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**A Fair and
Impartial
Testimony Against
the Backslidings,
Corruptions,
Divisions, and
Prevailing Evils**

John Willison



A Fair and Impartial Testimony...Against the Backslidings, Corruptions, Divisions, and Prevailing Evils...

Author(s): Willison, John (1680-1750)

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Description: In the mid-18th century, the Church of Scotland faced some considerable upheaval. The Church's General Assembly, despite opposition from a great number of its congregations, ratified a significant shift in the Church's policies for electing and placing ministers. As a result, some of the dissenting congregations chose to secede from the Church of Scotland, forming the United Secession Church in 1733. A decade later, John Willison, as well as merely documenting the event, wrote *A Fair and Impartial Testimony* as a call for the dissenting congregations to make peace and return to the Church of Scotland.

Kathleen O'Bannon
CCEL Staff

Subjects: Christian Denominations
Protestantism
Post-Reformation
Other Protestant denominations
Presbyterianism. Calvinistic Methodism

Contents

Title Page	1
Prefatory Statement by the Transcriber	3
The Preface	5
Testimony	17
Advertisement	117
Adherence	118
Postscript	119
Postscript	130
Subscriber's Names	131
Appendix	142
Indexes	150
Index of Scripture References	151
Latin Words and Phrases	153
Index of Pages of the Print Edition	154



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A
FAIR AND IMPARTIAL TESTIMONY
Essayed
In Name Of A Number of
Ministers, Elders, and Christian People Of
THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND
Unto The Laudable
PRINCIPLES, WRESTLINGS & ATTAINMENTS
OF THAT CHURCH;
and Against the Backslidings, Corruptions,
Divisions, and Prevailing Evils,
Both Of
FORMER & PRESENT TIMES
And Namely
THE DEFECTIONS OF THE
Established Church;
Of The
Nobility, Gentry, Commons, Seceders,
Episcopalians, Etc.
Containing
A BRIEF HISTORICAL DEDUCTION OF THE
chief occurrences in this church
from her beginning to the year 1744,
WITH REMARKS;
and humble pleadings with our mother
church, to exert herself
to
stop defection, and promote reformation.

attested & adhered unto by sundry ministers.

By the Rev. JOHN WILLISON,
Minister of the Gospel at Dundee, Scotland,
[Psal. ci 3.](#) I hate the work of them that turn aside, it shall not cleave to me.
[Isa. xliii. 10.](#) Ye are my Witnesses saith the Lord.
[Ezek. xliii. 11.](#) Shew them the form of the house, and write it in their sight.
[Isa. lviii. 1.](#) Shew the house of Jacob their sins.

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from the press of cramer and spear—1808

Willison's Testimony:

Prefatory Statement by the Transcriber

The original title of Mr. Willison's Testimony is transcribed below following this preface in its entirety. The title states that the Testimony is a "Fair and Impartial Testimony." As such, Mr. Willison presents an account of the events that took place in the history of the Church of Scotland. Not only does he write of the events that took place between the men involved, he also inserts proclamations of praise to God and alludes to the Lord's providential care over His Church. Mr. Willison demonstrates a highly practical understanding of God's providence as he demonstrates the infallibility of God's word in connection with history. He applies the eternal truths of the Holy Writ to the events that took place in a most appropriate manner. Also, as Mr. Willison recounts the sins of the Church, he not only exposes those who promoted error, but also demonstrates that those who stood for truth had a tendency to sin in a way peculiar to individuals who strive to maintain purity in doctrine. The reader may note that the parallels between the Church of Scotland then and the Reformed and Presbyterian Churches of today seem strikingly similar. There is nothing new under the sun.

Concerning the transcribed version certain changes have been made. These changes are minor and were made primarily for ease of reading. They are as follows. In the original text, references made to a king such as Charles I would have a period after the "I." (ie. king Charles I. did so and so...) . The period has been eliminated after such references so that the text reads "king Charles I did so and so..." in order to prevent the appearance of a sentence ending in mid sentence. Also, all hyphenations placed in hyphenated words have been eliminated and the words kept in tact. Another change was made with quoted data. The original text placed quoted data with quotation marks at the beginning of each line. If a quote was longer than one line, each line would begin with a " mark. These multiple quotation marks have been removed and modern methods for quoting data have been used in their place. In addition, archaic spellings have not been changed so there are words that appear misspelled according to modern spellings. Finally, when archaic words or words peculiar to Scottish language are used, definitions in brackets often follow. These definitions were derived from *Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary*, 2nd ed., (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983). The scanned transcribed version of the text below may still have errors.

The overall layout of the book is as it was originally printed. In chronological order, the reader will find the Title Page, Preface, Testimony, Advertisement, Adherence, Postscript, Contents, Postscript and a list of Subscribers Names. In addition, the transcriber has added a Subject Index in the Appendix. The reader will please note that the Contents and Subject

Index in the Appendix are found at the end of the book. Page numbers for the Contents of the book, Preface, Testimony etc., can be found listed in the Subject Index.

Ron Creech, Transcriber.

THE PREFACE.

THOUGH I be far less fit for framing a Testimony to the principles, wrestlings and attainments of this church, and against the corruptions, defections and evils of the times, than many of my brethren; yet being encouraged by some whom I highly valued to undertake it, and finding none else inclined to it, I have essayed it through Divine strength, hoping to see a *witnessing Body* appear within this Church, as well as without it, at least some who would desire to testify against the evils of the day with just zeal, impartiality and meekness.

No sooner I set my face to it, but I saw it to be a matter of great difficulty to steer a straight course, without swerving to the right or left hand, in these reeling and shaking times, when such different opinions are vented, provocations are given, calumnies are spread, and men's passions are stirred on each side, so that even the meekest and wisest are ready to stagger: I found also the difficulty increase, from the divided sentiment of godly ministers with respect to some particular occurrences, and the strong inclination of many live at ease, enjoy quiet, and even to sit down Issacar like and couch under the burden, when hopes of relief does not appear. These things greatly discouraged me to proceed in the design.

But when I daily weighed and considered the growing dangers of the church, the backsliding disposition that still prevailed, and the unsuccessfulness of all other methods to recover her from it such as *Dissents, Protests, Instructions, Representations, Petitions, Separations, Secessions*, &c. & that the only mean now left to be tried for giving check to corruption and exciting reformation, seemed to be that of an honest Testimony of some within the church: I determined at length to go on through all difficulties and discouragements, to prepare and publish the following *Essay*, with a sincere intention to preserve my Mother church, and promote her interests: looking to Heaven for a blessing on it, that it may be of use to excite judicatories to put a stop to some evils, and reform some things amiss: And though it should have little effect on the present backsliding age, yet hoping it may be useful to, the rising generation when God shall send a general revival of true Christianity in the land; at such a time the subscribers of this testimony will continue, when dead, thus to speak, to the glory of the ever living Redeemer.

I considered also within myself, that our old suffering ministers were all gone off the stage, and many other worthy brethren were going time to time, and that I myself get frequent warnings to prepare for going: and at the same time, that numbers of eminent good men drop into the silent grave, without leaving any testimony behind them; so that in a short time it may be called in question what their mind was concerning the principles and attainments of our fathers, and the corruptions of present and former times; and if I continued to linger a little longer, this would be my own fate also. Wherefore I resolved to expose this



Essay, and myself likewise, to the cenure of the world: and though I should be charged with mean and selfish views in it, as affecting *Singularity, a Name, Applause* from some, &c. if the Lord call me to bear reproach in carrying on a good design, why should I not submit to it? Surely it may be thought that one of my age should be dead to these vanities, and that it is high time for me to be seeking the approbation of my great Judge, more than that of all the world. May I ever mind this!

Quest. It is like it may be asked, “What warrant have ye for emitting such a Testimony?”

Answ. The reasons and grounds of it seem so plain both from Scripture and sound reason, that we may adventure to submit them to all thinking persons to judge of them.

I. The servants of God, and especially ministers of the gospel, are frequently in Scripture called his Witnesses; in regard they are called to give testimony to his truths and ways, and to bear witness against what is prejudicial or contrary thereunto, [Rev. xi. 3, 7.](#) [Luke xxiv. 48.](#) [John v. 33.](#) and [xv. 27.](#) [Acts i. 8.](#) and [xxii. 15, 18.](#) and [xxvi. 19.](#) It is by such faithful witness hearing that we must hold fast the truths of God when ready to be plucked from us, and to contend for the faith which he hath delivered to his saints, [Rev. iii. 11.](#) [Jude verse 3.](#) And in this way we are to wrestle with and overcome truth’s adversaries, [Rev. xii. 11.](#) *They overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony.* The character which God gives his servants three times in the compass of a few verses should make very deep impression upon us, [Isa. xliii. 10, 12.](#) and [xliv. 8.](#) *Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord.* And it is in that capacity he calls and requires us to *confess Christ before men, to bear witness to Christ and to his truths, to stand fast in the faith, to quit ourselves like men, to be strong, to be steadfast, to be zealous and valiant for the truth, to be faithful unto death.*—To contend earnestly for the faith and set ourselves for the defence of the gospel.—To plead with our Mother; to keep the charge of the Lord, and the charge of his sanctuary; to keep that which is committed to our trust; to be clean who bear the vessels of the Lord, and not to touch the unclean thing.—To save ourselves from an untoward generation: to keep our garments clean and unspotted from the world, to hate the work of them that turn aside, that it may not cleave to us; to keep ourselves pure, and not to be partakers of other mens sins; to flee from sin, and deliver every man his own soul; to abhor what is evil, to cleave unto the Lord and to that which is good; to keep ourselves from the accursed thing.—To be watchmen to the house of Israel, and give them warning from God; to cry aloud and not spare, to shew the house of Jacob their sins; to reprove the works of darkness; not to suffer sin upon our brother; to be pure from the blood of all men, and not to shun to declare all the counsel of God.—Now these multiplied Scripture texts and Divine precepts afford us clear and plain warrant to make an open appearance and declaration for our Lord Jesus Christ, and for his truths and ways when injured; and against the evils and corruptions of the times, especially when they are avowed and infectious, and like to infect more and more.



