfection applied to it is a mere relative term. I never said that the Synod of Ross expressed their unqualified approbation of Dr Stuart's work, "or that it is in every respect adapted to the dialects of the inhabitants, or that any overture of the Synod expressed an unqualified or qualified approbation of it." I never heard that it was such a work as will justify the binding of men's souls and consciences exclusively to its dictates by a law. Such a thing was never in contemplation, except in the troubled imagination of the worthy Doctor.

Whatever I said, this I now say, that, till the days of Dr Ross, and his differences with a certain most honourable, most zealous, and most useful Society, to whom the Highlanders are more indebted than to all the Doctors in Britain, the merit of the translation was never once called in question, though it was not faultless, and though it might differ from the dialectical variations of language in Ross, Inverness, Argyle, and Perthshires. For it differs from all; and this is just one of its excellencies. Now, Sir, to my clue, and to the authority of Dr Ross and his Synod, both to extricate me, and to justify the decision of the Assembly.

This is the high style in which the merits of the translation and the translator are stated, and beyond that style I would not deem it safe, were it possible to go. "Every competent judge," no man doubts the competency of the Doctor, "must think and talk of Dr Stuart's translation of the Scriptures as a work of extraordinary merit; none can think more highly of it than the writer of these strictures. As the work of an individual, or rather of three individuals, it is a wonderful performance." Is the Doctor in earnest? Hold! "a performance which has laid the Highlands of Scotland under unspeakable obligations to Dr Stuart, and which will hand down his name to posterity with immortal honour,"—*magna est veritas*,—"a performance from the merits of which"—we shall see by and bye—"I should be the last to detract, and the first to promote its usefulness, or proclaim its praise:" *neget quis carmino Gallo?* But, alas! "it is not a perfect work:"—who shall make it perfect? "Let Dr Irvine extricate himself as he best can!" Done! Thanks to my good friend Dr Ross, for he never expected such a panegyric upon a translation,

which, in the same breath, is characterized not only as imperfect, which we always admit, but as not done in "classical language," containing "many obsolete," "foreign," barbarous and obscure vocables and expressions, which offend the ears of the (Gaelic) scholar, and are unintelligible beyond the limited spot within which it was composed." Let Dr Ross extricate himself as he best can! For what has become of the panegyric? If the translation be unintelligible beyond Edinburgh and Luss, two spots, by the bye, within which it was composed, it ought to be condemned to a public execution. I do not rightly comprehend the Doctor's phraseology, (but that is owing to the shortness of my sounding-line) as "*within a spot,*" and "*composing a translation.*"

Now, as I am really sick of the inconsistencies of the Doctor's letter, and wish to part with my good friend in good humour, I must leave many things unnoticed, and, for his consolation, say, that he all along has been beating the air, and fighting with a shadow; that he may bring out his new translation, of which I never heard till this year, as soon as he can, and that I shall be very glad to give it an impartial perusal; that if it does not exist, as we are told, our prohibition as to it is harmless and inoffensive indeed; that if his people, or the inhabitants of Ross-shire, do not understand the present translation, they may translate or interpret for themselves, as I have often done.

I would advise Dr Ross and his friends, however, not to lay such another specimen of their translation on the Assembly table as that which I glanced at last May, lest an interdict may lie against them on the ground of carelessness at least. I should mention, that Dr Ross's edition of the Gaelic Psalms, by far the best we had, when it came from his own hands, claimed the merit of being as near as possible to Dr Stuart's translation, in orthoepy and orthography.

I have further to add, that the language of the translation is not, as Dr Johnson very properly inferred, that of the Isle of Col, or of any isle or province in Scotland, but pure, classical Gaelic, as free from provincialisms as possible, such as must be intelligible to every man who reads or understands that language. If there be in Ross-shire ministers who can neither read, write, nor understand classical Gaelic, is it any wonder that they do not understand our translation? Let them learn. Our translation

may teach them. On the margin, much against my will, are the terms employed in the different provinces or districts to convey the same ideas as those in the text.

Though the Rev. Doctor has not favoured the Committee with his remarks on our labours, I am sure Dr Stuart and his colleague, and every one of us, will thank him for them. Dr Stewart of the Canongate, *late of Ross-shire*, has, I presume, some acquaintance with the dialects of that extensive country. I have before me the work of one of the best Poets or Bards of Ross-shire, and though there be some odd words in it, I find it intelligible enough, even to my parishioners, who speak as bad Gaelic as any part of Ross-shire.

I have now only to add, that the learned Doctors he does me the honour to name with me, and the whole General Assembly, with the exception of Dr Ross's two friends, thought the overture from the Synod of Ross inadmissible, that we had no object in view but the good of the people committed to our care, and that we are persuaded the Synod of Ross have the same object, and hope Dr Ross has no other.

I have now to offer an apology for the length, and, I fear, tediousness of this letter, though I left many things untouched; and hope, that the importance of the subject to which it refers, will insure it a place in your widely-spread Journal, either at once or divided, in the expectation that it may save Dr Ross much trouble, and prevent him from teasing himself or others on such a subject, as his translation does not exist.—I am, Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

A. IRVINE.

Dunkeld, Aug. 4, 1820.

LETTER IV.

To the Editor of the Inverness Journal.

SIR,—A variety of unavoidable avocations till now prevented me from resuming the subject of my letter, which you so obligingly inserted into your paper of the 21st of July; and even now, when I have taken up the pen for that purpose, I must, first of all, say a few words in answer to Dr Irvine's long letter inserted in the Journal of the 18th and of the 25th of August.

The Doctor begins by laying before the public a pretty ample delineation of my character. On this part of his letter I am not bound to follow him. The fact is, that I consider both Dr Irvine and myself as objects of far too little consequence to deserve the notice of the public, on account of any personal qualities which we possess or want; and much less on account of any private opinion which we may respectively entertain of one another. I consider also a man's character, and particularly a clergyman's, as a very delicate thing, which, when touched at all, should be handled with great tenderness and caution; and in a manner at least very different from that which Dr Irvine has adopted in this instance.

I would, moreover, suggest to the Doctor, that it is too soon for him or me to pronounce upon each other's character,—that we are quite unequal to the task,—that we are expressly forbidden “to judge;” and that we are both now acting a part, according to which our character shall ere long be decided with awful and unerring equity. A man's *words, actions, and writings*, may be very proper subjects of animadversion; but his private character it is extremely impertinent to meddle with. That man's praise, at any event, must be of little value, who professes his unacquaintance with the subject; and his scurrility and invective must be equally undeserving of notice. In this estimation I hold Dr Irvine's compliments and abuse.

The Doctor having disposed the ruins of my character, talents, and motives, in that order and form which he thought best adapted to his purpose, and over these piled up the vast materials of his own opinions and counsels, and long and faithful labours to promote the happiness of the Highlanders, and of his well-tryed skill in examining various works in various languages; and on the summit of this immense elevation placed himself in an imposing attitude; he holds your Journal in his hand, and pointing to my letter in the 681st number of it, he gravely says: “If I well knew where to begin to dissect this singular production from Lochbroom, I would now *descend* to the operation. After, however, belabouring it with all the wrath of which hard words and abusive epithets are the ordinary indications, crowning all by pronouncing it to be positively a *felo de se*,”—he at length honestly confesses, “I feel myself sadly at a loss where or how to commence my labours.”

Accordingly, instead of proceeding to the operation of dissection, the Doctor leaves the Lochbroom production in a whole skin,—never draws so much as one drop of blood from it; but, throwing down the Journal, enters upon a long and would-be learned discussion on the good deeds of the General Assembly, which no man denied, and on the translation of the Scriptures into the Gaelic, Irish, Welsh, and Mankish languages, which is as little connected with the subject of my letter as it is with the discovery of the longitude or of the North-West passage.

The leading object of this elaborate (but in many respects incorrect) discussion, seems to be, to embody Dr Irvine himself with the General Assembly, and to tell the world what mighty service he has, so embodied, rendered to religion for the last 174 years! His words are remarkable, and, with your permission, I will transcribe them. “First, however, let me say of the General Assembly and *myself*, that WE have done all in OUR power to diffuse useful knowledge through the Highlands; that WE have encouraged directly every legitimate measure for the attainment of an end so desirable; and that, for this purpose, WE have watched with incessant care every attempt, under whatever colour, to propagate delusion or error among so interesting a portion of OUR countrymen, whether by translations or otherwise. In proof of which, I appeal to OUR records, both *before* and *since* the Revolution. I refer particularly to the pastoral admonition of the Assembly 1799;” (Dr. Irvine was not a Member of the General Assembly that year—I strongly suspect that he was not a Minister—nor is there one word in the pastoral admonition about translations;) “to the 16th Act of Assembly, 1699,” (Dr. Irvine was not in the world that year)—“anent Irish Bible and other translations; to the various Acts from 1646” (more than a hundred years before Dr Irvine was born) “to 1726; to the Acts for establishing libraries in the Highlands, from 1699 to 1709; to the measures adopted for erecting new parishes, for establishing schools, for employing Missionaries and Catechists, for encouraging translations of the Scriptures,”—(*encore*)—“Confession of Faith and Catechisms, and other pious books. In short, I would (*should*) astonish your readers, were I to recite even the titles of the Acts and means employed by the Assembly, from the Reformation downward to the present day, to diffuse the Gospel, with all its blessings, civil and religious, through the Highlands and

Isles. The Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge was reared under its nurturing care. It embraced, with open arms, every man and every measure qualified or calculated to promote the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom."

But passing over the *egotism* of this long paragraph, I must seriously tell Dr Irvine, that no reasoning can be more false than that which it contains—none which bears less upon the argument for which it is employed—nay, that all the inferences which can legitimately be drawn from it, are in direct opposition to the conduct which he has thought proper to follow, and which he is now endeavouring to vindicate. Dr Irvine cannot but be sensible, that in this long paragraph, and in the long discussion of which it forms a part, he represents the General Assembly, or rather himself and the Assembly, as an individual person, or, at least, as an individual body, which continues to exist, to deliberate, and to act, throughout a long series of years, or even of ages, without either interruption or change—so that the General Assembly of 1760 could be apprehended, tried, and punished, for the delinquency of the Assembly of 1740, just as the same man, at the age of 60, might be hanged for a murder which he had committed at the age of 40; and *vice versa*. In short, he reasons as if the General Assembly and the Church of Scotland were convertible terms; as he afterwards directly says—"This admirable translation—was sanctioned by the General Assembly, *that is*, by the Church of Scotland."

Now, the fact is, that the General Assembly is not the Church of Scotland; and nobody knows that fact better than Dr Irvine. That gentleman knows very well, that the General Assembly is merely a Court of Review, called together by the authority of the King and of the Church, once a-year or oftener, if any occasion arises, and acting by an authority delegated to it by the Church, in superintending the general management of its affairs, in seeing that the laws of the Church are duly executed, in receiving references, appeals, and complaints, and in disposing of them according to the laws of the Church. He knows also, that when the General Assembly spends ten days in these and similar duties, it is dissolved by the same authority by which it was convened, and never meets again in this world: And he cannot but be aware, that to denominate this temporary, and very transient convocation, "the Church of Scotland;" or to denominate all

the General Assemblies which have ever met, before and after the Reformation, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY of the Church of Scotland, in such a sense, that the man who objects to any one resolution of any one General Assembly, must be considered as reviling the *whole Church*, and so expose himself to the accumulation of obloquy, which Dr Irvine has thought proper to heap upon me so very impertinently, —is a species of manoeuvre in the management of an argument to which I do not chuse to give a name so bad as it deserves.

Supposing, however, without at all granting, that the fact is as Dr. Irvine states it—that all the Assemblies which ever met in Scotland are but one Assembly, continued down from year to year, and from age to age—supposing, at least, that it is but one General Assembly from the year 1646 to 1820: and *that* Assembly animated by the individual spirit of *that one man* who so often embodies himself with it in the paragraph alluded to,—supposing further, that this Assembly, or individual, had, during these 174 years, acted with uniform wisdom and propriety, (a supposition which, I hope, will not be very confidently pressed by any wise man,) are we, from all these suppositions, to draw the conclusion, that this Assembly or individual is infallible, and thus subject ourselves to the domination of a Pope in Scotland? and is a man to be accused of blasphemy, who remarks upon a real fault in the conduct of this Assembly or individual? If not, then Dr Irvine's reasoning bears no more upon the subject of my letter than it does upon the dispute between the Ali Pacha and the Grand Signor.

But in order to give Dr Irvine every advantage which he can possibly desire, I will meet him entirely on his own ground, and combat him solely with his own weapons: Supposing, then, that the Assembly, or individual of whom he talks, had not only existed during 174 years or more—had in all that time acted with the most consummate wisdom, and the most undeviating rectitude—and had, moreover, done so by pursuing that very line of conduct for which Dr Irvine demands so large a share of praise to this Assembly, or individual; that is “by doing all in its power to diffuse useful knowledge through the Highlands—by encouraging directly every legitimate measure for the attainment of an end so desirable—by watching with incessant care, every attempt, under whatever colour, to propogate delusion and error among so

interesting a portion of our countrymen, whether by translations or otherwise,—by adopting measures for erecting new parishes, for establishing schools, for employing Missionaries and Catechists, and for *encouraging Translations of the Scriptures*, Confession of Faith, and Catechisms, and other pious books :” Supposing, however, that, in the year 1820, (the last of the existence of this Assembly, or individual,) an Overture had been transmitted to it, by a most respectable Highland Synod, bearing that a growing desire for the knowledge of the Word of God was expressed by all descriptions of people within their bounds—that they were making the most rapid progress in learning to read the Scriptures in their native language—and that, for these and many other weighty reasons, it was highly expedient that a translation of the Scriptures more intelligible to the people than any yet in existence should be put into their hands—that such a translation was now in preparation, but had met with many obstacles to retard its publication, to the great grief of the religious community among them, by whom it was much wanted, loudly called for, and anxiously expected—and praying that the very Reverend the General Assembly would be pleased to express their approbation of the Translator’s labours in this great undertaking—and upon finding the Translation executed in such a manner, in every respect, as would render it deserving of the countenance and patronage of this Church, to grant permission for its being used in those districts of the country where it would be best understood, or otherwise preferred;—supposing that the Assembly, or individual, so often mentioned, should—after hearing this most respectful, reasonable, and pious Overture read, and deliberating upon the humble and earnest supplication—not grant the prayer of the Synod, as it had ever done in similar cases—not appoint a Committee to examine the merits of the proposed Translation, and to compare it with any already in existence—not express its approbation of the well-meant labours of the author—not shew the least sympathy for the wants, or the wishes, of the thousands of its fellow-creatures, who declared that they did not understand the translations already in their hands—not listen to the voice of those who, far removed, in their sequestered glens, and distant isles of the sea, from places of public worship, cried that they were bereaved of every earthly means of enjoying the light and knowledge of the word of God in an

intelligible language—nor to the still more appalling alarm of the exertions making by the enemies of religion, for the extension of infidelity, error, blasphemy, and irreligion, towards overturning the great foundation of the faith and hope of Christians :—but, instead of this, should dismiss the Overture ; and after dealing out a large measure of unmanly, uncandid, and illiberal abuse to the Translator, to the Translation, and to the Synod, should desire the Synod to go home, and tell the people within their bounds, if they did not understand the Gaelic of the existing translation, they might learn to do so, for that the Assembly was determined to allow no other to be executed—that the Assembly could hear with some patience of translations of the Scriptures into all the languages of Asia, Africa, and America—but a translation by which the Sacred Oracles should become more accessible, or more intelligible to the Ross-shire Highlanders, it was determined most strenuously to oppose !

In these circumstances—and that this was the conduct exhibited—that these were the sentiments expressed—and the above, the sentence pronounced by the General Assembly, Dr Irvine will not deny—what would a man, deciding upon the avowed principles of Dr Irvine, say ? Would he not reprobate such conduct, as the most ungenerous, and the most unchristian that had ever disgraced an ecclesiastical Court ? It must be here remarked, that I do not say whether the conduct of the Assembly was bad, or whether the principles of Dr Irvine are good ; but taking the principles and conduct as here delineated—no rational being—no man who has the least regard for his own character or consistency, can do any thing else than condemn the conduct in the most direct and unqualified manner. But what does Dr Irvine do ? Why, he justifies the conduct of the Assembly—and justifies it on the ground (*mirabile dictu*), that it has always done every thing in its power to diffuse useful knowledge through the Highlands—BY ENCOURAGING TRANSLATIONS OF THE SCRIPTURES ! Let Dr Irvine extricate himself the best way he can.

It is quite vain for Dr Irvine to plead, that it would be improper in the Assembly (supposing it still to be the same Assembly which existed from before the Revolution—which it was not, but a different one) to rescind its own Act, passed last year, in favour of a new translation of the Scriptures, which they knew nothing about—that it was quite impossible for the General Assembly

to *give its sanction* to any translation of the Scriptures being employed in public worship, &c. until *sanctioned by itself!*—or that it should express any public approbation of a work which was not as yet before them. No such request had ever been made by me—no such prayer was at all contained in the Overture of the Synod of Ross. “The Synod of Ross,” *in these words*—humbly overture the Very Reverend the General Assembly, praying that they may be pleased to express their approbation of Dr Ross’s labours in this great undertaking, and give permission to all Ministers, Teachers, and private Christians, connected with the Church of Scotland, to use this translation of the Bible in these districts of the country where it shall be best understood, or otherwise preferred; PROVIDED ALWAYS, that the author shall be considered bound to submit his translation to the examination of persons properly qualified to judge of its correctness; and that these persons do report to the General Assembly, declaring that the work is executed in such a manner, IN ALL RESPECTS, as shall render it *deserving of the countenance and patronage of this Church.*”

This was the Overture which the General Assembly dismissed, declaring that they would not allow the intended translation to be executed; and to this they were incited by Dr Irvine. How the Doctor endeavours “to justify the resolution of the Assembly, and consequently to vindicate himself on a subject so interesting to the Highlanders,” whose friend he still professes himself to be, and whose good opinion he is anxious to deserve and to cultivate, I shall proceed to enquire.