II. Writing and leaving a testimony behind us to true religion, and against error and corruption, is necessary and useful for the instruction, conviction, and confirmation both of the present and future generations, and a very proper mean for handing down God's truths and institutions pure from age to age; which is a debt that one generation owes to another, as God declares in his word; [Psal. lxxviii. 5, 6, 7.](#) *He established a testimony in, Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers that they should make them known to their children; that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children: That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of Cod, but keep his commandments.* [Psal. cxlv. 4.](#) *One generation shall praise thy works to another and shall declare thy mighty acts.* And according to [Psal. cii. 18.](#) God's works of grace and mercy are to be written for the generations to come, that the people which are to be created may praise the Lord. And we are enjoined, [Psal. xlviii. 13.](#) to walk about Zion, to tell her towers, mark her bulwarks and palaces, viz. the institutions and ornaments of the gospel church, that we may shew them to the generation following. And we are appointed, [Ezek. xliii. 11.](#) to shew to the house of Israel the form and fashion of the house of God, with the ordinances and laws thereof, and to write it in their sight, that they may keep them and do them. All these do plainly demonstrate our Scripture warrant for leaving such written testimonies behind us.

III. Writing and emitting faithful testimonies for God and his ways, is necessary and seasonable especially in times of corruption and backsliding, even when true religion is in danger. In such times Christ doth kindly accept and reward our open *confessing of him* and his truths before men, [Rev. ii. 2.](#) [Matth. x. 32.](#) And, on the other hand, he severely threatens our conniving at error and impiety, and not bearing testimony against them when they abound, [Rev. ii. 14, 15, 16.](#) Now, is not the backsliding day in which we live a proper season for such open confessions and faithful testimonies, when errors of all kinds are tolerate, approved truths are run down, and manifold corruptions prevail, to the dishonour of God and our holy religion; and when applications to judicatories for redress are unsuccessful? Surely it must be in such a time as this, that God calls his servants and witnesses to *rise up for him* (by faithful testimonies) *against the evil-doers*, and *stand up for him against the workers of iniquity*, [Psal. xciv. 16.](#)

Object. Some perhaps will say, "The corruptions and grievances of the times are not so great as some are ready to make them."

Answ. No doubt some do aggravate them beyond what is true and just. But, if what these say be fact, who use to speak within bounds, viz. 1. That a spirit of infidelity and error greatly prevails in the land, and open attacks are made upon the holy Scriptures and the Christian religion.—2. That a free toleration is given to all kinds of error, Arminian, Socinian, Arian, Popish, Deistical, &c. which are spreading more.—3. That sundry of the clergy are suspected of, and charged more than formerly, not only with looseness and immoralities in



their lives, but also with laxness and unsoundness in their principles; and some of these are allowed to possess eminent posts in colleges, and even to teach divinity, and train up young men for the holy ministry.—4. That many of these have no regard to act 7th assembly 1736 with respect to evangelical preaching, but take up with legal doctrine, and a sort of heathenish morality, instead of preaching Christ to sinners, which ought to be the main business of every gospel minister.—5. That many of them give great encouragement to patronage, that woful usurpation over the church of God, when they are under no necessity from the law to do it.—6. That gross intrusions are continued upon Christian congregations, who are thereby spoiled of their right to call their own pastors, contrary to the word of God and our known principles.—7. That there are now most unreasonable divisions, ill grounded and unscriptural separations, among sound and godly Presbyterians; contrary to Christ's royal law of love, and precepts of *keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*.—8. That there are strange liberties taken by many (of whom better things might have been expected) in reproaching the work of God's holy Spirit, in awakening, convincing, and bringing lost sinners home to himself.—9. That the Episcopal clergy are forsaking the Protestant cause, licking up old Popish errors and superstitions which their fathers cast out, and sliding gradually back again to Rome——Now, if these things be true (as many alledge with too much ground) Christ's witnesses have a plain call from him to stand up against these defections by faithful testimonies, and to give free warning of the evil and danger of them before it be too late.

IV. A written subscribed testimony seems necessary in obedience to the Ninth Commandment, for preserving and clearing the names and characters of honest ministers and elders in times of defection, and for vindicating them from the common charge of the corruptions and wrong steps of the societies whereof they are members. As they are often loaded unjustly with these evils, so their giving a subscribed testimony against them is a proper way to wipe off aspersions from their names while they live, to prevent blackning of their memories when dead, and also to yield them much inward peace when dying. Wherefore in my humble opinion, the call seems to be pretty clear to them who desire to, *keep their garments unspotted, and to hate the work of them that turn aside, that it may not cleave to them*, and who would embalm their names to posterity as witnesses for God in an evil time, to declare their minds by joining in such a testimony as this, and thereby exoner their consciences with respect to the backsliding and defections under which they have been long groaning. And whatsoever their hands finds to do in this matter, it is fit they do it without loss of time, seeing their standing is so slippery every day upon the brink of the grave.

V. Emitting testimonies in time of defection hath been the approven practice of God's worthies in former times. They judged their giving written testimonies against growing errors and corruptions to be the lifting up, a banner for truth, and the proper means to stop the current of defection, and to excite and plead with their Mother to use her best endeavours



for that effect.—We have still extant such faithful testimonies given by sundry ministers in the years 1658 and 1659, when a toleration was granted by law to the sectaries and errors which then prevailed: and namely, that famous testimony drawn up against these errors, and to the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of

this church, subscribed by Mr. Samuel Rutherford, Mr. James Wedderburn, Mr. James Guthrie, Mr. Alexander Moncrieff, Mr. Thomas Lundie, and many others.—Likewise a testimony against toleration by the presbytery of Edinburgh, 5th October, 1659.—One by the ministers of Lancashire, 3^d March, 1648.—One by Mr. George Gillespie, two days before his death.—One by the ministers of London, 14th December, 1647.—One by Mr. Rutherford on his death-bed, February, 1661.—One by, Dr. Horneck against stageplays, &c. And, lastly, what are all the dying speeches which our martyrs have left written behind them, but so many testimonies to the truths and ways of God, and against the errors and corruptions of their times? And these testimonies, however much despised by the world, God hath blessed as means for continuing truth and gospel purity among us to this day. And who knows but the Testimony now essayed in imitation of the foresaid worthies, may likewise be of use for preserving truth, and exciting reformation, when many of the present backsliding generation are laid in the dust? A new turn of affairs, and a general revival, may yet come; (The Lord himself hasten it!) Now it will be highly useful at such a time, for the generation to know something of the sentiments and practices of ancient wrestlers against corruption. Were there no testimonies of this kind, both the knowledge of truth, and the sense of duty and of sin in sundry cases, would be lost to the rising ages, towards whom we of the present age are indispensibly bound to act a kind and faithful part, viz. to give them just information.

Object. It may be alledged, “That the dissents and contendings of honest ministers, recorded in the books of synods and presbyteries, and other judicatories, are sufficient to inform after ages.”

Answ. These Testimonies commonly lye dormant in church-records, and are little known in the world: and frequently these, registers are quite lost, by their going from hand to hand, or by the death of their keepers; which indeed is a very great loss to after ages. Were all the testimonies of ministers and judicatories relating to patronages and accepting of presentations published, they might be of very great use; and particularly the acts of synods thereanant [with reference to the acts of synods], mentioned p. 54. of the Testimony. The synods of Aberdeen, Ross, Angus, Perth, Fife, &c. they made acts of that kind, severals of which I have seen, which well deserve, to be published. The substance of them being comprehended in the act of the synod of Fife, I shall insert it here.



Coupar, April 2nd 1735. The synod of Fife taking into their serious consideration, that patronages, with power of presenting men to take the oversight of souls, is a manifest encroachment upon the rights and liberties of the church of Christ, which the judicatories and faithful members of this church from its reformation have always complained of, and struggled against, as what deprives Christian congregations of that interest they ought to have in calling their own pastors, and which is claimed and asserted by the assemblies of this church. And further considering, that some do accept of presentations before any call from the vacant congregations, and without the advice and consent of the presbytery of the bounds, and sometimes even before the parishioners have occasion to hear them, or shew their inclinations to them; and adhere to their presentations notwithstanding the aversion of the congregations, and thereby give great offence, in shewing so little regard to the weighty ends of a gospel-ministry, the glory of the great and chief Shepherd, and the edification of his flock, and in affording too much occasion to people to look on them as seeking more a living to themselves than to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore the synod of Fife do hereby give warning to all ministers and preachers of the gospel within their bounds, of the evil and danger of such undue acceptance of presentations; earnestly exhorting and admonishing to beware thereof, as they would not mar the edification of Christ's flock, and continue this heavy grievance upon this church, and expose themselves to the just censure of its judicatories. And, to the intent this admonition may, be the more regarded, the synod appoints a copy thereof to be recorded in all the presbytery-books within that bounds; and the presbyteries, at their first meeting after the minutes of the synod come to their hands, cause read the same judicially, and also give copies thereof to all the ministers and preachers within their bounds, and likewise such students of divinity as may be presently under their trials, or hereafter may be taken on trials by them; and that hereafter, before they enter any upon trials either for preaching the gospel, or for the holy ministry, they endeavour to understand their sentiments anent [regarding] presentations being a grievance to this church, and their resolution to observe the recommendation of this act.—



But it must be told with deep regret, that these acts of synods, not being supported by superior judicatories, came soon to be disregarded, and so the door of patronage is still kept open, whereby a corrupt ministry enters into the church: May the Lord in mercy shut that door! Alas, how sad and mournful a thing is it, that ministers and preachers have no pity on this

once famous church, which is already defaced, and corrupted and likely to be corrupted more and more, by patronage and presentations; when it is plainly in their power to deliver their Mother church from this woful corruption and bondage! Oh what hard and cruel hearts must many ministers and preachers now have!

xiv

There, is one thing to be lamented, which tends to bring in a set of clergy, who have no scruple to encourage patronage, intrusions, error and looseness; namely, the planting of our universities with masters, who are either suspected as to their principles or morals, or who have little zeal for orthodoxy or piety. When such men are appointed to be heads of colleges, professors of sciences, languages, or divinity, for training up of young men for the ministry; what is to be expected from the students, under their care, but that many of them will be leavened with bad principles and inclinations? And how can better masters in colleges or professors of divinity be looked for, while these are chosen by statesmen, magistrates, or regents, severals of whom have no real concern for Christianity, but may be even tainted with error or infidelity? Alas! whilst matters stand thus with us, if private measures be not taken by friends of the church to get sound and pious men to teach divinity besides these, in colleges, this church may soon be overrun with corruption, looseness and error of all sorts; which I pray the Lord in mercy to prevent.

Some, may object, “Why do ye insist so much against patronage, seeing this was in the church in former times, of the presbytery, and now accepting of presentations is become common and fashionable, and the judicatories connive at it?”

Ans. 1. Our circumstances now differ vastly from theirs in former times. Why? In former times the law laid them under a necessity of entering to churches by the patron’s leave, there being no other way of entry; but now we are under no such necessity, there being a gospel door still left open to us.—In former times they were never delivered from patronage nor, sensible of the happiness of freedom from it.—but we have been set at liberty, and known the happiness of it.—They did not voluntarily submit to patronage after they were freed from it; but this, alas, is what we are doing: we have chosen this bondage, and subjected ourselves to it without any necessity from the law; so that our compilers with patronage are far more inexcusable than these in former times; our misery now is undeniable from ourselves, we are plainly self destroyers. O that our help may come from God in Christ, who even pities them who destroy themselves!

xv

2. However common the accepting of presentations be at this time, the acceptor’s sin is not lessened thereby, nor is he the safer from the wrath of God. A just God hath common punishments for common sinners: witness the flood that he brought upon a world of sinners at once. The acceptor makes himself directly a partner with the patron in his sinful usurpation over the church of God, and becomes in some respects more guilty than he; as is evident from the *Testimony*, p. 51 and 52.—Now if this practice be sinful (as certainly it is) the commonness of it will not at all loose us from, obedience to God’s command, that enjoins

us to *hate and abhor that which is evil*, and as God's witnesses to bear our testimony against it. Surely the commonness of this evil is one ground of the Lord's controversy with this church and land for which we ought to fast and mourn.

3. As to the church's conniving at these acceptances, I heartily bewail it: Alas! the fear of man hath brought them into this snare, as is observed in the *Testimony*, p. 51. But, whatever be the temptation, the word of God holds it as a sin in any church to bear with these members who are evil, or do evil, without duty testifying against the evil, yea, and censuring these who are impenitent and obstinate in an evil course. Wherefore I am afraid that our keeping silence so much at this sinful connivance, may come to involve us into the guilt of it. O what need have we to be humbled under a sense of this and other shortcomings, and to cry with the Psalmist, *Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults*. May the Lord bring the whole church, and every member of it to a sense of what is sin, and what is duty, in this matter!—As for my part, I must declare my opinion, That all these who are erroneous, immoral, intruders, supporters of patronage, and spoilers of Christian congregations of the rights which Christ hath purchased for them, ought to be testified against, and dealt with to bring them to repentance; and, if they remain impenitent and obstinate they ought to be purged out of the church.—And, if they still be connived at in the church notwithstanding of impenitence, I cannot but look upon the society as dangerous, infectious and hurtful. Likewise I must own, that the word of God makes it the duty of these who would keep their garments clean, to mark them, avoid them, and turn away from them, at least as to imitate fellowship and familiarity; for, if we should continue familiar with them, we will be ready to lose that abhorrence of their evil courses which God commands, and also to encourage and harden them in them. Wherefore it seems needful for these who would keep conscience while attending judicatories where such members are, that they protest or declare that their presence ought not to be constructed as giving any sort of countenance or encouragement to their evil courses, but rather as designed to testify against them, stop and prevent them, and to excite and promote reformation as much as in their power.

I make no question but sundry will be offended with this plain dealing, and especially these who would fain be at *ease in Zion*, though in a time of grievous provocations and backslidings, and of the Lord's judgments both inflicted and impending; but if I know my own heart, it is truly conscience not humour, love to the church not hatred, that prompt me to this plainness. I see no way to put an end to the Lord's controversy with us, but by a sincere turning to God in Christ, in the way of faith, repentance and reformation. Now, if we would behave as true penitents, make peace with an offended God, we must fall in with the revealed will of God in every thing: we must be far from pleading for sin, bearing with or conniving at it; that we must forsake sin, yea, hate and abhor what is evil, reprove the works of darkness, and have no fellowship with them. This being the express will of God to



us, how can we think he will be it Peace with us, until we sincerely fall with it! I acknowledge it is not easy to keep up the impressions of sin's evil, and a due abhorrence of it, when sin turns common and fashionable; it is not easy to keep clean garments when the examples of sin are always before our eyes, and especially when we see these who are reported pious drawn into it; but these things should weigh but little with us, when we see it is the express will of God that they *who bear the vessels of the Lord must be Clean, must keep themselves pure*, and not so much as *touch the unclean thing*; and these who, would take the kingdom, must do violence to their carnal ease and interest, when they, interfere with the will and glory of God. These considerations have moved me to use this plainness, and to join in the following *Testimony* against sin; and that not only keep myself pure, but also to preserve others, if possible, from the prevailing sins and evils of the day, which are more infectious and dangerous than, any plague whatsoever: and, this I think is the greatest act of charity that can be done to the precious souls of men.

The common *Objection* against emitting this or the like *Testimony* is, "That it may have bad consequences, make new divisions and distinctions in the church, give advantage to her adversaries, g&c.g"

Ans. 1. The subscribers of this *Testimony* testify against the ill-grounded divisions and unscriptural separations among Presbyterians which now prevail; and they design not to alter their respects or conduct towards other godly ministers, who may not be clear about every thing contained in this *Testimony*, seeing they never intended it as the badge of a party, or a term of communion either ministerial or Christian, but only to be an exoneration to conscience, a witness against corruption, and a prompter to reformation.

2. This argument, taken from the fear of division, strikes, equally against all testimonies whatsoever, against these emitted by our ancient worthies in times of defection, against the representation of the 42 ministers in the year 1732, and against all dissents and protestations in judicatories: for it may be pretended, that these testimonies or publick appearances tend also to make divisions in the church: nay, the same argument may be made use of against our giving a testimony against Prelacy, or the English service, or any gross error, were they coming into the church.

3. We must neglect present duty for fear of bad consequences which possibly may never happen; especially when we evidently see that the neglect will have far worse consequences.—In my view, by our omitting to give a testimony against error and corruption when it is called for, and all to prevent the evil of division which is uncertain; we bring on evils far greater and more certain, *viz. the loss of truth and purity, and the sinful neglect of duty*, both to God, and the generations present and to come. We see that great man, Luther, reckoned the loss of any of God's truths to be the greatest of evils; *Ruat calum (said he) potius quam una mica veritatis pereat*. And holy David says, [Psal. cxix. 72](#). *The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver*.



4. We ought to observe the order laid down in that Divine precept, [Ezek. viii. 19](#). *Love the truth and peace*; where the Spirit of God gives truth to the precedence of peace. Peace indeed is a thing very lovely in itself, but truth is far more amiable and precious, and must never be sacrificed to preserve peace. Union or peace is no real blessing to a church, if she be in a state of lukewarmness, or sliding back into corruption or error. Peace, in such a state, is rather a judgment than a mercy.

5. A most lamentable division and schism broke in amongst us a few years ago, when no testimony was in the field. Nay, in all probability, if a free and faithful testimony had been essayed by a great body of ministers sometime before it happened, instead of making a schism, it had prevented one, and might also have stopt judicatories from going such lengths as they have done.

6. As to adversaries getting advantage by this *Testimony*; the subscribers, as they had no such view, so they expect no such event, but rather the contrary, *viz.* that they will lose by it. But, whatever happen, if truth and holiness get any advantage by it, as is honestly designed; that gain will countervail any other damage.

But it is in vain to multiply answers to some, who will by no arguments be reconciled to a fair and honest testimony to truth, when the stream of opposition is strong against it. I now see by the discouragements I have met with in this attempt, that these who will be faithful to the truth, must be valiant for it also, and not daunted by the fear of faces, power or numbers of these who oppose it, or who shift appearing for it. It is one of the characters of God's servants, which he takes pleasure in, to be *valiant for the truth upon the earth*, especially when it is run down, [Jer. ix. 3](#). And indeed it is sometimes run down with such violence, that there is no lifting up a testimony for it, without something of this Christian valour. It is truly afflicting to me, to find that there are so many of my brethren whom I love and esteem, who privately own they are of the same mind with the following testimony concerning the defections and corruptions of the times, and yet have not the resolution to declare this under their hand to the world. I would be very loth [loath] to say they are of these whom the Scripture calls the Fearful, because of the society I see them classed with, [Rev. xxi. 8](#). But I have freedom to say, that the present dangerous state of this church, of the truths of God, and of true Christianity, in this day of backsliding, is such, as requires more courage and resolution for preserving true religion, and reviving a work of reformation, than what the most part of good men appear at this time to be possessed of. May the Lord himself spirit and qualify men for his own work!

As I join with the *Testimony* in other things, so especially in the humble *pleadings with our Mother*, with which it concludes; intreating that she would call all ranks to lay to heart the sins abounding and judgments impending, and to set about extraordinary fasting, humiliation, prayer, repentance and reformation. The present dangerous situation these nations are in from the combination of cruel Popish adversaries, who have destroyed other Protestant



churches, and multitudes of their fellow-creatures, doth loudly, call upon us to these duties. Very lately we were like to have been surprised with a formidable invasion from France, when unprovided for it; but the Lord of Hosts, in his astonishing mercy, pitied our naked defenceless condition, stepped in himself, and fought for us; he caused his winds and stormy seas to oppose the enemy and dash many of them in pieces, and so brake the attempt for that time: Surely our deliverance about the end of February last 1744, by God's own immediate hand, together with others of the same kind, should not be forgot by us. But though he hath hereby allowed us a further breathing time, and space to repent, our danger is not over; for now France as well as Spain have declared war against us. Now the "kings of the earth do set themselves, and the princes take counsel together, against the Lord," and these Protestant nations. Now there is a more formidable conjunction of Popish powers against us, than ever we saw before. Now France, Spain, Rome, Naples, Sicily, &c. these cruel and bloody nations, seem all to be combined against our Protestant king, and his royal family (whom God long preserve) seeking and plotting how to destroy them, together with our religion, laws, and liberties; and, instead thereof, to set up among us a Popish Pretender, an arbitrary government, and a blasphemous, idolatrous and bloody religion. And may not the numerous hosts of these nations, and the cruelty of a Popish party, wherever they get the upper hand of Protestants, as manifested in the dreadful burnings in queen Mary's reign the inquisition in Spain and Italy, the massacres in Ireland, in Paris, and other towns of France; I say, may not these alarm us, and sufficiently convince us of our danger, if the Lord permit them, for our sins to plot and effectuate a new invasion upon us? These days wherein we live, are surely perilous times upon sundry accounts, and call us not only to join in fervent prayer to God for mercy and help for Christ's sake, and to be deeply humbled for, and to mourn over, the procuring causes of God's wrath; but also to bear free and open testimony against these evils which are the Achans in our camp, and Jonah's under deck, that raise such terrible storms against this poor church and land. It cannot but make deep impression, when sometimes we call to mind the fore-thoughts and predictions of several of God's worthies in this land, from scaffolds, and also from the pulpit and press, that "God would at length proceed to terrible judgments, in resentment of his controversy with covenant-breaking Scotland, before the return of his wonted glory and presence in the sanctuary; yea, that our land should be made to swim with blood for the blood of God's saints that hath been shed therein." Now, the oftner that God delivers us from Popish enemies, and the longer we unthankfully abuse and misimprove God's mercies and deliverances, our guilt and danger still become the greater. As the cup of our iniquity fills up, so doth the cup of God's wrath proportionably.