And here he begins by saying, that I am either misguided by my passions, or discover culpable ignorance of the constitution of the Church of which I am a member. How he has made this out, it is impossible for me to say,—or what connection it has with the argument no human ingenuity can divine—nor is it worth while enquiring. We shall have plenty of this sort of *ipse dixit* scandal, without the least particle of proof. The next sentence is, “He seems to think himself of such importance (let him remember the fable of the poor frog,) as to excite the suspicions of the Society and the General Assembly that he may run away with all the honours of the day!” ALL the honours of the day! Surely no reproach can be more wanton—more uncalled-for, than this! But where is the proof, or where is the indication, that I think so? Dr Irvine says it!—“He seems to think” (adds the

Doctor) "that the prohibition of the Assembly respects his non-existent edition or translation of the Gaelic Scriptures exclusively." Yes, certainly I think this, and can prove it by irresistible evidence. But Dr Irvine will not provoke the proof, nor deny the fact. It is enough to say, that no other is in existence, or in contemplation, so far as has yet been announced. "He has thrown his judgment into a ruinous mistake," (says Dr Irvine.) *Ruinous* mistake! What does he mean by this? Does the Doctor suppose that the sentence of the Assembly is to make me lose my judgment?—But this is the ruinous mistake, "that the Society, by some mighty force, moved the Assembly to interdict *his* work." No such thing—it was effected by a very feeble force—or rather, no force at all was necessary—so much do I know of the Assembly, and of its "rocky" sons.

Dr Irvine now adopts the Socratic mode of expiscating the truth, and puts me upon my Catechism; which I will answer as well as I can.

Q. Do you not know that there is a Confession of Faith and Polity, establishing a certain form of doctrine, worship, discipline, and government for the Church of Scotland, sanctioned by law, after an arduous and deathful struggle? Ans. Yes I do—I never denied nor doubted it.

Q. Do you not know that its Judicatories have the sole guardianship of religion, morals, and education over all the Kingdom? No, I do not; and you will not say that they have.

Q. Do you not know that no translation of the sacred Oracles can be legally used in public worship without their authority, or that of the State, concurred in by them? A. I know that various translations of the sacred Oracles have been, and are used without such authority; and I know, moreover, that if the Scriptures should be translated into all the languages under heaven, they might be legally used in all these languages, within this kingdom, without any such authority, and I should like that you would point out any law to prevent their being so used, before you talk so confidently.

Q. If the Church Judicatories allow imperfect or improper translations of the Scriptures to be used, would they not desert their duty, and violate their oath? A. There is much difference between *imperfect*, and *improper*, translations. The former, I fear that they must allow—the latter, they certainly ought not,

and they can prevent in their own communion; but they are by no means under consideration at present.

Q. Do you not know that there was no translation used in public worship in the British Isles, since the Reformation, I might say before it, without such authority? A. I know the contrary, and so do you.

Q. Do you not know that our excellent English translation is authorised by Act of Parliament? A. Yes.

Q. Do you not know that it still keeps its place in our religious assemblies? A. Yes.

Q. Do you not know that I hope it *shall* do so until the end of time? A. I know nothing at all about that.

Q. Do you not know that various new translations into English, in whole, or in part, have been in our own day offered to the public, and are at this moment in our hands? A. I am not aware of any English translation of the Scriptures which has been executed in our day.

Q. Do you not know that not one of these yet found *their way* into our pulpits? A. They cannot find their way into our pulpits unless they *exist*.

Q. Do you not know that Dr Campbell of Aberdeen translated the four Gospels; and Dr Macknight of Edinburgh, the Epistles? did you ever hear of such books as these translations? A. Yes, they are both standing on one shelf beside me.

Q. Do you not know that they freely and honestly pointed out the imperfections of our present English version of the New Testament? A. Sometimes they did, and sometimes their own imperfections. But these are not translations even of the whole New Testament. Please name some of the English translations of the Bible to which you alluded.

Q. Did they (*i. e.* the translations—surely Dr Irvine means the translators, Dr Campbell and Dr M^r Knight) abuse the Assembly or the Parliament because their Acts prohibited their valuable translations from being used in our public worship? No. But who did? Did I?—"No such thing—I had more sense, more piety, more obedience."

Mr Editor, I appeal to you and to your readers, whether these questions have not been fairly put—whether they have not been fairly answered—and whether there has been one word in either question or answer favourable to Dr Irvine's argument.

But the Dr adds, that his present object is to shew that no Gaelic, or Irish, or Welsh, or Mankish translation of the Scriptures ever was, OR EVER CAN BE, used in our public worship without proper authority. Now, taking for granted that the proper authority intended is, an Act of Parliament, concurred in by the Church, Dr Irvine proceeds to establish his position by stating a few facts, for the satisfaction of his brethren and friends in the Synods of Ross and Glenelg, which, if they had known before (poor ignorant men!) they never would have overtured in favour of this new translation; but which, being now stated, must set the matter for ever at rest!

His first fact then is, that it was only in 1543 that an Act of Parliament was passed, *allowing* all persons to read the Old and New Testament in their mother tongue. Now, what does this fact prove, but that there had been Acts of Parliament before then, concurred in by the Church, to *prohibit* the reading of the Scriptures in the mother tongue? But does this apply in the present case? Are there any Acts of Parliament now prohibiting the reading of a Gaelic Bible? Perhaps Dr Irvine will allege, that the Act 1543 provided only for the reading of the English mother tongue, and the Act 1579 for the Scotch *vulgar tongue*, and that the Gaelic is still under the restrictions of Popish domination. If so, how was the New Testament translated into Irish by Dr Daniel in 1602?—how was there another edition of it printed in 1681, at the expence of the Hon. Robert Boyle?—how was the O. Testament, translated by Bishop Bedell, or Mr King, published in 1635, by the exertions of that Honourable and pious Gentleman?—how was the Irish Bible translated into the Roman character by Mr Robert Kirk in 1690?—how did the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge publish a new edition of the New Testament in 1767, and of the whole Bible in 1801? There was no Act of Parliament for all these translations, and consequently, on Dr Irvine's principle, no legal authority: yet all have been regularly used in public worship for above 200 years, unless when opposed by the Irish and Scottish priests!

If, on the contrary, it be allowed that the Act 1543 permitted the reading of the Scriptures in Gaelic also, then, what is to prevent a translation into that language, by those who are best able? Or, if there should be 1000 dialects of the Gaelic language, so different from each other, that those who speak the language can

understand only one of all these distinctly,—what is to prevent the Bible from being translated into 1000 dialects of the Gaelic? There is no law to prevent it;—Dr Irvine, Dr M^rFarlane, or Dr Cooke, can shew none;—and, until the sentence of the General Assembly 1817 passed, through the influence of the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian knowledge, the best exertions of our Parliaments, of our Church, and of our Church Courts, WERE UNIFORMLY AND ZEALOUSLY EMPLOYED, FROM THE REFORMATION DOWNWARDS, IN PROMOTING AND ENCOURAGING CORRECT TRANSLATIONS OF THE SCRIPTURES. Dr Irvine will not deny this. Let him account for the change.

The Doctor's second fact (and a most edifying one it is to his brethren and friends in the Synods of Ross and Glenelg) is, that the first printed Bible in Scotland was an edition of the Geneva, in folio, by Thomas Bassandyne, Edinburgh, 1576.

The third fact is, that three years after, an Act was passed in the sixth Parliament of James VI. subjecting to a penalty every man who had not (when?) a Bible and Psalm-Book in the *vulgar tongue*!

But surely these, and a long rigman-roll of similar facts which follow, are as far from proving the Doctor's argument, as the Doctor's purpose by bringing them forward is from throwing light upon the subject. Your readers will excuse me for passing them over, as equally disgusting and sickening—not excepting the “very curious one, that 120 years ago the language of Ireland and of the Highlands was called Irish, or Erse, being *nearly* the same, or *supposed* to be the same.” Astonishing!

Let us now proceed from the facts, to examine the averments of Dr Irvine. I admit that the New Testament was translated by Mr James Stewart of Killin, aided by several eminent Gaelic scholars. But it is not true that the Minister of Alness, who is said to have revised all the sheets, was the best Gaelic scholar in Ross. Mr James Fraser was certainly one of the most profound, pious, and eminently distinguished Divines, and one of the most popular and successful ministers of the Gospel in Ross-shire, during his own day. But he was not the best Gaelic scholar. Be the scholars, however, who translated the New Testament, what they would, it is allowed on all hands, that some errors crept into the translation. See Account of the Funds, Expenditure, &c.

published by the Society in 1796. And who will say that errors ought not to be corrected?

Dr Irvine next says, that “the Old Testament was completed by Dr Stuart, aided, as his father was, not by three, as Dr Ross asserts, but, to my knowledge, by all the best of known Gaelic and Hebrew scholars in the Highlands and Western isles, from Lewis to Tarbetness, and from Uist to Dunkeld.” Now, to every one averment in this bundle of averments, I give the most positive and pointed contradiction; and, I beg to warn Dr Irvine, that however well his raw and undigested averments may be received in the General Assembly, and whatever effects they may produce in that Court, (where no incorrect statements certainly ought to be made, and where they are the more dangerous, from the prevailing conviction, that no Member of that House will venture upon them) a man who had any regard for his own credibility should weigh well the averments which he prefixes to his name on the printed pages of a newspaper.

The Old Testament was *not* completed—that is to say, in all propriety of language, the Old Testament was *not all translated* by Dr Stuart. The 4th, and concluding volume was translated by the late Dr John Smith of Campbelton, Argyleshire. This is a fact which Dr Irvine will not deny, however hard it may bear upon the correctness of his own averment. Again, I did not assert that Dr Stuart was *aided* by three in executing his translation. What I said was, that the translation of the Scriptures into Gaelic was the work of three individuals—these three individuals were, Mr James Stewart, Dr John Stuart, and Dr John Smith. Let Dr Irvine contradict this if he can. Further, Dr Stuart was not aided in the parts translated by him, by all the best of known Gaelic and Hebrew scholars in the Highlands and Western Isles; nor could this fact, if true, be “to the knowledge” of Dr Irvine. The extent of country which he mentions is too great, and the period during which the translation was carrying on too far back, to admit the credibility of Dr Irvine’s averment. But to put the matter beyond a doubt, I call upon the Doctor to furnish a list of those gentlemen who gave any assistance to Dr Stuart in his translation; I call upon him also to furnish a list of all the Gaelic and Hebrew scholars whom he himself has known within the last fifty years (for during very nearly the whole of that period has the Gaelic Bible been translating); and then I will

shew how comparatively few were the assistants of Dr Stuart, or the acquaintances of Dr Irvine, of the noble band of Gaelic and Hebrew scholars whom the Highlands and isles produced. Let him next shew how many of the gentlemen who assisted Dr Stuart, translated a book, or a sheet, of the work; and till he does so, let him not talk of more translators of the Bible into Gaelic than I have mentioned. And, lastly, let him point out the chapter, the page, or the syllable, of the three volumes, which was not written by the hand of Dr Stuart himself; and until he does that, let him not attempt to tear the well-earned laurel from the brow of our venerable translator! Every one, I grant, was solicited to lend a helping hand---a few listened to the solicitation---and who was ever engaged in such a work that received no aid at all? But if one suggested the alteration of a few words, another recommended a different arrangement of a sentence, a third pointed out some errors of the press, and even if Dr Irvine himself revised some of its sheets, with a most respectable clergyman in Mull, does this constitute them all translators of the Bible? Certainly it does not! Then does the barbed shaft of Dr Irvine fall pointless to the ground.

Dr Irvine, after observing that this admirable translation was sanctioned by the General Assembly, ("that is," he adds, "the Church of Scotland,) and that the Mankish translation was published under the care of the Bishop, "that is," he continues, "the Church of Sodor and Man,"—two averments equally unfounded and absurd, proceeds, "Thus, Sir, the General Assembly, and every other ecclesiastical authority, superintended and permitted every Celtic translation of the Scriptures now in use in the British Isles; and no man ever considered their doing so as an injury or encroachment upon our rights and liberties till the days of Dr Ross, except the Popish Hierarchy, who accordingly published translations and other books consistent with its own tenets, and to prevent the heresies of our translations."

Now, I must again tell Dr Irvine, that all this is sheer, unmingled scurrility; and that it requires but very little penetration for a man to perceive that such gross and unfounded abuse, however it may serve for a while the ends of ridicule, malevolence, or detraction, must ultimately return with double force upon its unmanly author. Does Mr Irvine mean to insinuate that I hold tenets in which the Popish Hierarchy differs from our Church,—

or tenets contrary to those of our publicly recognized standards of faith and practice? Does he mean to insinuate that the object of my translation is to propagatate heresy, or to prevent the heresies of our translations in the same sense in which he understands the Popish translations to have that object? If he does *not*, his words have no meaning. If he *does*, he means to *insinuate* what he dares not *affirm*, and what he knows that he cannot affirm with *truth*. Does Dr Irvine really aver that I ever said that I considered the General Assembly's superintending and permitting every Celtic translation of the Scriptures as an injury or encroachment upon our rights or liberties? If he does *not*, let him explain the meaning of his words; for every human being must understand them as containing that averment. If he *does*, he really avers what he knows to be *contrary to truth*. He knows, and all who have read my letter, know, that what I considered as injurious in the sentence of the General Assembly was, their *opposing, resisting*, and, as much as in them lay, **PROHIBITING** the publication of a Celtic translation of the Scriptures! It is truly distressing for one Minister to be obliged to write in such terms concerning another. But, in my case, it is unavoidable. I will not be traduced to my country and to the world by such odious statements, by such detestable and groundless insinuations.

I have not done with Dr Irvine, nor with his false and injurious averments. I scorn to notice the idle rant in which he indulges about the obligations of the Church,—our liberty from Papal domination,—the restraint imposed upon translations and upon Ministers,—that they speak or preach sound doctrine,—“which Dr Ross cannot surely consider as a grievance, because it is only to fulfil his sacred obligations.” But when Dr Irvine proceeds to say, alluding to me, “Let him remember, that his translations, and notes, and comments, and himself, are under the jurisdiction of that very Assembly, whose power to regulate, or rather preserve the purity of our faith and worship, he most unaccountably denies:” I think it my indispensable duty to meet his averment with a flat and positive contradiction. I never, either accountably or unaccountably, denied the power of the General Assembly to regulate, or rather preserve the purity of our faith and worship.” Whether the General Assembly possesses the power of which Dr Irvine speaks, and whether its power is of that vague and indefinite character in which his language portrays it, is a

different question. But I defy Dr Irvine to prove that I ever denied any legitimate powers with which the General Assembly is vested, particularly that of taking cognizance of the purity of the faith and worship of its members; and I desire Dr Irvine to remember, that the charge of my having done so is equally scandalous, as it was intended to be offensive, and known to be unfounded.

Dr Irvine proceeds, in the same spirit of silly vanity which dictated the whole of his letter, to ridicule a paragraph of mine. The paragraph is as follows: "After alluding to the sentence of the last General Assembly, by which the overture of the Synod of Ross had been dismissed, and the prohibition (not merely of using any other version of the Scriptures into Gaelic in churches and chapels, except that of the Society, until another should be examined and approved of by competent judges,—for that was never asked, but of using any other *on any condition whatever*, and even of *publishing* any other, according to the language distinctly held forth in the Assembly,) continued, I said, "It is not my intention at present to engage in any laboured exposure of the partiality of this decision, though it is notorious that the book in favour of which it was given, has never been examined by the General Assembly, or by a Committee appointed by them; that it does not indeed exist; and that it may contain blasphemy when published, for aught that the last General Assembly can know."

Now, if it is possible for any man in his senses to understand the meaning of the above sentence, or to understand me as saying, that the partial *decision* of the General Assembly was given in *favour* of any book but the Society's Translation of the Scriptures, now printing under the care of Dr Stuart; which, of course, has not been examined by the General Assembly, or by a Committee of their number, which does not exist, and which may contain blasphemy for aught that the last Assembly can know, I have certainly made a very erroneous estimate of the reasoning powers of the human species. But mark how Dr Irvine twists and tortures this plain sentence, with the design of holding it up to ridicule. "Though I do not pretend," says Dr Irvine, "to understand this singular paragraph, I would ask, is the prohibition in favour of a book that does not exist, or that may contain blasphemy for aught we know? If it does not exist, our prohibition has no reference to it, and the very reason why we prohibit any

book from being employed in our public worship, or in the education of our youth, is, that it may contain blasphemy, and therefore cannot be permitted till we are satisfied that it does not. We do not doubt the orthodoxy of Dr Ross, though we have some cause to doubt his wisdom."

Dr Irvine complains of the shortness of his sounding-line, and I do not wonder that he should. It might have been as well, perhaps, to have kept the sounding-line out of view. But since the Doctor has produced it, we may very fairly endeavour to estimate its properties; and when we do so, we find, that although it is of no extraordinary length, it would just reach deep enough to keep his vessel in perfect safety, provided that the owner had sufficient discretion to use it as other people do. But when Dr Irvine chooses to perch himself upon the mast-head, instead of casting his plummet from the deck, he needs not wonder that his sounding-line should now and then run out; nor that his bark should strike upon a shoal, when he thinks himself in deep water. Dr Irvine had been, short before he wrote his letter to you, Mr Editor, at the General Assembly, where he certainly mingled with human beings who are perfect giants in point of understanding and every mental faculty, in comparison with himself; and now, like Gulliver, when just landed from the country of the Brobdignags, observing the littleness of men of his own stature, he begins to think himself in Lilliput. He is afraid of trampling on every traveller he meets, and often calls aloud to them to stand out of the way. Gulliver tells us that he had like to have gotten one or two broken heads for this impertinence. Let those mortals who have but *heads a-piece* take warning. He tells us also, that when he came to his own house, and one of the servants opened the door, he bent down to go in (like a goose under a gate) for fear of striking his head. Now, I should think it quite as harmless, and much less ridiculous, for a man to bend his neck like a goose, to go in at a door of ordinary height, than to break his head against the lintel, by attempting a stately entry on the back of a favourite hobby.