Ought not then these awful dispensations to move and quicken us to act a faithful part, both for God's glory and our own safety, even to pray, dissent, declare and testify, against these evils which we cannot stop? Were we helped to do this sincerely, we might hope,



through our Redeemer's mediation, that they would not be charged upon us in the day of count and reckoning, and that we should even be hid in the day of the Lord's anger. For we find the angel of the covenant doth hold the winds, until the servants of the living God be sealed for preservation, in a time of danger: nay, an upright witnessing remnant might, through Divine mercy, be the happy means of preserving the whole land from the invasion of cruel and bloody enemies, and of getting the poor decayed church of Scotland interested in that promise, [Jer. xxx. 11.](#) "I am with thee, to save thee: and though I make a full end of all nations about thee, yet I will not make a full end of thee; but I will correct thee in measure, and not leave thee altogether unpunished." May the Lord himself direct ministers and others to proper measures for turning away the fierceness of God's anger from us; and open the eyes of men to discern the true grounds and causes, of God's controversy with the land! And if it should please the Lord to bless the following testimony for promoting these ends, in any measure, yea, though it were but to convince one minister or preacher of the evil of intrusions, of supporting patronage, and of the neglect of preaching Christ, it would contribute to support me, under all the, discouragements I have met with in making the Essay to lift up a testimony against these evils. That the mighty Lord, who can accomplish great things by small means, may succeed this honest design, is the prayer of

Jo. Willison



A
FAIR AND IMPARTIAL

TESTIMONY,

ESSAYED IN THE NAME OF
A NUMBER OF MINISTERS, ELDERS
AND CHRISTIAN PEOPLE OF THE
CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

ACCORDING to ancient historians, our gracious God was pleased to visit Scotland very early with his glorious gospel, by means of some preachers and other Christians, who were forced to flee to Scotland to be out of the reach of Roman cruelty under the second persecution raised by the emperor Domitian about the year of our Lord 95, which was before the death of the apostle John; where they propagated the knowledge of Jesus Christ, which at length conquered Pagan darkness and idolatry so far, that in the beginning of the third century, about the year 203, king Donald I, did publicly, profess the faith of Jesus Christ; and he himself, his queen, his family, and diverse of the nobles, were solemnly baptized. After which, the king used his best endeavours to root out idolatry and heathenish superstition from his dominions, and to settle a gospel ministry in every corner thereof. But, this religious king being much hindered in his good designs by his continual wars with the Romans under the emperor Severus, this blessed work was afterwards greatly neglected by following princes until the reign of king Crathilinth, who about the year 277 set about the glorious work of advancing Christianity after the example of king Donald the first Christian king, but was greatly hindered by the heathenish priests named Druids, called so (as some think) because of their sacrificing groves under oaks. These idolatrous priests had got great interest and credit among the people, by reason of their sense-pleasing worship, and of their having drawn into their hands the determining of civil affairs; wherefore the people reckoned them so necessary, that they knew not how to live without them. But the Lord in mercy seconded the intentions of the good king, by sending several worthy men, both ministers and private Christians, from the south parts of Britain, and other parts of the Roman empire, who were obliged to flee in the time of the ninth persecution under Aurelius, and of the tenth under Dioclesian, from the terrible slaughter then made among the Christians. And these retiring to Scotland for refuge, as others had done long before them, were very helpful in turning the people from idolatry.

King Crathilinth, finding among these Refugees many men of eminent piety and learning, did kindly entertain them, and employ them in opposing the Druids, and further settling of Christianity through his kingdom. These holy men being settled in several places



of the land, and choosing retirement from all civil and worldly affairs, and giving up themselves wholly to the service of God in the ministerial work were called *Culdees*, or *Cultores Dei*. These Culdees, through the divine blessing, got the better of the Druids, and were great instruments of advancing true piety and Christianity in Scotland? so that from these *uttermost parts of the earth were songs heard, even glory to Jesus Christ the righteous*: and thus were accomplished in part the ancient promises made to our Redeemer, That *the heathen should be given to him as his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession; that the isles should wait for his law, and their kings bring presents to him; that he should be the confidence of the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar of upon the sea.*

27

These blessed instruments, the Culdees, were strict in their lives, and in governing the church of Christ. They allowed no higher order among them than presbyters or parochial bishops, and so continued for many years, until Paladius was sent thither by pope Celestine about the year 452, who by his subtile insinuations did gain so far upon the simple people, as to bring them to consent to a change of the government of the church into prelacy, and he himself became the chief Prelate among them. Both the historians of our own and other nations, such as Fordun, Boethius, John Major,

Buchanan, Sir Thomas Craig, Prosper, Baronius, Beda, Baleus, &c. do all agree that the Scots for several hundred years after Christ, were taught and governed by priests and monks without bishops, and that Paladius was the first bishop or prelate that ever Scotland saw. John of Fordun in his Scots Chronicle, *lib. 3 cap. 8*. saith, "Before the incoming of Paladius, the Scots had for teachers of the faith and ministers of the sacraments, presbyters only, or monks, following the rites and customs of the primitive church." And who questioned but the Scots were as sincere Christians, their ministers as real ministers, and their sacraments as true sacraments all these 400 years, as they were in after ages? Yea, Baleus in his history of the Britons, *cent. 14. cap. 6*. saith more, *Ante Paladium Scoti, g&c.g*

28

Before Paladius came, the Scots had their bishops and ministers, according to the ministry of the word of God, chosen by the suffrage of the people, after the custom those of Asia; but these things did not please the Romans, who hated the Asiatics.

So that we see the ancient Scots maintained presbytery, without either prelacy or patronage, till the Romans or church of Rome introduced both. And surely the Scots have still good reason to be zealous for their ancient church government and privileges, which they long enjoyed, in opposition to these Romish corruptions.

But Paladius having got our government changed, and our acquaintance made with Rome, then the mistress of the world; the church fell into a decaying condition, and popish corruptions increased more and more, till at length gross darkness overspread this whole land, as well as other nations; under which she lay for many ages (for what we read) until

the year 1494, in the reign of king James IV when the Lollards of Kyle, to the number of thirty persons, were summoned before the king and his council for holding many of the protestant articles of faith, though they were dismissed at that time. So that God had his witnesses in Scotland, who bore testimony to his truths, against the errors and idolatries of Rome, even in the darkest times.

Not many years after, that eminent man, Mr. Patrick Hamilton abbot of Fern, went abroad to the university of Wittemberg, where he became acquainted with Luther and Melancton, and made great progress in learning and in the knowlege of Christ . . . [This section of the text from which this transcription was made has about thirty words either missing or not legible.] at St. Andrews in the year 1327. . . [This section of the text from which this transcription was made has about three words either missing or not legible.] wisdom of God, tended much to the spreading of the truth: for many, enquiring into the cause of this burning, came afterwards to the knowledge and profession of the truth; so that it spread more and more through the land, in spite of all that enemies could do against it. Likewise Paul Craw was condemned to be burnt at St. Andrews, in the year 1431, for maintaining the doctrine of John Wickliff and John Huss.

It is most remarkable, that, after the burning of Mr. Hamilton, the favourers of the truth increased to many thousands; and God was pleased to raise up other famous instruments for spreading the light and carrying on his work, such as masters George Wishart, John Rough, John Knox, John Willock, Mr. Craig, John Erskine of Dun, and many others. These polished shafts God was pleased so to endow and furnish with gifts, graces, and zeal for God and his truths, and some of them with a prophetic spirit, that their adversaries were not able to resist the wisdom and spirit by which they spake; and multitudes of all ranks were by them converted to the Lord: so that in spite of all the power and policy of the popish clergy assisted by our rulers, and all the fiery persecution which they raised against the professors of the gospel, the Lord was pleased with a high hand to ransom this land from popish tyranny, idolatry and superstition; so that the pope's authority was abolished in Scotland by the parliament, the reformation established, and a sound Confession of Faith approven in the year 1560. *This was the doing of the Lord and most wondrous in our Eyes!*

The great rule and pattern of reformation, which our reformers observed, was the word of God, and the practice of the apostolic churches therein recorded, into which they made very narrow and impartial enquiry, their searches being attended with earnest prayers to God for the light and teaching of his Spirit, and communication of counsels with divines of other nations. After all which travel, they came to agree upon a platform of church government and discipline, in a due subordination of kirk sessions, presbyteries and synods unto general assemblies; as appears from our books of discipline, which were very early received and approven by the general assemblies of this church.

29

30

Though the civil powers, after the year 1560, were favourable to the reformation; yet our reformers had great and long struggling with many who were addicted to prelacy, and several popish errors and superstitions: but it pleased the Lord so far to countenance and help them, that a National Covenant was framed and entered into for the support of the reformation. This covenant was at first subscribed by the king and his household in the year 1580, and afterwards by persons of all ranks in the year 1581, and again by all sorts of persons in the year 1590; and afterwards presbyterian government and all the pieces of reformation then attained unto, were solemnly ratified by king and parliament in the year 1592. Only the grievance of patronage, under which the church was groaning, was not yet removed.

Here we must take occasion to adore the distinguishing goodness of God to this poor nation of Scotland, in bowing and inclining the hearts of the whole nation, as the heart of man, to enter into a solemn national covenant with God; even the hearts of our king, our nobles, barons, gentlemen, citizens, ministers, and professors of all ranks, to make a national surrender of themselves and their posterity to the Lord; and to bind both themselves, and them, to cleave to his truths and ordinances, and promote religion and reformation in their stations. Our histories inform us how this national covenant was afterwards renewed in this early period by our general assemblies, synods, presbyteries and particular parishes, and remarkably attended with much of the Lord's presence and countenance, and great outpourings of his Spirit; at which occasions there were to be seen floods of tears flowing from melting hearts and weeping eyes. Calderwood, in his history, tells us of a wonderful day of this sort at the reviewing of the covenant by the general Assembly at Edinburgh, in the little kirk, upon the 30th March 1596, Mr. John Davidson minister of Salt Prestoun presiding as the chief actor; likewise of another such day at the renewing of the covenant by the Synod of Fife at Dunfermline that same year, where Mr. James Melvil, minister at Kilrenny was moderator and chief actor. Also synods and presbyteries elsewhere had previous melting seasons, when about this work, which proved a special time of reviving to the work of God through the whole land. In this period the church of Scotland enjoyed very glorious days of the Son of man, and was honoured with large testimonies from divines of other churches: For the great pitch of reformation she had attained unto, she was called Philadelphia, and the morning-star of the reformation.

But these bright times did not long continue, clouds did soon arise: For king James VI having the view of succeeding to the crown of England, and desirous to gratify the prelatis there, did, contrary to his solemn declarations and engagements, begin to make incroachments upon the church and her liberties, about the years 1597 and 1598; and continuing so to do, there followed a long course of defection in this church, for about the space of forty years; during which time, prelacy that bitter weed was introduced into the government, superstition and popish ceremonies into the worship, and Arminian and Popish errors crept into the doctrine. The king, for accomplishing his designs, got several packt assemblies

31

32

convened, as these at Linlithgow in the years 1606 and 1608, that at Glasgow 1610, that at Aberdeen 1616, that at St. Andrews 1617, and that at Perth 1618, wherein, one way or other, he got several corruptions approven, and particular the Five Articles of Perth: prelates were set up, unlawful oaths exacted of intrants into the ministry; several popish ceremonies, with a service-book, and book of canons, were imposed upon the church, and many sinfully complied therewith; whereby the church's beauty was miserably sullied, and the land greatly polluted.

Yet, during this time of grievous backsliding from a covenanted reformation, it pleased the Lord to raise up several worthies, ministers and professors of religion, to bear testimony to the doctrine, worship, government and discipline of this church, and to Christ's right of headship over her and her judicatories, and to his power to institute her laws and ordinances, in opposition to the incroachments then made upon the same: upon which account divers pastors were arraigned before the council the high commission, and Diocesan synods; some were deprived of their churches and benefices, some were banished, some confined, and others imprisoned, and some were sentenced to death: likewise, several gentlemen and magistrates were sorely persecuted by the domineering prelates, for not conforming to the courses of defection. As for these faithful witnesses, who were suffered to live in their own land, severals of them went up and down in much poverty and affliction, teaching and confirming the people of God, waiting for God's returning in mercy to his oppressed church and people. Nevertheless, in this dark hour, the Lord gave testimony to his word in the mouths of his persecuted servants, through several comers of the land, by accompanying it with more than ordinary power and success; particularly in the year 1625 and afterwards, at Stewartown, Irvine, and many other places of the west of Scotland. A famous instance of that power was given at the solemn communion celebrated at the kirk of Shots the 20th June 1630, which proved a most remarkable sowing of seed through Clidesdale to the glory of free grace.

Afterwards, when the night seemed to be darkest, and the prelates in the height of their power and pride, competing with the nobles for all kinds of civil offices, and honours, and when corruptions in doctrine, worship and government were like to advance more and more; the Lord was pleased to look through the cloud with pity to this distressed church, in the year 1637, and to appear for her relief, first by animating severals of the common people of Edinburgh to oppose the reading of the new service-book there; and also at the same time exciting several honest ministers and professors in other parts of the nation to present supplications to the council, in September 1637, against pressing the Liturgy and canons upon them. But these, after several expresses to and from court, being at last refused, and new orders given for the use of the aforesaid books; a great number of all, ranks, nobility, gentry, ministers, g&c.g convened at Edinburgh in February 1638, where, after serious deliberation and prayer to God, they resolved upon reviving and renewing of the national

33

34

covenant, which had almost been buried for forty years before. This they drew up and subscribed with some additions and, explications suitable to their present circumstances, and sent copies thereof through the land, which, being read in churches, was heartily embraced, sworn, and subscribed by all ranks, with many tears and great joy so that the whole land, great and small (a very few excepted) without any compulsion from church or state, did in a few months voluntarily and cheerfully, return to their ancient principles, and subject themselves to the oath of God for reformation; and this they did when both the court and prelates were enraged against them for it. But the Lord from heaven did remarkably countenance them with the extraordinary manifestations of his presence, and downpouring of his Spirit, both upon Judicatories and the worshipping Assemblies of his people, which proved as life from the dead to a poor, withered, backslidden church.

Nay (which is wonderful) things ripened so fast for reformation, that, in November 1638, a free and lawful, general assembly, indicted by the king, convened at Glasgow, the very place where prelacy was restored in the year 1610. There the general assembly, (notwithstanding of the former backslidings of the Ministry) came to agree with wonderful harmony, to condemn and annul six pretended corrupt assemblies who had changed the government and corrupted the worship of this church, together with the high commission court, the service book, the book of canons, and the book of ordination, as also the unlawful oaths imposed upon intrants into the ministry: they likewise deposed and excommunicated the Prelates (except two) for oppression and gross scandals. They approved the national covenant, and declared Prelacy with the five articles of Perth to be adjured by it; and made sundry other worthy acts for purging the church, and promoting reformation and appointed the time of their next meeting, for carrying on what was so happily begun. And though the Prelates with their abettors made great opposition to their godly intentions, yea, run to court, and stirred up the king to make war against Scotland; yet the Lord was pleased so to countenance his servants and people, that the begun reformation was carried on, and at last ratified both by king and parliament in July 1641. Thereby Prelacy was abolished, and Presbytery established by law; and the king being personally present, he for himself and his successors promised *in verbo principis* never to come on the contrary of that settlement; which occasioned great joy through all the land, and was followed with much of the Lord's power and presence in his ordinances: So that the land, that formerly was like a wilderness, was now by the divine blessing turned into a fruitful field.

The Lord having thus prospered the nation of Scotland in her reforming work, her neighbours in England professed a desire to join with them for carrying on the like work of reformation through the whole three kingdoms; and the English parliament sent their commissioners to Scotland for that effect. And accordingly there was a solemn league and covenant agreed upon, and sworn in the year 1643, for maintaining, advancing, and carrying on a work of reformation in the three kingdoms of Scotland, England, and Ireland. In this

35

36

covenant, all ranks engaging bound themselves to personal reformation, and in their several stations to endeavour national reformation; to preserve the protestant religion, abolish Popery, Prelacy, superstition, schism, profaneness, an whatsoever shall be found contrary to sound doctrine and the power of godliness; and to endeavour to bring the three kingdoms to the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion, as to doctrine, worship and government, according to the word of God, and the example of the best reformed churches; that so they and their posterity after them might as brethren live in faith and love that the Lord might be one, and his name one through the three kingdoms.—This indeed was a glorious design, had the English parliament and people been truly and heartily sincere in it, as the Scots nation both parliament and general assembly were, who with one voice approved and swore this covenant themselves, and did recommend it to all others through the land, who generally received it with great enlargements of heart and expressions of gladness, as they had done the national covenant in the year 1638. It is true, the parliament of England took the covenant, as did the city of London, the Westminster assembly and many others in England, though there were but few of them who seemed to mind it much afterwards. Some good things indeed were thereupon done; for in consequence of this covenant, and the uniformity in religion engaged unto therein, the English hierarchy and liturgy were laid aside for a time, our present confession of faith was agreed upon by the assembly of divines at Westminster with commissioners from this church, together with the larger and shorter catechisms, the directory for worship, with a directory for church government, church-censures, and ordination of ministers. As all these were agreed upon by the Westminster assembly as a part of the covenanted uniformity in religion which was to be settled through the three kingdoms, so they were received after examination, and approved by our general assemblies and parliaments in Scotland. It is true, there were several acts and ordinances of the English parliament for establishing these in England: but they took little effect, because of the opposition which was made to the form of Presbyterial government by the Independents and Sectaries there.

Notwithstanding of this defection in England, the nation and church of Scotland pursued reformation according to their covenant engagements, and got several laws enacted both by church and state for carrying on the same: and particularly they got an excellent act past by the Parliament, for abolishing the patronages of kirks, which is worthy to be written in letters of gold, a part whereof we shall here transcribe.



At Edinburgh, March ” 9th 1649. The estates of Parliament being sensible of the great obligation that lies upon them by the national covenant, and by the solemn league and covenant, and by many deliverances and mercies from God, and by the late solemn engagement unto duties, to preserve the, doctrine, and maintain and vindicate the liberties of the kirk of Scotland, and to advance the work of reformation therein to the utmost of their power: and considering that patronages and presentations of kirks is all evil and bondage under which the Lord’s people and ministers of this land have long groaned, and that it hath no warrant in God’s word, but is founded only on the common law, and is a custom Popish, and brought into the kirk in time of ignorance and superstition; and that the same is contrary to the second book of discipline, in which, upon solid and good ground, it is reckoned among abuses that are desired to be reformed, and unto several acts of general assemblies; and that it is prejudicial to the liberty of the people, and planting of kirks, and unto the free calling and entry of ministers unto their charge: and the said estates, being willing and desirous to promote and advance the reformation foresaid, that every thing in the house of God may be ordered according to his word and commandment; do therefore from the sense of the former obligations, and upon the former grounds and reasons, discharge for ever hereafter all patronages and presentations of kirks, whither belonging to the king, or to any laick [lay] patron, Presbyteries, or others within this kingdom, as being unlawful and unwarrantable by God’s word, and contrary to the doctrine and liberties of this kirk.

38

Afterwards they say,

—And it is further declared and ordained, That if any presentation shall hereafter be given, procured or received, that the same is null and of none effect; and that it is lawful for Presbyteries to reject the same, and to refuse to admit any to trials thereupon; and, notwithstanding thereof, to proceed to the planting of the kirk, upon the suit and calling or with the consent of the congregation, on whom none is to be obtruded against their will, g&c.g

—By which excellent act it is evident, that our reforming nobility and gentry, many whereof were Patrons themselves, looked upon themselves as under strong obligations, both from the Word of God and their covenant engagements, to abolish patronages, and restore the liberty of congregations in calling of their ministers.