Dr Irvine next proceeds to extricate himself from the hose-net in which I thought I had got him entangled; which, however, may not be so easy as he imagines. He must first, however, indulge in a tedious and crowded parenthesis, to declare positively, that though he had done all in his power to oppose an improv-

ed translation of the Scriptures, he never said, nor thought, that the present translation was perfect, but was therefore susceptible of improvement. To deny stoutly his having said in the Assembly, that an overture of the Synod of Ross had expressed their unqualified approbation of Dr Stuart's work, although all the newspapers, and also the Christian Instructor, declare that he so expressed himself; and although his speech does not hang together, if this part of it be taken away,—(which, by the bye, was the hose-net into which I had put him, and out of which a mere denial, in the face of such testimony, will hardly extricate him,) to vow that he never heard that the Society's translation was such a work as would justify the binding of men's souls and consciences exclusively to its dictates by a law; although he was a very active and officious member of a Court which enacted a law by which all access to the Sacred Oracles should be denied to those who spoke only the Gaelic language, except through the medium of that translation, whether they understood it or not; and to affirm most boldly, that such a thing (as passing this law surely) was never in contemplation except in the troubled imagination of the worthy Doctor!

This parenthesis also includes a long tirade against Dr Ross for his differences with a certain most honourable, most zealous, and most useful Society, although no such difference ever existed; and for calling in question the merit of a translation which had never been called in question before, although the author himself (as I have already stated, and Dr Irvine will not deny) had called it in question immediately on its being printed, and loudly called for an opportunity of improving it! “And now, Sir,” says the Doctor, “to my clue, and to the authority of Dr Ross and his Synod, both to extricate me and to justify the decision of the Assembly.” By this sort of phraseology, Dr Irvine means, that by contrasting my commendations of Dr Stuart's translation with the idea of finding any fault at all with it, or with the possibility of improving it or making a better, he will palm an absurdity upon my reasoning, and so justify the General Assembly for prohibiting the attempting of any other translation. And it is truly amusing to observe with what exulting confidence the Doctor betakes himself to the labour of winding back his clue, and working his way out of this dark labyrinth; till at last having transcribed my panegyric upon Dr Stuart's translation, and

tacked to it a paragraph from my letter, not at all referring to Dr Stuart's work, but to a supposeable translation into the *English* language, executed in the Lowlands of Scotland; taking care to substitute the word *Gaelic* for that of *English* in the original; his thread suddenly breaks, and the Doctor, thinking that he is at the end of it, triumphantly exclaims, " Let Dr Ross extricate himself as he best can! for what has become of the panegyric?"

Now, to astonish Dr Irvine still more, and to demonstrate to him the generosity of my nature, I will overlook his trespass, in disjoining and transposing the sentences of my letter in order to convict me of inconsistency—I will pick up the broken thread, and put the end of it into his hand again, along with another still stronger than the former—and then I shall shew that with both these clues, and with all his ingenuity, and invention, and address, he will never extricate himself, nor justify the sentence of the Assembly. Be it known, therefore, to Dr Irvine, and to all his colleagues and coadjutors, that I am not disposed to recal one word of all the praise which I have bestowed upon Dr Stuart's translation of the Bible into Gaelic—that, if I knew more appropriate words in which to convey a higher degree of praise than those which I have employed are calculated to express, these are the words which I would employ—that I consider it as one of the finest specimens of human skill, and industry, and fidelity, which any language can exhibit—the most interesting work as a whole, (the originals always excepted) which can be put into the hands of old or young who are capable of perusing it—and a work of which I would rather be the author than of the *Iliad* of Homer or the *Paradise Lost* of Milton.

Let Dr Irvine, however, restrain his childish exultation—he is not relieved, nor is the Assembly at all justified in its decision—for I do not mean to diminish one iota of the objections which I have stated against the translation. I shall prove immediately, that it not only contains many obsolete, barbarous, and obscure vocables; but is also, in not a few instances, chargeable with bad grammar, and incorrect translation. I appeal to all Gaelic scholars, whether the following verses are not properly translated from the Gaelic Bible, viz:—Gen. XII. 3. And I will bless them that thou wilt bless. xxvii. 30. And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet

scarce gone out from the presence of Isaac a father.—Ex. iv. 7. And he said, put thine hand into thy bosom again. And he put a hand into his bosom again.—xxxii. 7. And the Lord said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. And verse 11. And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand.—Deut. xxxiii. 8. And of Levi he said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy Holy One who proved thee at Massah.—1 Chron. xxix. 29. Now the acts of Solomon the king, first and last, behold they are written in the book of Samuel the seer, and in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the book of Gad the seer.—Ps. ciii. 4. Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; whom thou crownest with loving kindness and tender mercies.—Mat. v. 39. [But I say unto you that 'ye resist not evil; but whatsoever person thou striketh on thy right cheek, turn to him the other cheek also.—Rev. xvii. 8. The beast that saw thee, was, and is not. Verse 12. And the ten horns which saw thee, are ten kings. Verse 15. And he saith unto me, The waters which saw thee, where the whore sitteth, are people, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. Verse 16. And the ten horns which saw thee upon the beast, these shall hate the whore. Verse 18. And the woman who saw thee, is that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

It is quite unnecessary to multiply instances to a greater extent. The above, hastily picked up, in occasionally turning over the volume, are sufficient to shew that the Gaelic translation of the Bible is not yet arrived at that degree of correctness of which the language is capable—that the General Assembly have acted prematurely in restricting all Gaelic readers to the use of this translation solely—and unadvisedly, and injuriously towards the best interests of religion in the Highlands, by passing an Act the tendency of which is to prevent the improvement of the Gaelic Scriptures, and to diminish their circulation and usefulness where no other language is understood. It would certainly have become the dignity of the General Assembly to have acted coolly and deliberately on a question of such vital importance to the best interests of so many thousands of immortal souls—it would

have become them to have consulted the CHURCH on a question which the *Church only* was competent to decide—and not to have hastily passed so partial a sentence at the suggestion of any man, or body of men whatever. If that printer is thought worthy of immortal honour who used to expose the proof-sheets of his Classics, for many successive days, in the most public streets of the city, to invite the corrections of all who could spy an error in them; with how much greater propriety would the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland have acted, if, instead of pronouncing a prohibitory law to all improvement, they had invited and encouraged every effort to produce the most perfect possible translation of the Sacred Oracles in the first language of the nation!

I am not at all ignorant that Dr Irvine will very loudly vociferate that by this sort of language, I revile the General Assembly, attempt to bring discredit upon the Church, and to deny the benefit which has resulted to this highly favoured nation from its doctrine and discipline, its institutions and government, during all the ages that are past. But I scorn and repel the unwarrantable charge! I am as true, as zealous, and sincere a son of the Church as Dr Irvine—I was as duly and legally returned a member of the last General Assembly as Dr Irvine—I have a heart to feel, and candour to acknowledge, and public spirit to glory in the inestimable blessings of which the Church of Scotland has been the fruitful source to myriads of the human race, as well as Dr Irvine—and I am certain that my wishes are as warm, and my labours as painful as his (however well or ill directed,) that these blessings may be continued in our Church to the latest posterity—“that peace may be within the walls of our Jerusalem, and prosperity within her palaces.”—I wish to see our Church, in our day, as our fathers have seen it in their day—respectable and respected—the source of light and comfort to its friends—of terror to its enemies—the admiration of surrounding nations—“the joy of all the earth”—even in advanced age, “looking forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.”

But, for this end, I wish to see its Courts, from the highest to the lowest, observe that coolness in deliberation, that patience of investigation, that perfect freedom from the influence of corrupt or partial counsel, that manly independence of party-measures or

considerations, and that single eye to the divine glory and the best interests of religion, pure and undefiled, which are indispensably necessary to render their decisions equitable, and their continuance useful and desirable. I wish to see our Supreme Ecclesiastical Court especially, listen with an equal ear to the claims of every party, in every question of a doubtful or suspicious nature; and cautiously avoid the consequence of a rash determination, which can do no good, and may be attended with extensive and serious harm.—I maintain that the sentence of the General Assembly 1817, regarding the Gaelic Bible, and renewed annually since, has done no good—was not calculated to do good—was unnecessary, and uncalled-for by the circumstances of the country—and has done, and is likely to do, much harm to the interests of religion in the Highlands of Scotland—that the present Gaelic Translation of the Scriptures is not understood in many parts of the country where the Gaelic language only is spoken—that it is not such as will justify that Church, whose sole rule of faith and manners is the Word of God, in binding men's consciences exclusively to its dictates by a law. If the supporters of that sentence expect to prove the reverse of this proposition, they must assuredly do so by very different arguments from those employed by Dr Irvine and his friends in the last General Assembly—arguments, the futility and pernicious tendency of which I shall, with the first leisure moments, expose.

The sentence of the General Assembly complained of has done no good, because it has not prevented a single Bible from being used in a pulpit or in a school, which would have been used if that sentence had not been passed—it was not calculated to do good, because it could not induce any person to bring a copy of the present translation into a pulpit or a school, who had not been previously disposed to do so—it was unnecessary and uncalled-for, because no other translation existed which could come into competition with it—it has done, and is still likely to do harm, because it has opposed, as far as an Act of a General Assembly can oppose, a bar to all future improvement of our Gaelic Translation, though confessedly faulty—because it prevents many from reading the Bible who would willingly do so if they had it an intelligible language—because it furnishes a plausible pretext to those who are indifferent about the Scriptures, to refrain from buying or perusing them, or encouraging their families to do so

—and because its direct and immediate object was, to bring into disrepute (by raising the hue and cry of heresy and jargon) a Work undertaken and prosecuted with great labour and expence, by a Member of our Church, which might be more generally purchased, and more extensively useful, both as a translation and a commentary, if that unnecessary and uncalled-for opposition had not been given.

I am very far, however, from supposing, or wishing it to be understood by these strictures, that the great majority of the General Assembly were under the influence of such motives as these, or were at all aware that such consequences would result from the motion to which they assented. I am convinced that that venerable and intelligent Court were actuated by the purest motives, according to the light in which the subject had been represented to them. The General Assembly formed their judgment upon the statements of a man who was himself a Gaelic scholar, a Member of the Court, and who professed to be a most wonderful judge of Gaelic compositions, most extensively acquainted with Gaelic translations and translators, a faithful friend of the Highlanders, a zealous promoter of the best interests of religion and morality, and really as competent to pronounce, with oracular certainty, concerning the sole means (at least as far as Gaelic translations were to be employed) for advancing these interests over all the widely extending districts of the Highlands and Isles of Scotland.

And who would not be misled by professions and statements such as these? particularly when it is considered that the professions have been repeated, and the statements defended, on the face of a most respectable and extensively circulated newspaper, some months after they had been made in the General Assembly. Notwithstanding all this confidence, however, and all these pretensions, had the General Assembly suspended their judgment for a little time, they would have found, what I am now going to demonstrate, that these statements of Dr Irvine were rashly hazarded, without the shadow of evidence, and were, besides, in direct contradiction to sentiments which had been recently declared in writing, by the same man, as the cool, deliberate, and firm conviction of his mind.

That the statements of Dr Irvine respecting the translation of the Scriptures, which formed the subject of the overture of the

Synod of Ross, were without evidence, is undeniable, because he has never seen a single sheet of that Work. And that they are directly in the face of his own avowed sentiments, I shall now prove by the testimony of a very respectable and credible witness whom I consulted, and whose assistance I craved, a few years ago, when about to engage in the great work which is now in hand. My friend writes to me in the following words, viz. "My dear Sir—I had the pleasure of your's of the 18th ult. in due time, and delayed answering it till I should have an opportunity of conversing with my friends hereabout, and making up my mind what opinion to offer. A pretty large quarto edition, like the Irish, of the Gaelic Scriptures, is certainly much needed, and I have no doubt, would have a good sale. I know no man better qualified than you for such an undertaking. You have knowledge enough, and more zeal and experience than are commonly found among our order. In point of ability, you are far before honest Dr Stuart, and your ability would unquestionably ensure the credit of the Work."——"I think there is much room for a new translation and new orthography, as I will (shall) endeavour to shew, in a Dissertation on the progress of the Gaelic. We have by far too many useless letters, which form no part of the word, and which obscure the language. People talk of the translation as the standard, without knowing what a standard is. How many impressions of the English Scriptures we have had before their orthography was fixed in its present state!" &c. &c.

This letter is addressed to me, dated "Dunkeld, 19th April 1816," and signed "A. IRVINE,"—that is, I presume, the Rev. Dr Alexander Irvine, Minister of Little Dunkeld. As Dr Irvine will not deny that he was the writer of the letter from which the above are correct excerpts, it remains with him to reconcile the sentiments which it contains with those which he expressed in the General Assembly in May, and conveyed to you in his letter, dated 4th August last; and I call upon him, as he values his own character and respectability, and usefulness, to do justice to himself, or to confess that he has erred.

It is ungenerous to strike a fallen foe (and I am sure that Dr Irvine will never give a satisfactory account of his own conduct); and it is painful to pitch a clergyman between the horns of such a fearful dilemma: but really Dr Irvine has himself to blame. I never courted, nor merited his opposition. But when a Minister

of this Church, and a Member of the supreme Ecclesiastical Court of the nation, chuses to come forward as the champion of a party, to call his brother Clergymen a parcel of ignorant dolts and conceited ideots, who can neither read nor write in their mother tongue—whose orthodoxy is doubtful, and whose compositions are a jumble of inconsistencies and wonders—completely “evil beasts, slow bellies”—to tell the General Assembly that nothing can be tolerated in the Highlands but what is impressed with the seal of his approbation, and that it would be perfect heresy to allow a publication to issue from the press of which “even he himself did not revise some of the sheets”—it is time to take up the cause of truth, and to inform the General Assembly and the country, that there are other clergymen in the Highlands who understand English and Gaelic as well as Dr Irvine—others by whom the doctrines of the Bible are as clearly apprehended, as distinctly stated, as faithfully delivered, as zealously enforced, and as strenuously maintained, as they are by him—and in whose hands the interests of morality and religion may be as safely entrusted as in his:—and it is proper to tell the General Assembly, that it may possibly injure these interests by listening too implicitly to the unsupported averments of any one party in a favourite case.

Before finishing my letter, I must beg leave, Mr Editor, to direct your attention to a most beautiful specimen of reasoning which Dr Irvine employs towards the close of his epistle, to shew the total inadmissibility of any other translation of the Scriptures into Gaelic, or of any material change upon the present translation; and by which he, at the same time, demonstrates the deep interest which he takes in the diffusion of Scripture knowledge, particularly among the poor ignorant people in the Highlands. Dr Irvine having formerly asserted, or rather taken for granted, that many of the Clergy in the Highlands can neither read nor write Gaelic, he now adds, “If his people, (meaning those of Dr Ross), or the inhabitants of Ross-shire, do not understand the present translation, they may translate or interpret for themselves as I have often done.” That is, the poor Highlander, who does not understand one word of any language in the world but Gaelic, and who does not understand the present translation of the Bible even in that language, may take the Hebrew Bible or the Greek New Testament, and translate or interpret for himself!

What can Dr Irvine mean by this mass of absurdity ! If a man *does not* understand a word but Gaelic, how can he translate into Gaelic from Hebrew, Greek, or English ? If he *understands* Hebrew, Greek, or English, what occasion has he to translate any of these languages into Gaelic, *for himself* ? Or what difference does it make to him whether a translation is intelligible or not ? But Dr Irvine allows the people, not only to translate, but to *interpret* for themselves !—an admission which I really did not expect from the Doctor ; because I think it might have occurred to him that, if by any chance, the parishioners of Little Dunkeld should come to discover that the poor Highlanders of Lochbroom might interpret the Scripture for themselves, their more enlightened neighbours would readily assert the same privilege, and desert the Doctor's ministry, and so our whole craft would “ be in danger to be set at nought.”

As to Dr Irvine's verbal criticisms, he should remember the Latin adage, “ *Aquila non captat muscas.*” However, as trifles are magnified into matters of importance, when solid arguments are altogether wanting, let us see to what Dr Irvine's criticisms amount. *1st, Within the spot*, is an elliptical form of speech, the ellipsis in which is supplied by every child, by the words, “ circumference of the” is perfectly good English. The very same phrase is used by Mr Brougham in his late celebrated speech in the House of Peers, in defence of the Queen ; and that is authority enough. Dr Irvine should remember that a *spot* and a mathematical *point*, which he seems to confound with each other, are very different things—that the earth itself dwindles into a very small spot, when observed from certain distances—yet within the circumference of that spot, how many wonderful achievements have been loudly celebrated !—What an astonishing variety of works, for instance, have been examined !—and in what an astonishing variety of languages !—and that within the fleeting period of one human life !—*2d, Composing a translation* is just a downright blunder---but it is such a blunder as a man in the hurry of *composition* commits, when he writes an *if* for an *and*, or a *from* for a *to*. The former part of the same letter, where the proper word is used, shews that it was merely so in the instance which the Doctor notices. It was, however, extremely stupid not to have corrected it in reading over the letter, if indeed that part of it was read over before it was sent to press.

In return for this admission, I request the favour that Dr Irvine will explain to my dull capacity, how a man can be cured of an *acid* by the *exhibition* of an *inconsistency* or a *wonder*? *2dly*, How a man can *embrace* a man, or a measure, with *open arms*? *3dly*, How *one* translation can find *their* way into the pulpit? *4thly*, What method could the *translations* of Dr Campbell of Aberdeen, and of Dr M'Knight of Edinburgh, have taken to *abuse* the General Assembly, or the Parliament, if they had been disposed to abuse them?

I have the honour to be,

SIR,

Your most obt. and humble servant,

THOMAS ROSS.

Lochbroom Manse, 26th Oct. 1820.

LETTER V.

To the Editor of the Inverness Journal.

SIR,—I am sorry to see by your paper of the 3d, 10th, 17th, and 24th ult. that the Rev. Dr Thomas Ross of Lochbroom suddenly made his exit. This world is, to be sure, a stage, and all the men and women are mere players. I suspected from the worthy, sober, candid, temperate, generous, friendly, gentleman-like letter of the Doctor, published in your paper of the 21st July last, that some great change was hanging over my old acquaintance, who was always too far north for me, and who was not improved by the muddy atmosphere of marshy Holland—then I recalled the words of the bard, *cenis, et manes, et fabula fiet*—that I might, as I thought, overtake him before his transit into his favourite comet, I lost no time in imparting some words of consolation, with an idea that it might be the last opportunity, and with a view to enable him to repose in peace in the dust from which he rose. I had not the most distant intention to ascribe to him Popery, or Prelacy, or Heresy, or any thing bad. I attributed his letter, and his speech, which I heard some years before, to some other cause, as difficult to define, and as difficult to remove. As a scholar alone I drew his character, allowing him a competent portion of good things, with what justice, we shall see.