39

Thus our reforming ancestors were helped to many excellent things from 1638 to 1650 for promoting reformation in the land, though at the same time (it must be owned) they

were not free of mistakes and wrong steps in their management.—There is no period here, the church can be said to be without spot or wrinkle.

After this a mournful scene opened by breaking division that entered into the church, which ended to stop the progress of reformation-work, and make way at length for restoring Prelacy. This was occasioned by some ensnaring questions put to the commission in *December* 1650 by the king and parliament (which they had better declined to answer) concerning the admission of persons into places of public trust civil and military, who formerly had been opposers of the covenanted reformation, upon their making public profession of their repentance; these who were for admitting them being called public resolutioners, and these against it being called protestors. There were many eminently good and great men upon both sides, and some as eminent who joined neither side. The point seemed narrow for the church to carry the difference to such a height as to suspend and depose one another upon it as they did, according as parties had the upper hand in Synods and Presbyteries: for Cromwell the usurper would not then allow them to meet in general assemblies, by which the division possibly might have been healed. But this fatal division looked like a judicial stroke from heaven upon the church for their other sins: the Lord's *judgments are a great deep*. Possibly there might be too great compliances in this matter with court-measures, and the humours of great men, as there were afterwards in the matter of indulgences, tolerations, and other ensnaring things brought in by the court upon the church. It is certain, that the greatest number of the strict and zealous ministers were on the protestors' side, who afterwards made a noble stand against Prelacy. And it appeared afterwards, the protestors' fears which they expressed, that these men, when taken into places of trust, would soon act the old game, were but too well founded. It must also be acknowledged, that though the most part of the public resolutioners submitted to Prelacy, yet several worthy men among them did not, and were exposed to sufferings for it as well as others.

At the time of the breaking out of these fatal divisions among us, an army of Sectaries under Cromwell invaded and oppressed us. These Sectaries had grown to such a height in the English army, that they invaded the parliament of England their masters, put away the house of peers, modeled the house of commons according to their pleasure, and erected a new court called the high court of justice, before which they impanelled king Charles I and violently took away his life, January 30th 1649; against which our commissioners both from church and state in Scotland, then at London, did protest, and were therefore hardly used. Immediately thereupon Scotland proclaimed his son Charles II their king, and out of conscience to their covenant sent for him, and crowned him at Scoon, where he solemnly swore the covenant, January 1st 1651. All which drew down the wrath of the Sectarian army upon us, who invaded the land, shed much blood, conquered us, and kept us in bondage ten years. During which time a sinful toleration of Sectarian errors was granted, by Cromwell and his council in Scotland, which brought in great looseness both in principle and practice; which

40

41

toleration was faithfully witnessed against both by the Presbytery of Edinburgh, and a good number of ministers in the provinces of Perth and Fife, as appears by their testimonies published in the year 1659.

Soon after this the yoke of the oppressor was broken, and the king peaceably restored in the year 1660, to the joy of the whole land, who thereupon expected good days both to church and state. (And, alas, the most part went to dreadful excess in jollity and drunkenness upon this event.) But, ah! soon was their joy turned to mourning, soon was their oppression in conscience doubled, the late glorious work of reformation razed, and all its carved work broke down with axes and hammers, as it were, all at once. For king Charles II after his restoration having called a parliament in England, they restored abjured Prelacy with the service book and ceremonies, which had been laid aside: whereupon about two thousand ministers there, who could not in conscience conform thereunto, were cast out at Bartholomew day, *August 24th* 1662.—He likewise called a parliament in Scotland who in the years 1661 and 1662, removed all the legal securities of the church of Scotland, and work of reformation therein. By that unparalleled act recissory, they annulled all the parliaments which had met from 1640 to 1651; they asserted the king's supremacy in all causes civil and ecclesiastic, and declared all meetings and assemblies, leagues and covenants without the king's authority to be unlawful and unwarrantable, and devolved the power of settling the government of the church upon the king; they declared the national covenant, as sworn in the year 1638, and the solemn league and covenant to be unlawful oaths, and all men to be free from the obligation of them; and they declared all that was done from 1638 to 1650, in prosecution of a covenanted reformation, to be rebellious and treasonable.

The king's prerogative and supremacy in church affairs being thus screwed up, he by proclamation declared his royal pleasure to be for restoring the government of the church by archbishops and bishops, as it was exercised in the year 1637. In the mean time Mr. James Sharp minister at Craill, (who had formerly been intrusted to act for the church, but now betrayed her) went to London with other three ministers, and were consecrated bishops in the Prelatic sense, having first been ordained deacons, and after that Presbyters, according to the form of the church of England. (This the Prelates set up by king James VI would not submit to.) Thereafter these, returning from London to Edinburgh, consecrated the rest of the bishops. Then they all took their seats in Parliament, where they got new acts made in their favours, commanding all ministers to obey them, and attend their Diocesan meetings. A little before this, the meetings of Synods, Presbyteries and kirk sessions had been discharged by the privy council, until they should be authorized by the bishops, who were soon to enter upon the government of their respective sees: Whereupon, at the time of the meeting of provincial synods in April thereafter, several noblemen and gentlemen were sent to raise them by force. It is to be regretted, that synods at this time so readily dismissed, and that

42

43

Presbyteries and kirk-sessions were deserted also, without any suitable testimony or remonstrance against these fearful encroachments and alterations.

One thing that contributed much to hinder any joint testimony, and to strike terror into many, was the severe treatment which some faithful ministers met with, when essaying a testimony of this sort: For Mr. James Guthrie minister at Sterling, with some few other ministers, having met in a private house in Edinburgh, soon after the king's return, to draw up a supplication to him, wherein, after congratulating his return, they humbly put him in mind of his oaths unto and covenants with God, for maintaining the true Protestant religion as established by acts of parliament and general assembly, g&c.g for this they were apprehended and imprisoned 23rd August 1660, and all such meetings and petitions were discharged as seditious. And, to strike the greater terror, Mr. James Guthrie was indicted before the parliament of high treason; and, being singularly faithful and zealous for carrying on reformation, he was condemned to die, and his head to be set upon one of the ports of the city of Edinburgh. He was accordingly executed the first of June 1661, and his head set up on the Nether bow port, which continued there till the revolution, as a public witness against the woful defections of a cruel perfidious generation. Likewise the worthy and renowned marquis of Argy II was five days before executed upon the same account, and his head set up upon the tolbooth of Edinburgh, to the great reproach of the nation: and sometime after Lord Waristoun suffered in the same manner; three eminently great and good men, who died with the resolution and Christianity of the ancient martyrs. Now, what could be expected from a reign and a government, whose foundation was laid in cruelty, and soaked with the precious blood of God's saints?

After this the parliament and council went on in their cruel and persecuting designs against faithful ministers who would not conform to antisciptural Prelacy, take presentations from Patrons, and collations from bishops, and also take an oath to the king, which they called an oath of allegiance, wherein they behoved to own his supremacy in all causes civil and ecclesiastic: some of these ministers they banished out of all his majesty's dominions: these generally went to Holland, and were kindly received there. Besides these, several hundreds were summarily ordered to leave their churches, and remove from their congregations: With which orders (it must be owned) they did too easily comply upon proclamations by the council, before they were thrust out by force; thereby leaving their poor flocks to corrupt teachers that were afterwards thrust in upon them, and not giving a due testimony against such a tyrannical act and encroachment upon the spiritual kingly power and headship of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only Lord of our ministry, and of the exercise thereof. Likewise, by an act of parliament, all the subjects were required to attend these who were thrust into their parishes, and other conformists, in their meetings for worship and that in



acknowledgment of, and hearty compliance with his majesty's government ecclesiastic; which indeed the far greatest part did, whereby all degrees of persons through the land were miserably involved in the breach of the covenant, and defections of the time. Nay, the wickedness of this period came to such a pitch, that our national covenant, and the solemn league, were ordered by public authority to be most ignominiously burnt at several market-crosses, to the fearful dishonoring of the great tremendous God, with whom these covenants were made.

45

After some time silence, the ejected ministers began to be convinced it was their duty to preach the gospel, at the earnest desire of their people, who declined to hear the curates who were thrust in upon them, though sorely harassed for it: and that they ought to preach, notwithstanding the prohibitions of the magistrate, especially when they saw what sort of men were thrust in upon the people. At first they had worship only in private houses in the most peaceable and harmless manner; but the cruel prelates and rulers would not bear with any such meetings; so that at length, by their severities, they were driven from houses to the fields for more safety. But still severer laws were made against all such meetings, whether in the houses or fields. Nay, they came even to that height to enact, Charles II Par. 2. Sess. 2. 1670, "That if any man shall preach or pray in the fields, or in any house, where there shall be more hearers than the house contains, so as some of them be without doors, he shall be punished with death and confiscation of goods." So that, by this terrible law, two or three hearkening at honest men's doors or windows in time of family-worship, [t]hough posted there out of malice or mere curiosity, did expose the worshippers of God to a cruel death. These and such like laws tended to banish family-worship out of the land, and were too successful that way. Likewise severe punishments were enacted against the hearers of ejected ministers, and these who did not hear the parish-ministers, or employed others to baptize their children. And they proceeded to incredible barbarities against Non-conformists, both ministers and people. Yet, in these cruel persecuting times, the Lord gave testimony to the word of his grace, and blessed his ordinances (though prohibited by men) with very remarkable success; and the more pains the persecuting Prelates and their instruments were at to suppress these assemblies, the more numerous they grew, and the parish-churches were the more deserted.

46

When methods of force and cruelty could not prevail to stop these assemblies, they fell upon more crafty ways, by granting indulgence to some of the ejected ministers to preach in vacant churches, under certain limitations: such as, Their being confined within their parishes, and not encouraging these of other congregations to resort to them; their forbearing to lecture before sermon; their not preaching in church-yards; their not admitting ministers who were not indulged to assist them, &c. This indulgence, and prescribing rules to ministers, being ordered by the king and his council by virtue of his ecclesiastic supremacy, now established by law, was on the magistrate's part a sinful incroachment upon Christ's

headship over his church. And though poor harassed ministers might be glad of any little breathing time for the exercise of their ministry in the midst of heavy sufferings, yet, if any of them did accept of the magistrate's indulgence upon the conditions and restrictions prescribed, they cannot be justified therein—But for these worthy ministers who left all for Christ and their conscience, and suffered greatly for not complying with Prelacy, and other defections of their time, and who always refused that they accepted the indulgence upon the terms of the king and council (though they preached in the churches they assigned) neither did observe these terms while they enjoyed the benefit, and were afterwards turned out again upon that account; it were hard to charge them with approving of the king's usurped supremacy: Though, at the same time, we wish they had given a more full and explicit testimony against the Erastian incroachments of the magistrate, than we can learn they did. Yet notwithstanding hereof, God was pleased to glorify his sovereign grace in giving remarkable success to the labours and ministry of these indulged in churches, as well as these who preached in the fields, betwixt whom there continued much love and peace for many years; until once some began to condemn the indulged so far, as to preach up separation from them; upon which followed very sad and mournful divisions among the people of God, even while under violent persecution, the fruits whereof continue to this very day.

At this time many conscience-debauching oaths, declarations and bonds were imposed upon the people of this land, for engaging them to own the king's supremacy over all persons, and in all causes; to renounce our covenants, with defensive arms, and all the former steps taken for carrying on reformation. Among others, that self contradictory oath of the Test was imposed, and made a handle for persecuting many of all ranks and stations. They who refused these oaths, and did not conform to Prelacy as required, were exposed to the greatest cruelties, being put to wander about in deserts and mountains, and to lodge in dens and caves of the earth. Multitudes were banished their native country; many suffered long imprisonment, and that in the most miserable and unheathful places; others were fined and spoiled of their goods, and many pillaged and plundered by merciless soldiers and barbarous Highlanders let loose upon them; husbands were exorbitantly fined, and entirely ruined, for their wives absenting from the parish-churches, though it was not in their power to help it; preaching, praying, or even hearing at meetings not authorised by law, was made death: Yea, refusing to witness against these guilty of the crimes of preaching, praying, or hearing, was also punishable with death. Simple conversing with persons forfeited or intercommuned, though our nearest relations, husbands, wives, parents, children, &c. or the giving them any supply when starving, or the not revealing the giving or demanding of it, was declared treason; so that men were exposed to a cruel death for pure acts of charity. The privy council in those days assumed a parliamentary power, and made acts and laws even more bloody than those of the parliament: And though these were most cruel and barbarous in



themselves, yet they were often more barbarously put in execution; so that this poor land became a miserable field of blood, cruelty and defection. Many of all ranks, noblemen, gentlemen, ministers, citizens, and commons, had their blood shed on scaffolds, as if they had been the greatest malefactors, and their heads and members set up on pinnacles to the view of the world. Many were tortured with boots, thumbkins [thumbscrew], fire matches, &c. to force them to discover their secret thoughts of state matters, accuse themselves or others, and answer such questions as judges pleased to ask at them. To such a height of cruelty and tyranny were things carried, that full power was given to merciless soldiers both to be judges and executioners of innocent people; so that in time of peace, without any witnesses or form of law, they cut off many in the open fields and high ways, and dragged severals out of their houses, and murdered them, if they did not take such oaths or answer such questions as they put to them; and sometimes would not give them so much time, before killing them, as to pray to God for mercy. Thus was the land soaked with blood, for the planting and growth of the bitter root of Prelacy therein. Ah! have we not cause to fear that the Lord plead a controversy with us, as he did with Judah many years after, for the sins of Manasseh, and the innocent blood that he shed, which (it is said) *the Lord would not pardon?* [2 Kings xxiv. 3, 4.](#) O that the land were purged from it!

After king Charles's death, king James a professed Papist, succeeded to him in the year 1685, when not only our civil liberties, but the Protestant religion, was ready to be sacrificed; for he was admitted to the government without taking the coronation-oath, which binds the king to maintain it: And our parliament, when they met, made an officer of duty to the king, wherein they openly declare for the king's absolute power and authority, and promise to give him entire obedience without reserve. This engagement surely was blasphemous, being only proper to the sovereign majesty of God. Upon such encouragement the king took upon him by virtue of his absolute power and prerogative royal, to dispense with laws at his pleasure, and, particularly to suspend all penal laws against Papists, and to allow them the free exercise of their religion. Sometime after, *viz.* 28th June 1687, he by his proclamation suspended all penal and sanguinary [bloodthirsty] laws made against other Nonconformists, *viz.* Presbyterians: and gave them leave to worship God in their own way in houses, injoining them to take care that nothing be preached or taught among them that might any wise tend to alienate the hearts of his people from him or his government; and to signify to the next magistrate what places they make use of, with the names of the preachers. Presbyterian ministers did generally accept of this liberty, and these who were abroad returned home, and got meeting houses fitted up for them, and multitudes flocked to attend their ministry, and found it remarkably blessed to them. This toleration indeed proceeded from a vile spring, *viz.* the king's absolute dispensing power; yet, Divine Providence made use of it, contrary to the design of the granter, as a mean to bring home the banished, and prepare the way for the happy revolution that soon followed upon it. There is in the proclamation

an injunction upon ministers to preach nothing that tended to alienate the hearts of the subjects from the king and his government. If the meaning of that was, that, in their sermons they should give no testimony against Popery or the toleration of it, it was sinful in any minister to comply with it: But we ought in charity to believe that these faithful ministers, who had long given proof, by their sufferings, of their zeal for Christ and his cause, had no regard to the injunction in that sense, but exonerated their consciences in testifying against the errors and corruptions of the day, and for which some were imprisoned at that time. No doubt those who had been long oppressed in their consciences, had their blood mingled with their sacrifices, and wanted ordinances, would be glad of a breathing time to serve the Lord. But, alas, we have it to regret, that *in every thing we offend, and come short of the glory of God. Ah! we and our fathers have sinned*, and we have great cause to be deeply humbled both for their sins and our own.



But behold how the mercy of God appeared for us, after innumerable provocations, and when all ranks had made fearful defections from God and their engagements to him. And after this church had lien under oppression for near twenty eight years, and Popery was far advanced, and the civil power in the hands of Papists, and there was but little wanting to accomplish the ruin both of our civil and religious liberties; the mighty Lord stepped in, and in made a wonderful appearance for us, by sending over the Prince of Orange (afterwards proclaimed king) in *November* 1688, to rescue us from Popery and tyranny, and that at a time after several attempts for our relief had misgiven, and the hearts of all true Protestants were beginning to faint within them, and the Popish faction had a numerous army to support them. Yet now, when God's time was come, our deliverance was brought about with great facility, through the wonderful working and concurrence of Divine Providence: So that *it was not our own arm, but the Lord's right hand, that wrought this salvation* for us; a salvation never to be forgotten by the friends of religion and liberty.—In particular, the church of Scotland ought always to commemorate the glorious deliverance and revolution in 1688, whereby she was raised out of the dust, and to be thankful to the great God the Author thereof, and to have a savoury remembrance of the name of king William the happy instrument of it under God. Since which time the Lord has granted her fifty five years freedom from persecution, and peaceable enjoyment of gospel-ordinances and church judicatories, such as she never had since the reformation. Though, alas! we must acknowledge with shame, that we have not improven such noble opportunities for God and his glory, as we ought to have done.



The Prince of Orange having, in his declaration for Scotland, shewn a great concern for our religious and civil liberties, and for the persecuted Presbyterians in Scotland, whose sufferings he was well informed of by our refugees in Holland from time to time; the Presbyterian ministers met and addressed him, congratulating his arrival in Britain, and thanking him for his declaration; wherein they complain of the overturning of Presbyterian government

which was generally received as of Divine right, and of the establishing of Prelacy contrary to solemn engagements. When the prince came to the throne, and had the government in his hands, he acted agreeably to his declaration; And though he did not all for us we could have wished, yet we have good ground to be assured of king William's hearty inclination to serve the church of Scotland, and his willingness to have done much more for her than he did.—But it was our, unhappiness, as well as his, that he had a Prelatic church in England to manage and gratify among whom the Scots Prelatists wanted not abundance of friends to agent daily for them: These Proved great clogs and hindrances to the king's gracious intentions: yet notwithstanding he did a great deal to raise up a poor sinking church from imminent ruin, which we ought never to forget.

Through the encouragement of his declaration, and call to our states, a convention of states met at Edinburgh in *April* 1689, who formed a claim of right, setting forth the grievances and privileges of the nation, and among the rest declaring, That "Prelacy, and the superiority of any office in the church above Presbyters, is and hath been a great and insupportable grievance and trouble to this nation, and contrary to the inclinations of the generality of the people ever since the reformation (they having reformed from Popery by Presbyters) and therefore ought to be abolished." And the said convention being afterward turned into a parliament, the king and queen, with their advice and consent, in *July* 1689, did formally abolish Prelacy, and rescind all acts and statutes formerly past in favour of it.—There was also the draught of an act brought in, and twice read in parliament, for excluding all these from places of public trust, who had a share in the oppressions of the former reigns; but the more zealous part in the parliament had not strength to carry it, and therefore it was dropt, to the great prejudice of both church and state.—The earls Melvill, Crawford, and several others, were very friendly to Presbyterians: yet they could not this session of Parliament carry an act for restoring Presbyterian government, partly because several leading members were either inclined to Episcopacy, or pretended to dread the tyranny of Presbytery; and partly because the enemies of this church had so much interest in severals about the king to cast *remora's* in the way.—Yet a good many episcopal minister were by the council turned out of their churches for not praying for king William and queen Mary, and for other acts of disloyalty.

Next year, April 1690, an act of parliament was past for restoring all the surviving Presbyterian ministers to their churches, who had been thrust from them since. January 1661 for not conforming to Prelacy and the courses of the time. Likewise they rescinded the act for the king's supremacy in ecclesiastick causes.—*June* 7th 1690, they past an act for received among us, after it was read in their presence: also they established Presbyterian government and discipline, as it was settled by 14th act, James VI Parl. 12. 1592. except that part of it relating to patronages; they rescinded many acts which were made against Presbytery, and for Prelacy, and for the five articles of Perth, the test, &c. and appointed the first



meeting of the general assembly to be, in *October* 1690. It is to be observed, that, in the act establishing Presbyterian government, they establish it, not only as agreeable to the inclinations of the people as in the claim of right, but also as agreeable to the word of God, and most conducive to the advancement of true piety and godliness. And by that act they expressly rescind all other acts; laws, statutes and proclamations, in so far as they are contrary to, or inconsistent [sic] with, the Protestant religion and Presbyterian government now established; which includes all the unrighteous acts of the late reigns against the church. By their 23rd act they abolished patronages, and gave liberty to parishes to call their own ministers—By act 27th and 28th, they rescinded the persecuting laws of the former period; whereby men's consciences were delivered from the thralldom of ensnaring oaths, and of attending any worship against their light.—Likewise they past an act for rescinding the fines and forfeitures of the former reigns; which was a public condemnation of the oppression and cruelty thereof.—Surely then we must own that these were not small things which king William and his parliament did for this poor church when lying in the dust. Some at a distance may make light of them, because every thing was not done they would have had; but surely Christians of solid judgment, and these who groaned so long under the heavy bondage and sufferings of those times, were made to acknowledge with thankfulness, that it was the Lord's right hand that turned again the captivity of our Zion. Our restored captives were then surprised with their liberty; they were like men that dreamed, amazed at the works of the Lord, and obliged to say, *The Lord hath done great things for us*.