Here I must say, that so far I was wrong in judgment, and crave forgiveness.

Since I cannot, with propriety, as a critic of his words and literary actions, apply to him the often-misapplied maxim *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*, I may apply an epitaph, which I do with the utmost gravity, "Alas! poor Yorick."

Having disposed of these preliminary points, I must now proceed to state some of my reasons for inferring his sudden departure, some way or other; they are founded on a long letter, outstripping in length its condemned antagonist, signed Thomas Ross, published in the said numbers of your very useful paper, and pretending to be an answer to my letter of the 4th of August, published in your paper of the 18th and 25th of that month; which answer is certainly most satisfactory, so far as assertion, denial, contradiction, inconsistency, and absurdity, can answer matters of fact—directly bearing on the point at issue. I can hardly think that Dr Ross would lose sight of his own dignity, so far as to allow such a letter to pass under his name, displaying so many extraordinary properties, in the highest degree becoming and honourable. I take it then to be the work of some roguish wag, hostile to his character and to his order, who, under his venerable name, was wanton enough to inflict a grievous wound upon his memory. Surely an enemy has done this—says every one who on this side the Grampians had patience to read the letter—not *magnum in parvo*.

If the former letter, which I now begin to suspect was not Dr Ross's, was a *felo de se*, a mass of good-natured absurdities, this one is infinitely more so, but with much more humour and amusement; and if there was much difficulty in dissecting the former, the difficulty here is almost too much for Barclay. It is almost a *noli me tangere* to the critic's scalpel; therefore, I do not intend to occupy much of your valuable paper, by attempting to analyze it; no offence for changing my metaphor; this is the less necessary, because to any candid or careful reader of Dr Irvine's letter, and of this, it, I mean pseudo-Ross's letter, answers itself even when it so unmercifully and so unsparingly loads Dr Irvine with undeserved honours, who must exclaim with the Thracian exile of this *ursa*, perhaps *ursus*, Major Borealis—*Me miserum, quanti montes voluntur aguserum*—i. e. Wretched me, how Lochbroom has overwhelmed me. I do not vouch for the accuracy of my

translation. It would be a sin "to triumph over a fallen foe:" this would not prove the "generosity" of Dr Ross's Christian temper. Seeing the worried Doctor writhing in literary agony, overwhelmed under sulphureous mountains, under the lash of Dr Ross, if so, who, though he could write books, could not write a *letter*. I think I see his spirit exulting in the victory, and joining his friend Pamphilus, in the comedy, hurrahing from his cloudy chariot, *O faustum et felicem hunc diem*—that is, What a clever fellow I have been. *Tres Doctores interfeci calamo—Dice sempiternum nomen*. I wish the Doctor's Advocate may admit the legitimacy of my translation, and doggrel Latin. Really, in venturing, Mr Editor, to approach this porcupine letter, which I am sure you are by this time abundantly satisfied I am unwilling to do, I am reminded of that awful line of a celebrated Bard—*Lassat agni speranza ovi ch' entrate*—that is, ye who touch me leave all hope behind.

But to prove the probability of my fears, or the reality of my conviction, I must now, at all hazards, state my reasons for denying the merits of this said letter to Dr Ross, which I do almost all in the humble form of a few questions, suggested by the amusing Catechism of the letter. The writer of it is offended, because I use the first person singular, when under the necessity of speaking of myself. Dr Ross never *would* use such a person. But would Dr Ross call this egotism, when really the language furnished no other term. He would never censure any body for being, like himself, a first person singular, though he be more a dual. Would he blame Dr Irvine for "would-be-learned," to use his own elegant expression, when in fact he shewed no learning at all, but such as it would be a shame to any Minister of our Church not to possess, especially when Dr Ross himself determined to display the abundance of his knowledge? Could Dr Ross be ignorant of the many late attempts to translate, in part or in whole, the Scriptures into English? Could he be ignorant of the famous new and literal translation just going on by Bellamy, or some such name, very near a-kin to his specimen of the Ross-shire Gaelic translation, laid on the table of the General Assembly in May last, evidently to prevent the Assembly from admitting the claims of Dr Ross, then living in Lochbroom, but attending his duty in the metropolis? Would Dr Ross, after being laughed at, pitied, if not despised, on account of his sheer ig-

norance and vanity, when, two or three years ago, he attempted to force his non-existent translation upon the notice of the Assembly, have again thrust forward two honest men to share his shame and defeat, without heading them to the field of combat with his claymore, which, it would appear, does execution only in Lochbroom? Would Dr Ross court this species of celebrity? Would Dr Ross deny, that not a sheet of his translation was ever seen by Dr Irvine or the Assembly, when his agents laid a sheet, professing to be a specimen of his translation, on the Assembly table? Would Dr Ross admit and deny the jurisdiction of the Assembly over the whole Church of Scotland, as the highest and only ecclesiastical tribunal in the kingdom? Would Dr Ross call averments, founded upon the Acts of Assembly, false, injurious, *ipse dixit* scandal, &c.? Could Dr Ross be mad enough to imagine that the Assembly could enter into his passions and absurdities, and recal their approbation of a work highly approved even by Dr Ross and his advocate, carried on under the inspection of the Assembly, and transfer their affection to the proposed translation of a man unknown, untried, who, in their presence, exhibited his incapacity, or worse? Could Dr Ross suppose, that the Assembly could, with any propriety, countenance two contemporary translations, or twenty, in the same language, for the same people, when they were doing all in their power to render an admirable translation as perfect as possible, and as intelligible as possible, to every one who really understands Gaelic, which, as will be seen just now, Dr Ross's advocate does not? Would Dr Ross publish his shame to the world, by telling, that though a member, he did not attend his duty in the Assembly, where he had such momentous interests at stake? Would Dr Ross venture to assert that the Assembly were preventing the improvement of Ross-shire, by opposing his translation, when their enactment had not the most distant reference to it, when in fact he may bring it out to-morrow if he can, when he admits that it was not intended, with its appendages, for the pulpit at least? Would Dr Ross take such ways to evince his zeal for the good of the Highlanders? Would Dr Ross, from the shadows of his fancy, try to raise the Highland host against the Assembly, and three obnoxious individuals, who acted faithfully, honestly, and conscientiously in the discharge of an important duty, without one feeling of dislike to Dr Ross, as a being altogether beyond their notice?

To bring my reasons to a close : Would Dr Ross be so unlike a man of honour as to publish in a newspaper, *without leave*, part of a confidential letter *in praise of himself*, without at least publishing the whole? Would Dr Ross, if himself be so devoid of delicacy and discretion as to cause two confidential private letters, certainly ill founded, so far as they gave praise where it was not due, to be read before the Assembly till the reader was called to order, and reprobated by the unanimous voice of the whole House? What would Dr Ross or his advocate think if Dr Irvine were to follow such an example? And what would any man of moral feeling have thought, if such a dereliction of principle, so subversive of social intercourse, were tolerated? Surely none but an enemy could have done this. But my chief object, in writing this letter, is to defend our present Gaelic translation of the Scriptures, which even the praises of Dr Ross could not injure. Therefore, I ask, would Dr Ross shew his ignorance of the first elements of Gaelic Grammar, by quoting, as inaccurate translation, passages correctly translated? Would Dr Ross not know that the relative pronoun, in the very first verse he pretends to translate, is the same in the nominative and accusative? Would Dr Ross condemn, in our incomparable translation, what he approved and *wrote* in Ossian? See Fingal, Duan V. line 274, exactly the same as to Grammar with the first specimen he gives of his skill in the Gaelic language—"A dfhāg me 'n talla nan Tūr," which, according to his notions, should be, not as the context leads us to understand, "whom I left in the hall of towers," but "who left me," &c. All the examples he quotes as mis-translations, shew the same ignorance : what, then, can we think of his capacity for a new and improved translation of the Gaelic Scriptures?

I am much at a loss to account for the rage and fury of the letter, unless they arose from the consciousness of having got his head into a noose from which he cannot extricate himself, just as a horse becomes enraged when he finds himself in a bog. The writer representing Thomas Ross, reminds me of the lines of a Roman satirist, which I will not translate—

Nunc face supposita fervescit sanguis, a ira
 Scintillant oculi ; dicisque facisque quod ipse,
 Non sani esse hominis, non sanus juret Orestes.

With Dr Ross I had no quarrel, no controversy—I spoke in self-defence to repel a groundless attack for doing my duty, which I attribute to unpardonable ignorance,—and had I any doubt about the propriety and justice of my conduct, it would have been removed by the two letters. I must embrace the alternative allowed me by the writer of the second, and confess that I have erred in my judgment of Dr Ross—*humanum est errare*: for I hardly know any man less fit for executing a proper Gaelic translation of the Bible. I cannot think that the Act of Assembly deprived him of his judgment. “Does the Dr,” he gravely asks, “suppose, that the sentence of the Assembly is to make me lose my judgment?” The Dr never supposed any such thing, where there was none to lose—for if there had been judgment, it would never have allowed Dr Ross to condemn another for mentioning his name, and yet so unmercifully follow the example. Dr Irvine certainly was not born 121 years ago, though he was a minister long before 1799. But the Assembly never dies.

Having trespassed much farther upon your limits than I at first intended, I shall conclude with giving a few advices to Dr Ross, if the foresaid reasons do not prove that he is not, *nam fas est ab hoste doceri*—that, if alive, he should write a dissertation upon the merits of Dr Stuart’s translation, including all his coadjutors, giving at the same time specimens of his own improved version, for the inspection of the Gaelic scholars to whom he appeals, and stating the improper conduct of the Assembly—and, in order to bring the indignation of the country upon his adversaries, demonstrate the irreparable loss which the poor Highlanders of the North may have sustained, from not having the Scriptures in a language which they can understand, especially in so cheap, portable, and convenient a form, as a handsome *quarto with annotations*—and that if he publish in Gaelic, it will be more accessible to those who are personally interested. This will give him an opportunity of exhibiting specimens of the excellency of his Gaelic, and of his capacity to translate from the Greek and Hebrew. Lastly, I would recommend to him two subjects in your paper—a cure for bilious and liver complaints, and the cock fighting with his shadow in the boot; only I am afraid he will make himself the cock, and his opponent the shadow. No matter, *Aquila*

nox captat umbras. Let me then conclude with a passage applicable to the man who usurped the name of Thomas Ross :

Emittit que Notum, (Ovid should have said Boream)
 madidis Notus evolat alis
 Terrebilem picea tectus calijine vultum.
 Utque manu lata pendentia nubila pressit
 Fit fragor.—What a crash !

I now, Mr Editor, offer you my warmest thanks, for your candid and kind attention ; ask pardon of your readers for my letter, which is intended for Dr Ross, or his Substitute ; and take my leave of him and his singular successor, assuring him that I am quite gratified by his compliments, though not given in the most delicate style.

I am, Sir, yours,

Dunkeld, 22d Dec. 1820.

A. IRVINE.

P. S.—The reason why I did not notice the letter sooner, is, that I thought a while before I had determined to take any notice of it at all. But, after laying it by for some days, I took it up yesterday, and found it so amusing and so edifying to us in the South, upon whom the Aurora Borealis so seldom shines, that I thought it deserved a *coup de grace*.

LETTER IV.

To the Editor of the Inverness Journal.

SIR,—Were I not well convinced that the free circulation of the Sacred Scriptures among the numerous population of the Highlands of Scotland, in an intelligible language, and, by that means, the extensive diffusion of saving knowledge among so interesting a portion of our fellow creatures, is an object which can never lose its interest in your estimation, I should think it highly presumptuous in myself to resume, at this distance of time, the subject of my letter which you did me the favour to insert in your Journal of the 21st July last. Assured, however, as I feel, of your hearty co-operation in any legitimate plan for the promo-

tion of an end so important und desirable, I proceed, without further apology, to consider the opposition given to it at the last General Assembly, just where my former letter left it.

In that letter, I combated the two first arguments which were employed by Dr Irvine to oppose the Overture of the Synod of Ross in favour of a new translation of the Bible into Gaelic, and with such success that both the arguments have been completely relinquished by the Doctor. The first argument was, "That as a former Overture of the same Synod had expressed their unqualified approbation of Dr Stuart's work, and of its being in every respect adapted to the dialect of the inhabitants, therefore the present Overture was most unnecessary and improper." This argument, which was reported by all the newspapers and other periodical publications, Dr Irvine withdraws, by denying that he ever made use of it; which shews, at least, that it is untenable, and ought not to have been employed. His words are, "I must, however, protest against ascribing to me what I never said nor thought. I never said that the Synod of Ross expressed their unqualified approbation of Dr Stuart's work, or that it is in every respect adapted to the dialects of the inhabitants, or that any Overture of the Synod expressed an unqualified or qualified approbation of it."

His second argument is, that if one translation, besides that which he approves of, were to be attempted and allowed, there would be no end of translations, because every district and locality would insist upon having a separate version for itself. To this I answered at considerable length; and as Dr Irvine has not in his long letter said one word in reply, I must take for granted that he is perfectly satisfied on that head also.

Dr Irvine's third argument, in opposing a new translation of the Scriptures into Gaelic, is, "That if every one who thinks fit is allowed to make translations of the Scriptures, there is every danger of misleading and bewildering the people." By this species of reasoning we are surely to understand the Doctor as supposing that there is nothing to prevent every one who pleases from making a translation of the Scriptures, but merely the fear of the controuling power of the General Assembly; and that if this fear were once removed, by granting the prayer of the Ross-shire Overture (which, however, it would not be one bit,) then the whole country would at once be inundated with Gaelic Bibles

in all the various dialects, (or, in the more elegant phraseology of Dr M'Farlane,) in all the various *jargons* of the Highlands; so that the people, bewildered and confounded, would be at the utmost loss how to act or where to look for a proper copy of the Scriptures of truth.

This argument, the speaker wishes us to believe, had made such an impression upon his own mind, that he considered it as altogether conclusive and unanswerable; and the effect which it produced upon the Assembly was just that which he desired, at least so far as it is safe to infer from the ordinary token of approbation in such cases, though very frequently the echo of an empty head,—*Hear!*

But, in order to shew what degree of importance Dr Irvine really attached to this argument, I shall take the liberty to put a few plain questions to him, which he cannot answer otherwise than according to my wish, and so extract the genuine sentiments of his heart from his own mouth.

Q. Will you tell me, Dr Irvine, how many persons there are in the island of Great Britain who care one penny whether there shall or shall not be a Gaelic Bible in the world?—A. Comparatively few.

Q. Will you tell me how many of these comparatively few you conceive to be particularly wishful that the Sacred Scriptures should be enjoyed by the Highlanders in their own language in the purest possible form?—A. Still fewer.

Q. How many, then, of these “still fewer,” do you think could translate the Bible into proper and classical Gaelic, if they should be “allowed” to do so by the General Assembly?—A. Very few, to be sure; at least I know that there are many “*Ministers* in the Highlands who can neither read, write, nor understand classical Gaelic;” and if this is the case in regard to the *Clergy*, what must it be in regard to the *laity*?

Q. How many of those “very few” who could make a good translation of the Bible, if they were “allowed” by the General Assembly, are otherwise in circumstances which admit of their undertaking and executing so great a work?—A. Still fewer, no doubt.

Q. How many now, do you think, of these “still fewer than the very few,” whose talents, knowledge, and other circumstances are just as favourable as could be wished, would, with all these

facilities, at the same time, risk a thousand or two thousand pounds of their property for promoting the object under consideration, particularly if they were aware that they were to meet with the most determined opposition in publishing and circulating their translations from yourself, and from Dr M'Farlane, and from Dr Cooke?—I candidly confess that I cannot tell.

Q. Tell me, then, Dr Irvine, how many persons *have*, in fact, made translations of the Scriptures into Gaelic from the time of the confusion of languages, at the building of Babel to the present day?—A. “ You know that, in 1602, when the King of Scotland became the King of England also, the New Testament was then translated into Irish by Dr Daniel, afterwards Archbishop of Tuam, in quarto, and published at the expence of Sir William Usher and the province of Connaught,—that this edition was persecuted and speedily destroyed by the Popish Priests. In 1681, however, a new edition was published at the sole expence of the Honourable Robert Boyle, a name dear to piety and to literature.”

Q. I know, likewise, that in the year 1802, just two hundred years after Dr Daniel had translated the *New Testament* into *Irish*, and when the King of Scotland and England became, by a happy union, the King of Ireland also, as one kingdom, a *Book of Sports* was published by the Rev. Wm. B. Daniel, (though not afterwards Archbishop of Tuam,) in two elegant volumes, in 4to too, with a number of very beautiful engravings, and treating of Dogs, Foxes, Stags, Hares, Rabbits, Martins, Badgers, Otters, Fishes, Game-Laws, &c. &c. But as the question is not about *Irish New Testaments*, or *Rural Sports*, the publication of both these books is equally foreign to the subject. My question is, How many persons have made translations of the Scriptures into *Gaelic*?—A. You know that in 1640 the *Old Testament* was translated by Bishop Bedell of Kilmore; but it remained unprinted and unpublished for 40 years. In 1685 it was published by the exertions of Mr Boyle, who expended L.700 Sterling upon such a pious work.”

Q. I know, too, that the same most excellent Bishop Bedell translated the English Common Prayer Book into Italian, and also drew up an English Grammar for the use of the Father Paul Sarpi, who, in return, sent the Bishop his picture, and a MS. copy of his famous history of the Council of Trent. But what has the

history of the *Council of Trent*, or the translation of the English Common Prayer Book into *Italian*, or of the Old Testament into *Irish* to do with my question, which is, How many persons have made translations of the Scriptures into GAELIC?—A. You perhaps may not know, “and it is curious to remark, that 120 years ago the language of Ireland and of the Highlands was called *Irish*, or *Erse*, being nearly the same, or supposed to be the same.”

Q. This could only be done by persons who were equally ignorant of both languages; just as other persons who do not understand the Dutch and German languages may call the language of Germany and of Holland *High Dutch* or *Low Dutch*, being nearly “the same, or *supposed* to be the same.” But surely a man who has examined a variety of Works, in a variety of languages, could never fall into this mistake. I beg, therefore, that you will answer my question, How many persons have made translations of the Scriptures into *Gaelic*?—A. “On the 27th March 1563, a bill was brought into the English Parliament to provide, that the Bible and the Divine Service might be translated into the Welsh or British tongue, and used in the Churches of Wales. In 1567, the New Testament was printed by Henry Durham, a London printer; and three years after the whole Welsh Bible appeared in folio; a new and improved edition, called Parry’s Bible, was published in 1620; another, called Bishop Lloyd’s Bible, came out in 1690.”

Q. On the 3d November 1534, too, the Parliament being assembled, completed the union of England and Wales, by giving to that principality all the benefit of the English laws. But what have these events to do with my question, How many persons have made translations of the Scriptures into *Gaelic*? I beseech you, Dr Irvine, without any farther evasion, to give me a direct answer to this question.—A. “As yet there was no Highlander to take pity upon his perishing countrymen, who despised the men of books.”

Q. That is, as I understand you, till the days of the Hon. Robert Boyle. Let me now ask you, How many have published translations of the Scriptures into Gaelic since his days, or since he published the *Irish* Old Testament?—A. “It was not till 1767 that the New Testament was translated by Mr James Stewart, minister of Killin, father of the present translator, and printed at

the expence of the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge, aided by several eminent Gaelic scholars in different parts of the Highlands. It was 1802 before the Old Testament was completed by Dr Stuart, aided, as his father was, to my knowledge, by all the best of known Gaelic and Hebrew scholars in the Highlands and Western Isles, from Lewis to Tarbetness, and from Uist to Dunkeld."

Q. This translation was set on foot, conducted, completed, and printed at the expence of the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge? Was it not?—A. Yes.

Q. Then has it no more connection with my question that if it had been executed in the moon. You know very well, that the overture of the Synod of Ross was in favour of a translation executed by one individual, whose name and designation were given,—that it was to be made at his own expence, and printed and published at his sole risk. You know also, that your own words in the General Assembly were, not that there was danger from translations which might be made by the Church at large, or by great societies, aided by public contribution, and enriched by Royal munificence; but "if every *one* who thinks fit is allowed to make translations of the Scriptures, *there* is every danger." Let me therefore repeat my question, How many *ones*, or *individuals*, have published translations of the Scriptures into Gaelic since the days of Mr Boyle?—A. Not one.

Q. And is there not much less necessity for publishing a new translation of the Scriptures in Gaelic now than there ever was before?—A. To be sure there is, because we have an admirable translation already; and of that translation many thousand copies have already been printed by several excellent Societies, and are widely circulated in every district of the Highlands, to the great comfort and edification of the people.

Q. Is not the prospect of pecuniary emolument from publishing a new translation of the Scriptures in Gaelic, therefore, much more uncertain now than it ever was before?—A. Yes, certainly.

Q. And is not the chance proportionably less, that individuals will venture upon so unpromising a speculation with the view of worldly gain?—A. Undoubtedly it is.

Q. And is not the danger from new translations by individuals in exact proportion to the number of individuals who are likely

to embark successfully in the undertaking of publishing new translations of the Scriptures into Gaelic?—A. That cannot be denied.

Q. Tell me, then, Dr Irvine, fairly and candidly, what is, in your estimation, in all the circumstances of the case, the amount of this danger?—A. I am not obliged to tell you that.

It is quite unnecessary, Mr Editor, to press Dr Irvine upon this question,—“*Causa scientiæ* (or rather *scientiæ*) patet.” It is just NOTHING AT ALL.

From this simple dialogue, which, if my understanding does not deceive me, has been conducted with the utmost fairness, it is clearly admitted by Dr Irvine, that from the days of the flood there was no attempt by any individual to publish a translation of the Scriptures in the Gaelic language until the present, which has been made by the writer of this letter; that there never existed a Gaelic translation of the Scriptures until the one now in circulation was made by the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge; that since the publication of that translation, the necessity for publishing any other is much less than it was before,—the prospect of gain from such a publication most delusive,—the danger to religion or the Church, from the frequency of such publications, just none whatever; and Dr Irvine's opposition to a new translation, therefore, (the first that ever was given publicly and avowedly by a Protestant Clergyman of our Church to a translation of the Scriptures into any living language,) is not founded on any apprehended danger; his argument, here examined, was calculated only “to mislead and bewilder” the General Assembly; and his justification of his Assembly speech, calculated only “to mislead and bewilder the people.”—“*O magna vis veritatis, quæ, contra hominum ingenia, calliditatem, solertiam, contraque fictas omnium insidias, facile se, per seipsam defendat!*”

The 4th argument employed by Dr Irvine to oppose the overture of the Synod of Ross, is, That there are many preachers in Ross-shire who can neither write nor read Gaelic; that the members of the Synod are therefore no judges of the orthodoxy or purity of a translation into that language; and, of consequence, that the translation which they recommend, is likely to contain errors of doctrine, or other essential defects.

Now, in remarking upon this argument, if I may dignify it with the name, I have two or three words to say to Dr Irvine, as to its bearing on the Synod of Ross, on myself, and on the proposed translation.

In regard to the Synod of Ross, it was certainly a very egregious departure, on the part of Dr Irvine, from that chastened decency of language which is indispensable in the ordinary intercourse of civilized society, to cast so foul an aspersion as that of gross and palpable ignorance upon a whole provincial Synod of our National Church. To correct the "acid" of this sweeping sentence, it may be proper to observe, that there are "*preachers*," yea Ministers, in the Synod of Ross, who have no occasion to write, or to read, or to preach, or to speak, in the Gaelic language; and therefore that the censure of ignorance, on the ground of not knowing that language, will apply to any other Synod of our Church with equal propriety as to the Synod of Ross. And even with respect to those *preachers*, as he chuses to call them, whose stated duty it is to officiate in the Gaelic language, I will boldly venture to affirm that there are men among them, in comparison with whom, it is no detraction from any talents or qualifications to which Dr Irvine has any legitimate pretensions, to say, that he will always occupy a very inferior rank to them, as a scholar, as a preacher, and as a Divine.

In regard to myself, I have to complain that Dr Irvine has done me a most wanton, unprovoked, and unmerited injury—an injury, too, which, as far as I am unknown, and any importance will be attached to his word, and to the decision of the Court whose judgment his word swayed, is irreparable. He has represented me as a clergyman whose orthodoxy in the faith is suspicious, whose knowledge of the language in which it is his duty every day to minister in holy things, is greatly defective, and whose proposed publication of the Scriptures ought not to be allowed, from the danger of its containing "ERRORS IN DOCTRINE, or other essential defects."

It is in vain for Dr Irvine to plead that he did not particularly allude to my translation—that his speech had reference wholly to the incapacity of the Synod of Ross, and the danger of allowing any translation to be published, of the orthodoxy and purity of which they were to be the judges. The Synod of Ross claimed no such privilege. On the contrary, they expressly stipulated as a condition for the publication of the work which they recom-

mended, that it shall be approved of by the *General Assembly*. Besides, there was no other translation in the field, nor the least chance, according to Dr Irvine's own admission, of there being any other as long as he lives. No other translation, therefore, could by any possibility be intended.

It is equally needless for the Doctor to plead, that he did not *directly affirm* any thing respecting the heterodoxy of my sentiments, or the danger of perusing my intended work. He knows very well that a dark hint, or sly insinuation, will *take* as well, and operate as powerfully with the generality of mankind, as a direct assertion, while the injured person does not possess an equal power of doing justice to himself; and the cowardly slanderer screens himself under the ambiguity of his expressions, from the merited consequence of a legal action. He knows that the slander which is originally conveyed in the form of a *much lamented*, perhaps, and *most improbable*, surmise, comes from the mouth of the first reporter, as a very likely story—from the second as a positive fact—and from the third, as a fact of the most deplorable nature, and having its natural deformity bloated and blotched by ten thousand hideous aggravations.

Dr Irvine has been accustomed "to examine a variety of works, in a variety of languages." He cannot, therefore, but have met with the admirable description of scandal which is given by the Prince of Latin Poets :---

Fama, malum quo non aliud velocius ullum ;
 Mobilitate viget, viresque acquirit eundo,
 Parva metu primo : mox sese attollit in auras,
 Ingrediturque solo, et caput inter nubila condit.

* * * * *

Monstrum horrendum, ingens ; cui quot sunt corpore plumæ,
 Tot vigiles oculi subter, mirabile dictu !
 Tot linguæ, totidem ora sonant, tot subrigit aures.
 Nocte volat coeli medio terræque, per umbram,
 Stridens, nec dulci declinat lumina somno :

* * * * *

Tam FICTI PRAVIQUE tenax, quam nuntia VERI.
 ——et pariter *facta* atque INFECTA canebat.

With this memento, therefore, fully in his recollection---know-

ing also, as he must have known, that such is human nature, that a bad report is much more readily received, and more rapidly circulated, than a good one---and aware, moreover, from his own feelings and experience, of how much consequence it is to a clergyman, that his character, particularly for orthodoxy of sentiments, should be unsuspected---how much more so, unimpeached, by any of his brethren, or by the Church of which he is a Member ; I must be allowed to say, that it is with no favourable aspect towards me---and considering his decided and unequivocal testimony in favour of my qualifications as a translator, and of a new translation of the Scriptures, which has been already quoted ;---I must also conclude, that it is with no design to promote the diffusion of Scripture knowledge among the Highlands, in the most correct and pleasing form, that Dr Irvine made use of the arguments on which I have been remarking, in the General Assembly.

In regard to the rapid circulation, and injurious effect of the calumny conveyed in that argument, I have to mention, perhaps to the great satisfaction of Dr Irvine and his friends, that, since it was uttered in the General Assembly, I received a letter from a most respectable Gentleman in the West Indies, who has been encouraging my labours, and has procured a number of Subscribers, to the Gaelic Bible, expressing his concern at the opposition which was given to it by the last General Assembly, and particularly at the insinuations of heresies and heretical doctrines to be apprehended from it---adding, that he has never heard of my having been cited before that Assembly, for teaching any doctrine at variance with the standards or discipline of our Church.

If such, then, was the effect of Dr Irvine's speech, on a person of superior intelligence and information, favourably disposed towards the Work, and sanguine for its success ; what impression must it have made upon those who heard it, or who read it with minds prepossessed in favour of the speaker, and of his erroneous views ? I mention this as one apology for the trouble which I have given you, Sir, and to shew the necessity of exposing the futility of Dr Irvine's reasoning to the numerous readers of your paper.

For this purpose, I further proceed to shew that, as Dr Irvine could apprehend no danger from the ignorance of the Synod of Ross, nor from the heterodoxy of the Editor of the New Tran-

slation of the Bible, so neither could he apprehend danger from the translation itself, although it should be published, and although it should contain even "errors in doctrine, or other essential defects." No man need inform Dr Irvine, that I, as a minister of the Church of Scotland, am amenable to the laws of the Church for any transgression of these laws with which I may be charged; than an error in doctrine can in no way be more easily detected, or more substantially proved, than when it appears on the pages of a printed book; and that in no book in the world will such an error appear more glaring, or more offensive, than in an edition of the Sacred Scriptures. He knows also, that there is not an individual in our Church, but has a right to bring any error in doctrine, or other essential defect in my translation of the Bible, before the Presbytery of his bounds, from the Presbytery to the Provincial Synod, and from the Provincial Synod to the bar of the General Assembly, and there to insist that the promulgator of heretical doctrine shall be censured, suspended, or deposed; and that the heretical publication shall be burnt by the hands of the common executioner. Such is the power which I recognise in the Church of which I am a member, and such is the power with which Dr Irvine knows it to be invested. Where then is the ground of Dr Irvine's alarm? Where was the danger to the interests of morality or religion from the publication of the intended work? It is as clear as the sun at noon day, that it no where existed. Yet at such a climax of hallowed zeal, does the Doctor affect to have arrived in opposing it, that he solemnly calls upon his Maker to witness the reality of his fears. "God forbid, said the Rev. Gentleman, that we should allow any translation to go abroad in which there may be errors of doctrine, or essential defects of any kind?"

It is truly melancholy to think, that not only in the ordinary conversation of thoughtless and unprincipled persons, but even in our most dignified Courts, we often hear this great and venerable Name employed for purposes the most unworthy, and in a manner the most profane. Without imputing any improper motives to Dr Irvine, it is surely fit to admonish him, that the occasion on which he spoke did not vindicate so solemn an appeal. If, as a scholar, he had consulted good taste and propriety, a heathen poet would have told him,

“Nec deus intersit, nisi dignus vindice nodus
 “Inciderit.”

And if, as a Christian Teacher, he had consulted his Bible, the Third Commandment would have checked the impetuosity of his affected zeal.

Having now discussed the arguments of Dr. Irvine, I next proceed to examine those of Dr M'Farlane. They are only two in number, and are certainly of no great weight, so that we shall soon get rid of them.

The first is, “That there is not a great town in Scotland in which there is not a chapel where Gaelic is preached every Sunday, and which people attend who come from every quarter and district of the Highlands, and yet these congregations are well attended, and the people never complain of not understanding the clergyman.”

To this the answer is as follows, viz. 1st, In some great towns in Scotland, as in Glasgow, there are two or three Gaelic Chapels, and the people may attend the ministry of that one of the Ministers of these whose language they best understand, or whom they otherwise prefer. 2dly, Where there is but one Gaelic chapel, the people who understand only Gaelic, must attend there, or stay at home; and such as are religiously disposed of them do attend, just as an Edinburgh Porter, whose residence happened to be in Holland, in France, or in Italy, would prefer going to an *English* Chapel, where the language was far from being perfectly intelligible to him, because he did not understand one sentence of *Dutch, French or Italian*. In such a case, what is the good of complaining? It will not mend his circumstances, and he has no alternative. 3dly, In great towns where only one Gaelic minister officiates, the Highlanders there assembled enjoy many advantages which are denied to those in the country, and particularly in remote situations. In towns, the people who come from different districts of the country, have occasion to meet frequently with each other, and so to mingle in conversation, that a common language is soon formed by them, which is equally intelligible to all. A stranger who comes among them, is immediately laughed out of his provincial peculiarities, and adapts his language promptly to the taste and fashion of those around him. The Minister, on his arrival among them, is always of this number, to his no small annoyance; but must submit to learn the language of his

people that he may be able to speak in the church, with his understanding, such words as by which he may teach others also, after the example of the great Apostle. Besides, they have their private and fellowship meetings on Sabbath evenings, and week days, where they assemble together, to converse familiarly upon religious subjects, to repeat what they have heard in church, and to consult with each other, and with their Minister, regarding any difficulties, in words or sentiments, which may have occurred to them.

How different is the lot of the sequestered country Highlander, whose dwelling is at the distance of twelve, twenty, or thirty miles from a place of public worship—who does not enter his parish church perhaps twice in the year—whose neighbours, thinly planted around him, all speak the same dialect that he speaks himself—and with himself are equally ignorant of Scripture analogy, or Scripture illustration—whose humble cottage does not contain a single printed book—or if there be *one*, and that the best in the world, it is *but one*, printed on a small type, and coarse paper, in a language almost unintelligible, and without one word of comment, or explanation. To such a being, would not Dr M·Farlane find it in his heart, to allow a man who was willing and able, to send a Bible in his mother tongue, and with some explanatory notes? Let me assure him that there are thousands in similar circumstances in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. Dr M·Farlane's first argument, therefore, has no weight, and savours rather of one "who is at ease in Zion," "and is not grieved for the affliction of Joseph."

His second argument is, That the best way to occasion the corruption of religious principles is to run the risk of poisoning the very source of them; that there are many attempts made by preachers to gloss over and alter the orthodox meaning of Scripture; that therefore the General Assembly cannot suffer a version of these Scriptures, which can so easily be made a vehicle for heretical doctrines, to go forth to the world without being sifted and examined; that, for these reasons, it would be highly dangerous to permit any translation of the Scriptures to be circulated.

In order to meet this argument with proper effect, it is quite necessary to clear away the rubbish of unmeaning words and broken sentences by which it is surrounded and obscured; for the argument itself may be contained in a nut-shell.

I have, for this purpose, to observe, in the first place, that Dr M'Farlane's assertion "that it would be highly dangerous to permit any translation of the Scriptures to be circulated," which he makes in these words, is contrary to truth, reason, Scripture, and experience; because it would restrict people in all ages, nations, and languages, to the use of the *originals* only. The Roman Catholic practices of keeping up the Scriptures from the common people, and of administering religious ordinances only in the Latin language, are innocence-itself, in comparison with this plan; and I wonder how the man who proposes or approves of it can take an English translation to his pulpit, or give his vote for circulating the Gaelic translation of the Society for Propagating Christian knowledge.

I have to observe, in the second place, that the *best way* to occasion the corruption of religious principles, by poisoning the very source of them, is, not by publishing false *translations*, but by vitiating the *originals at once*;—that much may be done, and, alas! has been done, to corrupt religious principles, without venturing upon the very *best* possible way;—that every man who ever transcribed or printed the Bible, and every man who translated the Scriptures, and transcribed or printed the translations of them, has "*run the risk*" of corrupting religious principles;—that every man who has ever addressed his fellow-creatures on the subject of religion, either in word or writing, has "*run the risk*" of corrupting religious principles;—and therefore that the best way to avoid every *risk* of the kind in future is, never to print or translate the Bible, and never to write or speak upon the subject of religion at all! such is the conclusion from Dr M'Farlane's reasoning,

I have further to observe, in the third place, that the overture of the Synod of Ross was, not that a version of the Scriptures should be published without being *sifted* or examined; but having been well sifted and examined, that then it should be published. I mean to sift and to examine every sentence of my translation of the Scriptures before I offer it to the public; the Synod of Ross had confidence in hoping that I should do so until it should exhibit a faithful picture of the originals; and therefore they overture the General Assembly to remove any restrictive enactments which might discourage its circulation. It was in favour of a faithful and approved version of the Scriptures, and not

of a corrupt and doubtful version that the Synod of Ross over-tured; and therefore Dr M'Farlane's objection does not apply to the Overture before the House.

I have to observe, in the fourth place, that it is quite a new sort of doctrine in this country to say, that the General Assembly cannot suffer a book to go forth to the world which *can easily be made* a vehicle of heretical doctrines, without being sifted and examined. I should like to know by what law, civil or ecclesiastical, the General Assembly can prevent the publication of such books,—by what process,—in what stage,—and under whose particular inspection do the books pass through this formidable ordeal?—of what substance are the sieves made through which they are sifted?—who are the makers of them?—what are the tests of examination?—what are the designations of the officers?—at which end of the book do they begin to sift it?—when was there a book so sifted and examined in Scotland by order of the General Assembly, and a licence of publication granted, because it COULD NOT, or refused because it COULD, be made a vehicle for heretical doctrines?

I might pursue this species of interrogation much further, if it were necessary. Dr M'Farlane may be offended that I have pursued it so far. But really he has himself to blame. He should have certainly better weighed the meaning of his expressions before he applied himself to address so intelligent a Court as the General Assembly, and upon so important a subject as the Bible. If he commits a series of blunders in addressing that Court, from want of general knowledge,—from want of ideas,—from want of skill in grammar,—or of dexterity in the management of a syllogism,—or from a determination to mystify and mislead; and if, by these blunders, he sways the Court to a wrong decision, and thus threatens the best interests of religion, or diminishes the sum of public happiness, or of individual comfort; are his blunders not to be exposed, and their evil consequences averted or removed.

What book that ever was, or will be published, but *could* or *can* be made a vehicle of heretical doctrine? But who ever heard before that the General Assembly could prevent the publication of a book, or even sift and examine it before-hand on that account? What bag of meal or flour was ever brought to the Edinburgh

market but could be made the vehicle of arsenic or any other deadly poison? But who ever heard of the Magistrates subjecting the bags of meal and flour so introduced by a dealer of honest fame, to the operations of the sifter, or to the experiments of the chemist? or where is the honest dealer who would not feel indignant at the disgraceful proposal?

Do I, by these questions, wish it to be inferred, that the civil Magistrate has no right to watch over the health and comfort of the lieges, or to punish the murderous vender of infected provisions? Far from it. So neither do I deny the right of the General Assembly to superintend the morals of the people; or to punish those members of the Church who disseminate heretical doctrines; though I scout the vague, unconstitutional, and absurd assumption of Dr M'Farlane.

I am a dealer in honest fame,—I bring my commodity into the public markets, on my own responsibility, as all other dealers do; and I should like to know what right Dr M'Farlane has to say that my commodity should be subjected to a species of inquisition which is quite incompetent in regard to dealers in the same line. Were Henry's Commentary, Scott's Bible, Doddridge's Family Expositor, Campbell's Translation of the Gospels, and MacKnight's Translation of the Epistles, subjected to this sort of inquisition? Certainly not, although all of them *could be made* the vehicle of heretical doctrine as well as my Gaelic translation. And wherefore, then, should this last, and not any of the former? I have a name and a standing in the Church as well as these men had; and, without provoking any sort of comparison, there is a responsibility attached to my name which I would not risk the forfeiting of on a trivial occasion. My claims upon the republic of letters, to be sure, are not great. But, small as they are, I see no cause why Dr M'Farlane or Dr Irvine should so ostentatiously oppose them, as if they had themselves arrived at that height of literary fame that their approbation was become the passport to distinction. I have written and published, in Gaelic and English, more than twice as much as both these Reverend Doctors, and I may, without the least arrogance, affirm, that my literary labours have been as useful, and as well received as any productions of their own, whatever their respective opinions may be!

I now proceed to consider the *argument* of Dr M'Farlane (for there is but one, or the semblance of it) by which he opposes the

Overture of the Synod of Ross. It is as follows, viz. that there are many attempts made by preachers to gloss over and alter the orthodox meaning of Scripture; and therefore the overture for the publication of a Bible, accompanied by an orthodox commentary, must not be listened to!

Without stopping to inquire whether Scripture has a *heterodox*, as well as an "*orthodox*, meaning," or whether its heterodox meaning might not be glossed over and altered as well as the orthodox meaning; it is of more consequence to observe, that here it is taken for granted that the people are ignorant, and therefore ready to be imposed upon, misled, and eternally ruined by false glosses upon Scripture; it is asserted that the teachers are wicked and unprincipled men, ever labouring to impose upon the people by false glosses upon Scripture and heretical doctrines; it is an indisputable fact, that no method of inculcating error can be more promising of success than that of promulgating it from the pulpit; it is equally undeniable, that the mere Gaelic reader has no means of detecting, refuting, or exposing error so promulgated, except a translation of the Scriptures, partially circulated in many parts of the country, ill understood, and unaccompanied by a single word of comment or explanation. In these circumstances, a certain ecclesiastical person stands up in a certain ecclesiastical Court, and says, it is a most intolerable thing to hear that any man should dare to send the sacred Scriptures to these people in a more correct or intelligible form,—it would be highly dangerous to suffer any translations of the Scriptures to be circulated among them,—how much more so to permit a commentary on the Scriptures, in a printed form, to be put into their hands! It is very true that such a commentary may be very orthodox, evangelical, and useful,—it is at least clear, that having it in a printed form, we can be perfectly satisfied that it is so, or prohibit its circulation among the people;—but still, because it "*can be made a vehicle of heretical doctrine*" it must not be allowed to go forth into the world. If the people are ignorant, let them remain so, rather than "run the risk" of corrupting their religious principles; and if their teachers are determined to gloss over and alter the orthodox meaning of Scripture, it would be quite preposterous to put the means of detecting their errors into the hands of the people! If there is a Protestant alive who would not ascribe this reasoning to the most violent membe

of the Council of Trent, I am most egregiously mistaken ; I am equally deceived unless it is the full import of Dr M^rFarlane's argument in the General Assembly of the Church, of Scotland.—I, at least, plead not guilty to the wish of misinterpreting his words.

I have one word to say to Dr Cooke ; for he said but one word on the subject under discussion in the General Assembly. “ He observed, It must be known to every one, at all acquainted with ecclesiastical history, that there has never been a more successful mode of propagating heresies than that of venting translations of the Scriptures.” He, therefore, seconded Dr M^rFarlane's motion.

It may be reckoned a very desperate adventure for me to risk a meeting with Dr Cooke on the ground of history ; particularly as he has, contrary to the established laws of chivalry, not only named the ground himself, but also made choice of his favourite weapon. But I do not fear the challenge, the weapon, or the ground ; for I learned from an ancient Highlander,* “ Never to seek the fight, nor shun it when it comes.” Dr Cooke has been, indeed, more cautious than the other two learned opponents of the Gaelic Bible ; for he has said less upon the subject than they said ; and even in what he did advance, he took good care not to expose himself to the hazard of a direct contradiction. That ground on which he expected that his powers would not be called in question was open before him—he boldly stepped upon it—and by one flourish of the two-edged claymore, (a weapon suggested by the Ross-shire member) he thought to have defied resistance, and, in the language of Dr Irvine, to have “ set the matter for ever at rest.” Luckily for me, however, although the ground has been more frequently footed by the Doctor, the weapon which he has taken up is the hereditary property of my own country, and if dexterity and strength shall not completely fail my right hand, I shall immediately wrest it from him, turn it against himself, and drive him from the field, or leave him prostrate there.

Dr Cooke tells us “ that there never has been a more successful mode of propagating heresies than that of venting translations of the Scriptures.” Granting the position, for the sake of argu-

* Ossian.

ment, what does it prove relative to the subject under discussion? or what inference must be fairly drawn from it? Surely it is, that translations are, in all cases, and at all times, to be avoided—that they are dangerous, wicked and pernicious things—that they have done more mischief in the Church than all the other means which have ever been employed by her enemies; and should, therefore, on all occasions be resisted, reprobated, and prevented. This is undoubtedly the fair inference to be drawn from Dr Cooke's position—the whole amount of his historical argument. For it must be observed, that there was not one word before the house concerning a heretical translation—the Synod of Ross did not overture for one—Dr Irvine, or Dr M'Farlane, or any man in the Assembly, did not say, nor even hint, that my translation was to contain heresy;—the translation for which the Synod of Ross overtured was warranted to be orthodox to the complete satisfaction of the Court; and as that was the only one under discussion, the objection could by no means lie against it; it must, therefore, lie against all translations whatever; particularly orthodox ones.

There is no getting the better of this reasoning, in my opinion. Yet, if Dr Cooke should find some loop-hole to escape by, from the absurdity of condemning all translations of the Scriptures, I am perfectly indifferent; for I will immediately meet him with a counter-position from which there is no possibility of escape. I maintain, then, without the fear of contradiction, that translations have been the most powerful, effectual and successful, means which have ever been employed by Infinite Wisdom and Goodness for the diffusion of useful knowledge, for the spread of the everlasting Gospel, and for the eternal salvation of immortal souls. Translations were the first means employed by inspired Apostles, for bringing men from darkness into light, and from the power of Satan unto God; and because the ordinary efforts of human industry and application, at the first promulgation of the Gospel, were deemed inadequate to the circumstances of the time, and the necessities of perishing souls, the gifts of the Holy Spirit were miraculously bestowed, for the purpose of instantaneously translating the glad tidings of salvation into all the languages of the known world. It is by translations that (with extremely few exceptions) the whole of the human race become acquainted with the God who made, the Saviour who redeemed, and the Holy

Spirit who sanctifies them. It is to translations, accompanied by the Divine blessing, that the great majority of the multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and *tongues*, which stand before the throne of the Most High, owe their elevation, their dignified employments, their transcendent prospects. It is by translations that the knowledge of the Lord is to fill the earth as the waters cover the sea. It is by means of translations accordingly that the whole Christian world is at this moment labouring to bring about the speedy accomplishment of this glorious purpose; and, to add no more on this head—without translations of the Scriptures, what would the Island of Great Britain, and what would this learned and accomplished Doctor, who sets himself so strenuously to resist translations, have been?

Such, then, being the indispensable necessity of translations to the very existence of a Church in the world, and such the inestimable benefits derived and promised from the use of them; the argument in their favour, from history, experience, and prophecy, is to that against them, as stated by Dr Cooke, as infinity to nothing; and Dr Cooke has brandished his two-edged weapon only to shew hisin capacity of wielding it with effect, or of wresting it from the grasp of his antagonist.

But the Doctor will still insist, that the venting of translations has been a very successful mode of propagating heresies. And, what if I should grant him this position also, and turn it equally against himself? For this purpose, let me ask the Doctor, What were the translations which, in all the ages of the world, have been most successful in the propagation of heresies? He will unquestionably answer, that they were not the translations which the zeal of individuals led them to undertake in the face of the whole Church, with the view of perverting the truth, and winning over disciples to the belief of a false Creed—far less were they the translations which were executed by individuals, in full communion with the Church, deriving benefit and protection from it, and aiming only at the same pious end—that of promoting the Divine glory, and the salvation of perishing sinners—neither were they the translations which pious individuals made, to supply the want of intelligible translations, or to correct the errors of corrupt translations, in a degenerate Church;—but that they were the authorised translations and glosses of the Church itself, which

were at all times the most fruitful sources of heresy, immorality, and profaneness in the world.

Was it as a successful mode of propagating heresy, that John Wickliff vented his translation of the Scriptures? No doubt, an universal clamour was raised against it by the Church; and after much consultation among the bishops and heads of the clergy, a bill was brought into Parliament to suppress it; and the pious and zealous advocates for the bill set forth the alarming prospect of *heresy* which this version of the Scriptures opened, and the ruin of all religion which must inevitably ensue. They had reason, indeed, to be alarmed. The publication of the Scriptures in the vulgar tongue was as the dawn of the Reformation in England—it shone such light upon the accumulated system of priestcraft, which the Roman Catholic Church exhibited, as made it soon to be detested and shunned—and the benefit of that dawn, which has been shining more and more in every succeeding age, is substantially felt in the light, and liberty, and happiness of the present day.

Was it as a successful mode of propagating heresy, that Martin Luther vented his translation of the Scriptures; or was the propagation of heresy the effect of his translation? According to the doctrine of the Church of Rome, it was—he was himself the prince of heretics—and his translation of the Scriptures was the principal engine by which his heresy was propagated; for Dr Robertson tells us, that the publication of his translation of the New Testament proved more fatal to the Church of Rome than that of all his own works. He tells us, that it was read with wonderful avidity and attention by persons of every rank. And he adds, “The great advantages arising from Luther’s translation of the Bible, encouraged the advocates for reformation, in the other countries of Europe, to imitate his example, and publish versions of the Scriptures in their respective languages.” But was it heresy in the same sense in which the Church of Rome uses the word, that Dr Cooke wished to keep down by opposing the translation of the Scriptures into Gaelic? Doubtless it was not. Then was the translation by Luther, in defiance of the church, a powerful instrument in promoting the cause of truth, and in reclaiming mankind from the paths of error and vice; which is altogether in favour of my argument.

Was it as a successful mode of propagating heresy, that Wil-

William Tindal published a new translation of the Scriptures, nearly two hundred years after that by Wickliff? Such, indeed, was the power of the Roman Catholic clergy in his day, that he was obliged to execute his great work in a foreign country—such was the inveteracy with which it was opposed, when it made its appearance, that the greatest pains were taken, by the ablest scholars in the land, to convict it of heresy—Sir Thomas More condemned it loudly for mistranslation—and specially because the author had used *seniors*, instead of *priests*, *congregation* instead of *church*, and *love* instead of *charity*! &c. &c. The Bishop of London declared publicly in a sermon, that he had found in it no less than 2000 errors,—in short, a royal proclamation was issued for totally suppressing the translation of the Scriptures corrupted by William Tindal—himself was afterwards imprisoned, condemned to death, strangled in his cell, and his body reduced to ashes. Yet was his translation highly prized, and eminently useful, not in propagating heresy, but in conveying the knowledge of divine truth into the minds of many who, without such a medium of information, would have remained ignorant of it.

Was it as a successful mode of propagating heresy that Miles Coverdale published his translation of the Bible, in more favourable times, under the eye of the Church, and the smiles of Royal favour? Did the Church indicate any jealousy of his labours, by throwing obstacles in the way of his success? Did they tell him that his undertaking “was unnecessary and improper”—that there was already an “admirable translation” in their hands, which superseded the necessity of any other—that “if every one who thought fit, were allowed to make translations of the Scriptures, there was every danger of misleading and bewildering the people”—that “the best way to occasion the corruption of religious principles was to run the risk of poisoning the very source of them”—that “versions of the Scriptures could easily be made vehicles of heretical doctrines”—and that “there never was a more successful mode of propagating heresies than that of venting translations of the Scriptures?” By no means.

Did he, on the other hand, or is it necessary that any other person who engages in a similar undertaking, should, deny the power of the church of which he was a minister “to regulate, or rather preserve the purity of its faith and worship”—or “forget the jurisdiction of the church over himself and his translation?”

Far from it. On the contrary, he declares in his preface, (as others have done in their advertisements, and overtures before the Church) "that he set forth this special translation, not in contempt of other men's translations, or by way of reproving them, but humbly and faithfully following his interpreters, *and that UNDER CORRECTION.* He added, after maintaining the fidelity of his own version, "that there came more understanding and knowledge of the Scriptures by these sundry translations, than by all the glosses of *SOPHISTICAL DOCTORS.*"

What then were the translations which were the fruitful source of heresy and error? They have, in all ages, been the publicly authorised, and exclusively allowed, translations of corrupt and degenerate churches—translations which were designedly unintelligible to the great body of the people, and but partially understood by the public teachers of religion—translations which were partly made into the vulgar language of the country; but having many of the most important words untranslated, so as to suit at pleasure the corrupt and varying principles of the church—or translations which were intentionally corrupted to support a horrible system of delusion, idolatry, and priestcraft.

Are these the translations to which Dr Cooke alluded? If they are, then is his conclusion as far from his premises as the East is distant from the West. If they are not, and if he had the former class of translations in his eye, then is his statement, in an equal degree, removed from the possibility of historical proof. Ergo,

HIC JACET.

Thus have I disposed of the arguments employed in the last General Assembly against the intended translation of the Sacred Scriptures into Gaelic, and shewn that there was not a shadow of reason for all the opposition which was given to the Overture from the Synod of Ross. It has also, I trust, been made to appear, that the General Assembly acted without reason, contrary to reason, and contrary also to the uniform practice of all Protestant Churches, in all past ages, in dismissing that Overture, being misled by the specious words of the above-mentioned three Doctors; that the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge had no right to apply to the General Assembly for an exclusive monopoly of Gaelic translations, because their own translation is confessedly faulty, and now under revisal for a new edition, for the correctness or fidelity of which, no human being can answer—

that the General Assembly had no right, in the circumstances of the case, to grant any such monopoly, and has, in no case, a right to enact laws for prohibiting the publication of Gaelic translations or any other works whatever, having no controlling or inquisitorial power over the press of this free country—that the General Assembly, having been informed that two translations of the Scriptures into Gaelic were in progress at the same time, ought to have suspended its judgment until both the translations should be examined and compared by competent judges, and then decided according to truth and justice—that while there was only one translation in existence, a law restricting people to the use of that one, was idle and nugatory—that to pass such a law, when one translation only existed, and that confessedly a faulty one, and another was announced professing to be an improved one, and strongly recommended as such by some of the best judges in the kingdom; was to shew a blind and invidious partiality, greatly unworthy of the Supreme Court of our national Church—that the General Assembly can have no legitimate ground of jealousy for the publication of the translation announced by the Synod of Ross, because the Author and his Work are always in their power; and therefore that they have no interest, or reasonable motive for opposing it—that there is no occasion for restrictive enactments to discourage the publication of Gaelic translations of the Scriptures, because the difficulties in prosecuting such a work are sufficiently formidable, without such enactments, to prevent any ordinary Adventurer from engaging in it; while the prospects of gain are so very unpromising, that he must be under the influence of strong motives of a different nature, who will meet the hazard of a failure; and placed in very favourable circumstances, who can rationally anticipate success—that translations of the Scriptures have, in all ages, been eminently useful, and since the miraculous gift of languages has been withdrawn, seem to be altogether indispensable, in gathering together the members of the household of faith from the four corners of the world,—that as the subjects of the Redeemer's kingdom are to consist of persons called out of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and *tongues*, it seems to be by no means displeasing to the great Author of our religion that his word should be translated, not only into the more polite and refined languages of the great nations of the world, but also into the various *tongues* or dialects, (or, as our squeamish modern doctors would call them, jargons,) by which the kindreds of

families of these nations might be distinguished,—that a rational and orthodox exposition of the Scriptures is as much needed, and as likely to be useful in the Gaelic as in any other language,—that no such exposition or commentary as yet exists,—that they who subscribe for a copy of the one now offered to the public, can, by so doing, give no ground of offence to the Church in general, or to any pious or well-constituted member of it; and that if the three Doctors who have hitherto opposed the publication of that work, expect to convince the public or the General Assembly of its inexpediency, they must do so by very different arguments from those which they have hitherto employed.

As to these Gentlemen and their opposition, I have only to say, that I leave their motives for their own serious reflection; their arguments I have treated with freedom, and at the same time with candour; but to their persons, their characters, their talents, or their ministry, I have not made the most distant allusion.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your most obedient and humble servant,

THOMAS ROSS.

Lochbroom-Manse, 30th December 1820.

LETTER VII.

Inverness, 12th January 1821.

SIR,—On my way to this place yesterday, I had an opportunity of perusing Dr Irvine's Letter inserted in your last Journal; and I must say, that, although I could not have told the very words in which the Doctor would have conveyed his sentiments upon the subject of it, yet I did calculate upon seeing a letter from him as little to the purpose as that one turns out to be—I guessed that he would not have been directed by good sense to hold his tongue; and, as to argument, I knew that none had been left him to lay his hands upon.

“The gall'd jade will wince.”

But surely every one who has a particle of feeling, must pity that man who could make so public an avowal of imbecility and spleen.

My only reason for troubling you at present is, to put Dr Irvine right in regard to what he calls the *relative* pronoun in my

last letter. The pronoun on which I had remarked was *tu*, which I always had been accustomed to call, not a *relative*, but a *personal*, pronoun. It is also the pronoun, not of the *first*, but of the *second* person, although the pronoun of the first person was that of which Dr Irvine took an example from Ossian, to prove the incorrectness of my remarks—for he will be at *Ego*.

Now, the fact is, that although the pronoun of the first person is the same in the nominative and accusative in the Gaelic language, the case is different with regard to the pronoun of the second person—of that pronoun the nominative and the accusative are different—the passage quoted from Ossian (with the exception of a typographical error) is perfectly good Gaelic—the passages quoted in my letter from the Bible are all in bad grammar—and Dr Irvine may depend upon it, that they will be all altered in the edition now in progress, so far as they are yet unprinted.

I have the honour to be,

SIR,

Your most obedient and humble Servant,

THOMAS ROSS.

LETTER VIII.

To the Editor of the Inverness Journal.

SIR,—I know your attachment to Highlanders is too strong, and your regard for their best interests too great, to have read with indifference a subject which has lately occupied many pages of your truly valuable Journal. The important addition proposed to be made to the means which Highlanders possess of acquiring religious knowledge, and giving them easier and more intelligible access to that most invaluable treasure, the Word of God, through a translation of Holy Writ, in the language best understood by them, appeared to me, and to all with whom I have access to converse, to be so truly Christian, noble, and praise-worthy an employment, that I could not have believed that any man perfectly qualified for such an undertaking, who could devote the most valuable part of his life to such an employment, but must thereby secure to himself the respect and best wishes of every sincere lover of the Gospel, and the countenance, support, and gratitude

of all who wish well to their fellow-mortals' best interests in time and eternity; nor can I think there is one who sincerely loves the Lord Jesus and the cause of truth, but must view this subject as a matter worthy of deep and serious attention, entering materially into all the relations we hold in life, or hope for after death. It belongs not, however, to one so far removed from the means of judging accurately of motives, to say from what source the opposition given to Dr Ross's Gaelic Bible, both in the Supreme Ecclesiastical Court of this country, and in your Journal, proceeds; but it must be obvious to all who are in the least acquainted with the Doctor's character and history, or rather that of his opponent's, that a sincere attachment to the cause of the Gospel, a generous and liberal wish to do good and increase the means of advancing the Redeemer's kingdom, and an ardent enthusiasm for the instruction and improvement of Highlanders, forms none of the sources of opposition to Dr Ross's Gaelic Bible. Let any man candidly examine the opposition given to this work, and inquire on what it is grounded, and he will find that it cannot proceed from sound and proper principles. He is not charged with incapacity or unfitness for executing the arduous, but valuable and loudly called-for work; he is accused of no crime,—no fault,—no felony,—no misdemeanour or *mala fama*,—but *solely* of an anxious wish to disseminate and illustrate the Sacred Scriptures among his countrymen in their own language. How has this opposition been conducted? not by legal libel,—not by any direct charge of misconduct or wicked design, but by dark and malignant insinuations, equally vague as unfounded,—equally calculated to do mischief as beyond the reach of legal scrutiny. With the same temper let him look into the Doctor's defence, and he will, I am convinced, see it as I do,—manly, able, clear, and perfectly satisfactory; no evasions,—no shuffling,—no sophistry,—no blinking of any question that bears on the subject. He goes at once into the real merits of the case, and discusses it in every point with equal perspicuity and force of argument; always master of himself under the greatest provocations, and often in the very best humour. The replies by Dr Irvine strike me as master-pieces of arrogance, conceit, and confusion; and the learned Doctor discovers himself, to my humble apprehension, by this literary exhibition of talent, (and I never saw or heard of any other production of his pen,) to be a man as

extravagant in pretensions as he is void of the means of doing justice to any argument. Driven out of every solid and just ground of opposition, he betakes himself to abominable scurrility, and the most rancorous personal abuse, equally degrading to the character of a clergyman, as hurtful to the morals of youth, and disgusting to all the delicate readers of newspapers. It must appear truly mortifying to those who entertain respect for the Supreme Ecclesiastical Court of this country, to think that they should have been led, even when taken by surprise, to pronounce a decision so injurious to the interests of religion, and on the ground of arguments clearly demonstrated to have been so silly and unfounded.

Although Dr Ross's last letter to Dr Irvine is a model of dignified contempt for a foe already on his back, "who gnashed his teeth with rage, and writhed his body to and fro with pain," yet one thing seems to me to be wanting,—Dr Ross having removed every objection that was brought forward against the Gaelic Bible, to the full satisfaction of every reflecting mind, disdains to notice the irrelevant arguments and abuse of Dr Irvine; but I should wish that he had answered some of the questions which Dr Irvine puts in his last letter, because *all* readers of newspapers are not persons of much reflection; many are apt to think, that the question which deserves to be put, deserves to be answered; and others may suppose, that the only reason for not answering them is, that they are unanswerable. And I must think, that after all that Dr Irvine has exhibited of presumption and want of sense, it is not likely that he would have provoked an answer to some of the questions he has put, if he thought they could be answered unfavourably to himself. Therefore, I should wish, that Dr Ross would yet attempt an answer to the queries in Dr Irvine's last letter, or candidly confess it, if he cannot answer them. If they can, and shall be answered favourably to the object he has in view, I must conclude that there will be no more opposition to the Gaelic Bible from any man, or society of men, who profess the fear of that Being, "who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth, that they also might be sanctified through the truth."

PHILO-CLERICUS.

22d Feb. 1821.

LETTER IX.

To the Editor of the Inverness Journal.

SIR,—I BEGIN to suspect that your correspondent, PHILO-CLERICUS, will call me uncivil for not having sooner taken notice of his letter, inserted in the Journal of 16th March; and that many of your readers have ere now set me down as vanquished in the controversy with Dr Irvine, because I have not sent you an answer to the questions which he puts in his last letter inserted in the Journal of 5th January.

I should be sorry to appear uncivil to any of your correspondents, and, on the other hand, I can easily convince myself that, so far from being thrown out of the field by the queries of Dr Irvine, in the sober judgment of every reflecting mind, my argument has never yet been touched by a single word which he has written.

PHILO-CLERICUS, however, is entitled to an apology. It is as follows: *First*, When his letter came to my hand, it was not in my power, on account of other engagements, to give that attention to the subject of it which it required. *Secondly*, Dr Irvine's questions were not put to *me*, but to *you*, Mr Editor: with what propriety I shall not say; unless it was, to convince you and your readers that he did not *want* an answer. As for me, I was, by the supposition, *defunct*: And, *thirdly*, I am pretty certain, that PHILO-CLERICUS (be he who he will), does not call for answers to Dr Irvine's questions for his own sake.

Be that as it may, since he declares it as his opinion, that the question which deserves to be put, deserves to be answered, and that some may suppose that the only reason for not answering a question is that it is unanswerable; I shall now, with your permission, proceed to give such answers to Dr Irvine's questions referred to, as will convince PHILO-CLERICUS that they are not in my opinion unanswerable.

The first question which Dr Irvine asks is in the form of an affirmation, and is expressed in these words, viz. "The writer is offended, because I use the first person singular when under the necessity of speaking of myself." Now, here Dr Irvine has

mistaken my meaning altogether. I never found fault with Dr Irvine for using what pronoun he pleased to represent his person, when there was a *necessity* for speaking of himself. What I reflected on was his speaking of himself in any person, first, second, or third; his speaking often of himself, and in high-sounding and pompous language, when there was no necessity at all for it,—no call upon him to do it, but from that inward feeling, out of which arises the fault in writing which is called *Egotism*,—no propriety,—but the greatest impropriety, in doing it.

That there was no necessity for Dr Irvine's bringing himself forward on the occasion alluded to in my letter is evident to every one but himself. There was not one word in the overture of the Synod of Ross about Dr Irvine,—there was not one word about him in the sentence of the General Assembly,—and there was not one word about him in the strictures which I made upon that sentence, or upon the reasoning which led to it. His *name*, indeed, was mentioned in the report of the proceedings of the General Assembly; and his *argument* was examined with considerable freedom in my letter; but of his *person* I did not take the smallest notice; and I always deprecated any impertinence of that kind on either side. But that Dr Irvine did bring forward his own person unnecessarily and improperly on that occasion; and that he did make use of the word *Ego*, in the objectionable manner reflected upon, will be amply demonstrated, if the decision be left to the discerning judgment of the elegant author of the *Spectator*. “The most violent *egotism* which I have met with,” says Addison, “in the course of my reading, is that of Cardinal Wolsey's ‘*Ego et Rex meus*,’—‘I and my King.’” For I apprehend that there is not the least shade of difference between this most violent *egotism* and Dr Irvine's “*Ego et Conventus Generalis*,”—“I and the General Assembly,”—so ostentatiously brought forward, and so often repeated.

Quest. 2d. “But would Dr Ross call this *egotism*, when really the language furnished no other term?”—Ans. Most certainly, when there was no occasion to make use of it. For the objection is not at all to the term or word, but to the manner or unnecessary frequency of its application.

Quest. 3d. “He would never censure any body for being, like himself, a first person singular, though he be more a dual.”—Ans. Mark, reader, *himself* is a *first* person singular, and *he* is

more a *dual*! Does PHILo-CLERICUS insist upon any further answer to this question?

Quest. 4th. "Would he blame Dr Irvine for 'would-be-learned,' when, in fact, he shewed no learning at all, "but such as it would be a shame for any minister of our Church not to possess?"—Ans. I did not blame Dr Irvine for "would-be learned." What I adverted to was a "would-be learned *discussion*." And I never charged Dr Irvine with possessing more learning than other Ministers of our Church. In short, I repeat, that I said nothing about Dr Irvine at all.

Quest. 5th. "Could Dr Ross be ignorant of the many late attempts to translate, in part or in whole, the Scriptures into English?"—Ans. Dr Irvine might as well have asked, Could Dr Ross be ignorant of how many letters there are in the Chinese alphabet? The one question has as much connection with the subject under discussion as the other.

Quest. 6th. "Could he be ignorant of the famous new and literal translation just going on by Bellamy, or some such name?"—Ans. The same answer will apply here. Dr Ross has nothing to do with Bellamy or his translation. What follows concerning the specimen of the Ross-shire Gaelic translation will be noticed immediately.

Quest. 7th. "Would Dr Ross, after being laughed at, pitied, if not despised, on account of his sheer ignorance and vanity, when, two or three years ago, he attempted to force his non-existent translation upon the notice of the Assembly, have again thrust forward two honest men to share his shame and defeat, without heading them to the field of combat?"—Ans. To write such abominable and low-lived ribaldry as the above lines contain, is a degradation to which, it is to be hoped, that few clergymen would submit, even if the facts and circumstances connected with it had been founded in truth. But the merit of *fabricating* a story of this kind, and of putting it into the form of an interrogation, on the face of a newspaper, for the purpose of bringing contempt upon a neighbour, of whom he could not *truly affirm* any thing that would be injurious to him,—Dr Ross cheerfully leaves with the man who has been bo'd enough to claim it. He affirms, that the substance of this 7th interrogatory is a complete fabrication,—no such scene as it supposes having ever been

acted on the stage of real life,—that Dr Ross never attempted to force his translation upon the notice of the Assembly,—and that he was never laughed at, pitied, nor despised, on account of any such attempt. The records of the General Assemblies of 1817 and 1818, at both of which I attended, will shew whether any motion was brought forward by me at either of these Assemblies in favour of my translation of the Gaelic Bible; and Dr Irvine may have recourse to them. But a much readier way of coming at the truth for all your readers, Mr Editor, is, by turning up the solemn declaration which Dr Irvine himself has ultroneously, though very inadvertently, emitted in his letter to you, dated 4th August 1820, and inserted in your Journal of the 25th of the same month. Dr Irvine there expresses himself in the following words, viz. “ I must leave many things unnoticed, and for his” (Dr Ross’s) “ consolation, say, that he all along has been beating the air, and fighting with a shadow,—that he may bring out his new translation, OF WHICH I NEVER HEARD TILL THIS YEAR, as soon as he can!” Dr Irvine did well to suppose me dead before he ventured upon this 7th question.

Quest. 8th. “ Would Dr Ross deny that not a sheet of his translation was ever seen by Dr Irvine, or the Assembly, when his Agents laid a sheet, professing to be a specimen of his translation, on the Assembly table?”

Ans. To *deny* that a sheet was not seen, would be to *affirm* that a sheet *was* seen. This Dr Ross never did. On the contrary, he *denied*, and still *does deny*, that a sheet of his translation *was* ever seen by Dr Irvine or the General Assembly: or he *affirms* that *not* a sheet of his translation was ever seen by either of these great bodies. He adds, that he had no Agents at the Assembly of last year: and he affirms that not a sheet, professing to be a specimen of his translation, appeared on the Assembly table. What sheet did appear on the Assembly table, Dr Ross does not know,—or how the sheet made its profession, he is utterly at a loss to conjecture. As to his translation of the Scriptures, he knows, and hereby avers, without the least fear of contradiction, that not one word of it has ever yet been printed, and that it is at this moment quite uncertain whether it shall be printed in Edinburgh, in Inverness, or in Lochbroom.

To account for Dr Irvine’s blunders, Dr Ross is certainly not bound. But he strongly suspects that the poor *sheet* against which

he has, for so many months been levelling the artillery of the most rancorous and unsparing abuse, will turn out to be, not a *sheet*, nor a *syllable* of Dr Ross's translation, but a single *page* of the admirable translation of Dr Stuart, and perhaps a *page* of one of those *sheet* of that admirable translation, which "even Dr Irvine himself revised, with a most respectable clergyman in Mull." Dr Ross, at any event, got one quarto page of that translation printed, but without altering a letter of it, on a Pica type, to enable him to calculate the number of sheets to which his own translation would extend in that form. Some of the members may have got hold of this page, and thrown it on the table as a specimen of the printing. But, whatever Dr Irvine has said against that page, applies, not to Dr Ross's translation, but to his own. It shews, however, how far prejudice will mislead and expose some folks.

Quest. 9th. "Would Dr Ross admit and deny the jurisdiction of the Assembly over the whole Church of Scotland, as the highest and only ecclesiastical tribunal in the kingdom?"—Ans. Mr Editor, I certainly mean no offence to you or to any of your readers; but really I must take the liberty to say that this is sheer nonsense, and that no man is obliged to reply to it.

Quest. 10th. "Would Dr Ross call averments founded upon the Acts of Assembly, false, injurious, *ipse dixit* scandal?"—Ans. Dr Ross never would do, nor did do any such thing.

Quest. 11th. "Could Dr Ross be mad enough to imagine that the Assembly could enter into his passions and absurdities, and recal their approbation of a work highly approved even by Dr Ross and his advocate, carried on under the inspection of the Assembly, and transfer their affection to the proposed translation of a man unknown, untried, who, in their presence, exhibited his incapacity, or worse?"—Ans. Without designing to animadvert on the unmannerly and ungentleman-like terms in which this question is conveyed, it is quite sufficient to observe that Dr Ross had no motion at all before the Assembly, and that the overture before the Assembly proposed no such *entrance*, no such *recal*, or no such *transference* as Dr Irvine insists on.

Quest. 12th. "Could Dr Ross suppose that the Assembly *could*, with any propriety, countenance two contemporary translations, or twenty, in the same language, for the same people, when they were doing all in their power to render an admirable translation as perfect as possible, and as intelligible as possible to every one

who really understands Gaelic, which, as will be seen just now, Dr Ross's advocate does not?"—Ans. Dr Ross, and every rational being, could certainly suppose that the Assembly might with the utmost propriety have countenanced, or at least tolerated, two, or twenty translations in the same language; and not only so, but that it could not, without the greatest impropriety, and the most unwarrantable stretch of power, oppose one of two or twenty translations in the same language. If the Assembly could not, without impropriety, allow two translations of the Scriptures in the same language, how have they tolerated Dr Campbell's, and Dr Doddridge's, and Dr M'Knight's translations, and even the translation of Bellamy, or some such name, into the *English* language? especially when we had such an admirable translation before? Surely the General Assembly must have acted with great impropriety, either in tolerating all these translations into *English*, or in opposing a *second* translation into *Gaelic*: and if Dr Irvine were a man capable of feeling shame from being convicted of the most palpable absurdities, I should think that his situation between the horns of this dilemma could not be a comfortable one.

Were it necessary to prosecute this subject, it might be asked, Who ever thought of interdicting Pitt from translating the *Æneid*, because Dryden had given us a beautiful translation of it before him? Or who ever abused Cowper for attempting a translation of the *Iliad* into English, because Pope had already rendered that wonderful production in the same language? But, truly the stupidity of opposing a translation of the Sacred Scriptures into any language, is worthy of such an advocate as Dr Irvine, and of such arguments as he employs. The Assembly, so far from doing all in their power, have actually done nothing, to render the Gaelic translation of the Scriptures perfect: the surest method of attaining to a perfect translation is by encouraging all translations, and, out of these, to form the best—to oppose or discountenance translations, is the way to keep any translation imperfect, unintelligible, and useless. There is not one member of the General Assembly but who knows this.

Quest. 13th. "Would Dr Ross publish his shame to the world, by telling, that, though a member, he did not attend his duty in the Assembly, where he had such momentous interests at stake?"
Ans. Does Dr Irvine mean, by this question, to insinuate, that every man who is returned as a Commissioner to the General

Assembly, and does not attend his duty there, has cause to be ashamed on that account? If he does not, his words have clearly no meaning. If he does, they are the ravings of frenzy, and not the dictates of reason. Does Dr Irvine so superficially know, so slightly feel, or so seldom inculcate, the slender tenure by which man holds life, and health, and every sublunary enjoyment, as to venture to affirm that no circumstance could occur, from the first Tuesday of April, to prevent a man, (reluctantly and unavoidably) from attending in Edinburgh, at the distance of 200 miles, on the third Thursday of May? Are there no instances of Commissioners, or Chief Commissioners being returned to the Assembly in perfect health and strength, and being sick or dead before the time of meeting? Are there no instances of Ministers having risen in health and comfort on the Sabbath morning, and being seized by sickness, or arrested by death, before the ordinary hour of preaching? And is their absence from the pulpit on such a ground, or on the ground of a thousand other casualties which might make it equally unavoidable, and equally excusable, to be published to the world as a cause of shame? No, no! Every sentiment of delicacy, of humanity, of good taste, and good nature, must be shocked at the revolting thought, and say, Fie upon the man who could bring it forward. But reasoning is lost on Dr Irvine; and it is not for his sake that these reflections are made, but for the sake of those readers for whom PHILO-CLERICUS pleads.

For their sakes, it may be proper also to ask, what were those MOMENTOUS INTERESTS which Dr Ross had at stake in the last General Assembly? Now, in answer to this question,—It does not appear, nor has Dr Irvine shewn, nor can he shew, that Dr Ross had one particle of interest at stake in that Assembly more than what belonged to him in common with all the other members of the Church. He had no motion of his own before the House,—no cause,—no “*Agent*,”—no pleading,—he was not at the bar as a delinquent or complainer,—he had no favour to ask of the Assembly,—no reason to apprehend or deprecate their censure. It is true the Synod of Ross had an overture before the General Assembly; and, no doubt, Dr Ross, like many other good men, wished success to the overture. But he had no “*momentous interests at stake*,”—no personal concern, in fact, in its failure or success. He had never taken it into his head that he

ought to apply to the General Assembly for permission to publish a translation of the Scriptures,—he knew no law by which the General Assembly could prevent him,—he knew no reason why they should wish to do so,—at this moment he knows none,—and he despises, from the bottom of his soul, all that blustering and rant by which Dr Irvine wishes to represent the highest Ecclesiastical Court in this nation as overstepping the bounds of its just prerogative, to oppose a work which is calculated to promote the moral and religious improvement of the country. What “momentous interest” Dr Irvine may have at stake in doing this is best known to himself.

Quest. 14th. “Would Dr Ross venture to assert, that the Assembly were preventing the improvement of Ross-shire by opposing his Translation, when their enactment had not the most distant reference to it, when, in fact, he may bring it out to-morrow, if he can, when he admits that it was not intended, with its appendages, for the pulpit at least?”—Ans. Dr Ross still asserts, that the Assembly, which opposes translations of the Scriptures, does in so far prevent the improvement of the countries where these translations are needed; and Dr Ross knows that, whether the enactment of the last General Assembly had the *most distant* or the *most direct* reference to his translation, he may still bring it out to-morrow, if he can. But what, then, becomes of the “momentous interest” which he had at stake in the General Assembly? Does Dr Irvine suppose that any reader, even of a newspaper, is so silly as not to pick up a palpable contradiction of this kind?

Quest. 15th. “Would Dr Ross, from the shadows of his fancy, try to raise the Highland host against the Assembly and three obnoxious individuals who acted faithfully, honestly, and conscientiously in the discharge of an important duty, without one feeling of dislike to Dr Ross, as a being altogether beyond their notice?” Ans. The *fidelity*, *honesty*, and *conscientiousness*, with which these individuals acted, in a business which no duty imposed upon them, have been already so fully pourtrayed in my letter to you dated 30th December last, that I need not say one word more upon the subject. Dr Irvine, however, should consider that *humility* is a temper of mind not unbecoming a Christian, or even a CHRISTIAN MINISTER.

Quest. 16. “Would Dr Ross be so unlike a man of honour as

to publish in a newspaper, *without leave*, part of a confidential letter in praise of himself, without at least publishing the whole?"

Ans. The letter was upon a public subject, of the deepest importance—conveyed, not merely the private sentiments of Dr Irvine, at the time of writing it, but also the decided and declared opinions of the neighbouring clergymen, whom he had deliberately consulted—was calculated to encourage Dr Ross in engaging in a Work which could not be successfully prosecuted without very great labour and expence—and was, of course, the most effectual, and a perfectly justifiable weapon in the hands of Dr Ross, to repel the charge of ignorance, presumption, and conceit, which, after having been four years indefatigably labouring in the work, was so wantonly made upon him by Dr Irvine.

Dr Ross would not wittingly transgress any of the laws of honour. But the standard of honour, in the mind of every Christian Minister, at least, should be the morality of the Gospel. Who first infringed this law, in the present instance, will be determined by the readers of this correspondence. If a wanton and injurious attack was made, and repeated, in the most public manner, even on the face of a newspaper, by Dr Irvine upon Dr Ross, which the latter had no means of repelling but by the production of a letter written by the former; and if, by the production of that letter, the attack was effectually and triumphantly repelled; it remains for every honourable mind to say whether the letter ought to have been produced or not. How the matter stands at the bar of Dr Irvine's conscience, he alone can tell. But let no man wonder that he complains.

The reason for not publishing the whole of the letter was merely to save the columns of your paper. If Dr Irvine thinks that there is a sentence in it more favourable to his fidelity, his honesty, or his conscience, than those excerpts which have been given, the whole is completely at his service.

Quest. 17th. "What would Dr Ross or his advocate "think if Dr Irvine were to follow such an example?" Ans. It is impossible for a living man to say how a dead man would think. But perhaps Dr Irvine may make the discovery by trying the experiment.

Quest. 18th. "Would Dr Ross shew his ignorance of the first elements of Gaelic Grammar by quoting, as inaccurate translation, passages correctly translated?" Ans. Never would, surely.

Quest. 19th. "Would Dr Ross not know that the relative pronoun, in the very first verse he pretends to translate, is the same in the nominative and the accusative?" Ans. Dr Ross denies that *tu*, the word in question, is a *relative* pronoun. He affirms that it is a *personal* pronoun. He denies that it is *the same* in the nominative and accusative. He insists that it is *tu* in the nominative, and *thu* in the accusative.

Quest. 20th. "Would Dr Ross condemn in *OUR* incomparable translation, what he approved and *wrote* in *Ossian*? See Fingal, Duan v. line 274, exactly the same as to grammar with the first specimen he gives of his skill in the Gaelic language—'A dfhag mi 'n talla nan tur,' which, according to his notions, should be, not as the context leads us to understand, 'whom I left in the hall of towers, but 'who left me,' " &c.—Ans. Dr Ross has not condemned in the Bible what he wrote in *Ossian*. He has translated the passage quoted from *Ossian*, "Whom I left in the hall of towers," and he defies Dr Irvine to point to any notions of his by which it *ought* to be otherwise translated. Not but it *might* be otherwise translated, if the context had rendered that proper: for the phrase in that example is perfectly ambiguous—equally susceptible of the one translation or of the other. This is Dr Irvine's example. Not so is the quotation by Dr Ross from Gen. xii. 3, which is in the present translation, "Agus beannaichidh mi iadsan a bheannaicheas tu, agus iadsan a mhallaicheas tu mallaichidh mi:"—literally in English, "And I will bless them whom thou wilt bless, and those whom thou wilt curse, I will curse." It must be observed, that this is the only true translation of the passage here quoted—there is no ambiguity in the Gaelic used here—it admits of no other interpretation or meaning—and no Gaelic scholar will say that it does. Dr Ross maintains that the above passage is incorrectly translated into Gaelic—just as much so as the English version of it given above, is inconsistent with, and contrary to, the original Hebrew—he maintains that it is so, by using the nominative of the pronoun instead of the accusative—and he maintains that the pronoun of this person is not the same in the nominative and accusative.

Dr Ross insists, that the correct translation of the passage quoted, from the original Hebrew into Gaelic, is as follows, viz. "Agus beannaichidh mi iadsan a bheannuicheas thu, agus iadsan a mhallaicheas thu, mallaichidh mi." Dr Ross is perfectly willing to

rest the "momentous interests" of the dispute between himself and Dr Irvine, of his reputation as a Gaelic scholar, and of the success of his "new and improved translation of the Gaelic Scriptures," upon the correctness of this translation. And therefore, when Dr Irvine adds, "All the examples he quotes as mis-translations shew the same ignorance;" Dr Ross only insists upon his admitting, that they also exhibit an equally correct and critical knowledge as this example does; and his own examples, a corresponding ignorance and want of candour on his part.

I hope, Mr Editor, that I have satisfied the utmost desires of PHILo-CLERICUS, but I fear that I have exhausted your patience, and that of your readers.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your very obedient and humble servant,

THOMAS ROSS.

Lochbroom-Manse, 10th May 1821.

P. S. I was going to enlarge upon the examples by which Dr Irvine affected to prove my ignorance of the Gaelic language, when it occurred to me, that Dr Irvine's object in provoking such a discussion must have been, to pick up a correct knowledge of the language for himself *gratis*; when I instantly threw down my pen, and resolved (which you may tell him) that, if he wishes for instruction in the Gaelic language, he must become a Subscriber to my Gaelic Bible, or come to Lochbroom and pay a guinea for every twelve lessons.

I have only to add, that since his opposition to my New Testament has been avowed, I have more than doubled the number of my subscribers.

T. R.

Dr Irvine having complained in his second letter to the Editor of the Inverness Journal, (see p. 57,) that part of his letter to Dr Ross had been published, without at least publishing the whole; the whole is here given *verbatim et lit ratim* from the original.

"MY DEAR SIR,— I had the pleasure of yours of the 18th ult. in due time, and delayed answering it till I should have an opportunity of conversing with my friends hereabout, and making up

my mind what opinion to offer. A pretty large quarto edition, like the Irish, of the Galic Scriptures, is certainly much needed; and I have no doubt would have a good sale. I know no man better qualified than you for such an undertaking. You have knowledge enough, and more zeal and experience than are commonly found among our order. In point of ability you are far before honest Dr Stewart; and your ability would unquestionably ensure the credit of the work.

“ But I have strong doubts whether you could bear the expence of coping with the Society; and if you could not sell as cheap as they, people would wait the coming of their edition. The Scriptures are so easily got now, that I hardly see how any individual could pay his trouble and expence in editing the Gaelic Scriptures, unless he got under the patronage of the Bible Society. If you could get that, I would advise you to proceed immediately. I must also tell you, that hereabout we know that the Society are to publish a quarto edition; and, for fear of offending them, we would be slack in countenancing any rival labours. These are the sentiments of the brethren with whom I conversed. As for myself, though I wish to live at peace with all men, I am always ready to do what I can to forward any good work. And therefore, if prudence advises you to undertake the work in question, I shall do for it what I can, judging of its utility, not of the object which passion or ill-nature may have in view. I think there is much room for a new translation and new orthography, as I will endeavour to shew in a Dissertation on the progress of the Galic. We have by far too many useless letters, which form no part of the word, and which obscure the language. People talk of the translation as the standard, without knowing what a standard is. How many impressions of the English Scriptures we have had, before their orthography was fixed in its present state. I proposed to edit an impression of the Galic Psalms, with a view to avoid the shameful errors which disgrace every one I see. The last edition of yours I have not seen. But those of Smith’s are scarcely legible, from typographical errors. A small edition of Ossian’s Galic poems is coming out from Sir John Macgregor Murray, aided by M^r Lachlan and others. I examined the London edition, and pointed out hundreds of errors of the press I fancy, and proposed some emendations of the spelling; but I fancy the Baronet will not adopt them. I fancy, up-

on the whole, the people about you are well supplied with the Scriptures, and can now make use of them, partly through the Galic schools. You will rejoice with me in the extension of our Redeemer's kingdom, especially in Africa. Had the Christian conquerors, or rather plunderers and oppressors of India and America acted on Christian principles, the name of Christian and the cause of Christ would not be connected with every thing base, and cruel, and impious. I shall be glad to hear from you now and then. I pray God to bless you and your's, and your pious labours, and remain, my dear Sir, your friend and brother,

A. IRVINE.

Dunkeld, 19th April 1816.

The only comment which Dr Ross will offer on the above letter is, To ask every candid reader, whether it was possible for Dr Ross to suspect Dr Irvine of any want of sincerity in the declarations which he had made in it, of personal regard towards Dr Ross, of respect for his talents as a scholar and a Christian minister, of the need of a quarto edition of the Sacred Scriptures in Gaelic, of Dr Ross's superior qualifications for executing such a work, and of Dr Irvine's determination to do all in his power to promote it?

MINUTE of the PRESBYTERY of LOHCARRON.

At Lochcarron, April 3, 1816,

SEDERUNT,—the PRESBYTERY of LOHCARRON.

Dr Thomas Ross, Minister of Lochbroom, stated, That having long observed with regret that there was no Edition of the Bible in Gaelic, except one on a very small type, equally unfit for being read by the aged, and used in families, as it is for the use of the Clergy in the Pulpit, it was his intention to publish, at his own expence, an edition of the Scriptures in Gaelic, in a quarto size, and printed on a large type, and requested the countenance and support of his brethren in this Presbytery in recommending the use of this edition to their respective parishioners, if they should find it deserving their good opinion. The Presbytery after due consideration to a subject of so much importance to the spi-

ritual interests of the greater part of the population under their charge, feel much satisfaction in receiving this communication from Dr Ross, as they are fully satisfied that from his learning, his critical accuracy, and his acquaintance with the Gaelic language, few are better calculated to execute such an undertaking with the prospect of credit to himself and of utility to the public.

Extracted from the Records of the Presbytery of Lochcarron, by

A. DOWNIE, *Clerk.*

Copy MINUTE of the PROVINCIAL SYNOD of GLENELG.

At Lochcarron, Friday the 19th day of July 1816 years,

SEDERUNT,—The PROVINCIAL SYNOD of GLENELG.

Inter alia,

The Committee of Overtures being called upon to give in their report, it was stated, that a Prospectus of a New Edition of the Sacred Scriptures in Gaelic had been published by Dr Thomas Ross of Lochbroom, which they deemed highly worthy of the attention of the Synod.

This Prospectus having been examined, it was moved and seconded,

“ That the Synod of Glenelg, considering the present edition of the Gaelic Bible, though executed with much ability, to contain some imperfections in point of translation, which it would be desirable to see remedied, and, further, to be by no means adapted to general use, owing to the smallness of the type, and coarseness of the paper, do express their satisfaction at the prospect of having an edition of the Bible more accurate in point of language, and more perfect in external form: That, impressed with a sense of Dr Ross’s eminent qualifications for the undertaking, from his well-known learning, talents, and industry, they do re-

commend to the different Ministers within their bounds to promote the circulation of this edition among their parishioners ; and that, in the meantime, the thanks of this Synod be given to Dr Ross for his exertions in carrying into effect a work so much wanted, and so much calculated to promote the interests of religion in the Highlands of Scotland."

This motion being unanimously approved of, the thanks of this Synod were accordingly given from the chair to Dr Ross.

Extracted on this and the two preceding pages, by

COLIN M'IVER, *Synod Clerk,*

LETTER—DR STUART TO DR ROSS.

Luss, 7th February 1816.

DEAR SIR,—I am favoured with your letter of the 29th *ultimo*, just as I was proposing in any event to write you. I lost no time in communicating your former letter to the Secretary of the Society for Propagating Christian knowledge, and I received his answer only on the 5th current.—He acquaints me, that last summer the Society had the printing a quarto edition of the Gaelic Bible under their contemplation, and got from Mr Charles Stewart the printer an estimate of the expence, which he was pleased to send me ; that at a late meeting the directors had determined, with as little delay as possible, to print such an edition, and have requested that I will conduct and superintend the work, which I have agreed to. I believe the Society propose to be themselves at the sole risk and expence of printing said work, and to depend on the sale for their being indemnified, whereas, if either you or I were to undertake it, we could not do so without a liberal subscription. I return you many thanks for the handsome offer which you are pleased to make me ; but owing to the engagements under which I came some time ago to the Society, I cannot accept it. As the Society had employed hands for translating the Sacred Scriptures into the Gaelic language, and in this country had hitherto been at the sole expence of printing a Gaelic version of them, it was always clearly my own opinion



that they have a title to be consulted before any other thinks of printing a new edition of said version. If I should not live to see the said work brought to a conclusion, from your knowledge of the Gaelic language, and of the orthography thereof, the experience you have now had in superintending the printing of it, and your acknowledged accuracy, I know none so fit for carrying on the business as yourself; and I have given that as my opinion to the Secretary of the Society.

I am,

Dear Sir,

Your's truly,

JOHN STUART.

The candid Reader will have the goodness to correct the following

ERRATA.

Page 40. line 2. from bottom, *for* Mr. *read* Dr.

— 48. — 4. from bottom, *for* had it an, *read* had it in an intelligible language.

— 52. — 20. *for* is, *read* as.

— 69. — 7. *for* than, *read* that.

— 74. — 15. *for*, in honest fame, *read*, of honest fame.

— — — 16. *for* markets, *read* market.

— 91. — 5. *for*, sheet, *read*, sheets.