In consequence of the act of parliament, the first general assembly met at Edinburgh *October* 16th 1690, after about forty years interruption, where was a great gathering of old banished suffering ministers, who had survived the long storm of persecution that lay upon this tossed afflicted church. These ministers had several general meetings before this: in one of them they agreed that the first day of the Assembly's meeting should be kept as a day of solemn fasting and humiliation, which was observed accordingly by prayer and preaching both before and after noon, their majesties high commissioner Lord Carmichael joining with them in that good work. Afterwards king William's letter to the Assembly was presented, in which he expresses his affection to them, but presses calmness and moderation in their proceedings in very strong terms; yea tells them, that his authority should never be a tool to their irregular passions.—In answer to this letter, the Assembly say,



They received his letter with all the joy and thankfulness that the rising and shinning again of the royal favour upon this long afflicted and distressed church could possibly inspire.—The God of love, the Prince of Peace with all the providences that have gone over us, and circumstances that we are under, as well as your majesty's obliging pleasure, require of its a calm and peaceable procedure. And if after the violence for conscience sake, that we have suffered and so much detested, and these grievous abuses of authority in the late reigns, (whereby, through some men's irregular passion, we have so sadly smarted) we ourselves should lapse into the same errors, we should certainly prove the most unjust towards God, foolish towards ourselves, and ungrate towards your majesty, of all men upon earth.

56

Afterwards they say, "Desiring in all things to approve ourselves unto God, as the true disciples of Jesus Christ, who, though most zealous against all corruptions in his church, was most gentle towards the persons of all men."—But, notwithstanding of all this moderation of the Assembly, the Prelatical party raised great clamours against them at court, and through England, for their severity.—But, as the Assembly observe in their foresaid answer to the king—"Great revolutions of this nature must be attended with occasions of complaint; and even the worst of men are ready to cry out of wrong for their justest deservings."

This assembly was much concerned, to get Presbyterians united among themselves, who, under the late persecution had been wofully divided by means of the indulgences and toleration granted by the civil government: and to compass this design, they received into fellowship with this church and her judicatories, three ministers, Masters Linning, Shields, and Boyd, who had carried the point of separation on the foresaid accounts to too great a height; but now promised to live in union with, and subjection to, the judicatories of the church for the future; having at the same time given in a long paper for the exoneration of their consciences, bearing testimony to what they judged right, and against what they took to be wrong. These three ministers afterwards proved eminently useful in the church and in the judicatories, and contributed greatly to heal the schism that was among us.

57

This church having been long overwhelmed with ruins, this assembly 1690 had much work to do, to remove some of the rubbish, and establish some order: They had civil rulers urging a coalition with, or comprehension of, many of them; they had rents among themselves to heal, and many other difficulties to grapple with. Amidst all these they did a great many good things, such as appointing all ministers, elders and probationers to subscribe the Confession of Faith; making acts for keeping the Lord's day, and for applying the parliament to alter markets from Saturdays and Mondays, for erecting schools in the Highlands, providing them with Irish Bibles, for rescinding the sentences past by the publick resolutioners and protestors against one another. They appointed large committees or commissions for visiting several parts of the national church, with instructions how to manage; they also

appointed two of their number to repair to London, to wait upon the king concerning the affair of this church. And for further healing of their rents, turning away the wrath of God, and imploring his mercy, they appointed a national fast to be observed on the second Thursday of January thereafter: In the causes whereof, they enumerate a great many sins of the land, both in the former land present times; such as,

58

Ingratitude for mercies treacherous dealing with God, unsteadfastness in his covenant, falling from their first love, open defection of all ranks from the ways of God, by horrid immoralities, and sacrificing the interest of Christ and privileges of his church to the will and lusts of men, introducing Prelacy, imposing and, taking unlawfull oaths, shedding innocent blood, the general fainting under the late persecutions and even of eminent ministers, by either yielding to the defections and evils of the time, or not giving seasonable and necessary testimony against them; ignorance and neglect of Christ, and of living by faith on him; contempt of the gospel, and barrenness under it; want of holiness and piety towards God, and of love and charity towards men; the most part being, more ready to censure the sins of others, than to repent of their own.

These and a great many other evils they mention as a ground of fasting. It has indeed been complained of, that the hints given of some of these evils are too general. No doubt, if the drawing of the act had been put in some hands, these had been more particularly and fully expressed, and the Assembly would not have scrupled to have approved the act in that shape. It is wished the act had been more full and explicit with respect to *the shedding of the blood of God's saints and martyrs under prelacy, the king's ecclesiastic supremacy then advanced to a most blasphemous height, the self-contradictory oath of the abominable test, and the fearful indignities done to our covenants*, which we find mentioned by subsequent assemblies, and for which their is cause of mourning and humiliation to this day. Likewise we wish they had done more to retrieve the honour of these broken and burnt *Covenants*, by openly asserting the lawfulness and obligation of them, and applying to the civil powers for their concurrence to renew them, or rather of one made up of both, with accommodation to their times and circumstances. No doubt they were well apprised of the opposition that would be made to such a motion, as they found made to other such designs, and particularly to that of purging the church, and keeping out of judicatories these who were enemies to it; in which they met with strenuous opposition from statesmen and great men in power, and even from the throne itself; as appears from two letters from the king to the commission of assembly 1690, and his letter to assembly 1692, wherein he presses strongly their uniting with the Episcopal ministers then in churches. His commissioner the earl of Lothian seconded

59

the king's letter; and because they fell not in with it, he said he had orders to dissolve the Assembly, which he did, without naming a diet for another.

And here we cannot but observe the noble spirit and disposition of the Assembly 1692, which they shewed upon that occasion. The moderator Mr. William Crichton, in his speech to the commissioner, delivered himself as follows:

May it please your grace, this Assembly, and all the members of this national church are under the greatest obligations possible to his majesty: and, if his majesty's commands to us had been in any or all our concerns, in the world, we would have laid our hands upon our mouth and been silent; but they being for a dissolution of this assembly without indicting another to a certain day, therefore having been moderator to this assembly, I in their name, they adhering to me, humbly crave leave to declare, that the office bearers in the house of God have a spiritual intrinsic power from Jesus Christ, the only Head of his church, to meet in assembly about the affairs thereof, the necessity of the same being first represented to the magistrate; and further I humbly crave, that the dissolution of this assembly, without indicting a new one to a certain day, may not be to the prejudice of our yearly general assemblies granted us by the laws of the kingdom.

60

Here the members rose up, and with one voice declared their adherence to what the moderator had said. Whereupon the moderator turning himself to the assembly, as if he was to pray, the members by a general cry pressed to name a diet for the next general assembly. The moderator thereupon said, That, if they pleased, the next general assembly might meet here at Edinburgh upon the third Wednesday of August 1693 years. And the members did again with one voice declare their approbation whereof.—Wherefore these who knew the difficulties our ancestors had then to struggle with, will rather be inclined to pity than censure them, and to bless God that helped them to do so well; though still it must be owned, it would have been much for the church's exoneration, that matters had been more plainly and closely laid to the door of the state, that the world might have seen, where the stop was.

Nevertheless, by that wonderful Revolution, all persecution was stopt, and the church enjoyed the freedom of gospel ordinances; the Lord gave large testimony to the word of his grace, and there were great days of the *Son of man* in many places of the land, and multitudes of souls were brought in to Jesus Christ their Saviour. Likewise judicatories did many good things some of which we shall instance.

61

The general assembly, in the years 1694, 1697, 1698, and subsequent years shewed great zeal for suppressing profaneness and immorality, by making many acts to that purpose, and by applying to the parliament to concur with them by the civil authority; who were pleased to revive former acts, and make several excellent new acts in that end, which the assembly

appointed to be read, together with their own acts, frequently from the pulpits. Likewise it was the care and business of the general assembly for many years to get the North and Highlands supplied and planted with proper ministers; they sent diverse committees of the most experienced ministers to purge and plant the North, and transported many of the best ministers of the South to that country.

These first assemblies, and severals since, have made strict laws with respect to licensing preachers, not only about their learning, orthodoxy and prudence; but have appointed presbyteries

to make narrow inquiry into their moral character and piety, and what sense and impressions they have of religion upon their own souls; and they declare that such as are esteemed to be vain, imprudent, proud, or worldly minded, by the generality of sober intelligent persons who converse with them, shall be kept back from that sacred work.

Happy were it for the church, if these excellent rules were strictly observed by all the presbyteries of this church.

They made acts against the atheistical opinions of the Deists and others. They condemned the errors of Madam Bourignon, and deposed Dr. Garden for espousing them. They strictly appointed all ministers and preachers to subscribe the *Confession of Faith*. And for preserving of truth, and for preventing the corrupting of youth with error and immorality, they appointed all schoolmasters, chaplains and governors of youth to subscribe the *Confession of Faith*: and these who do not so, or are guilty of negligence, error or immorality, they appointed presbyters to apply to magistrates, heritors, &c. to get them removed from their offices.—They also enacted, That these who should receive licence or ordination from any of the late prelates, should be incapable of ministerial communion with this church, till they gave evidence of their repentance.

They made excellent barrier acts, for preventing all innovations in our doctrine, worship, or government, by appointing that all these acts which are to be binding rules and constitutions to the church, shall first be proposed as overtures to the assembly, and be transmitted by them to the several presbyteries of this church, that they may send their opinions or consent to the next assembly, who may then pass the same into acts, if the more general opinion of the church, thus had, agree thereunto.—They made many acts and frequent applications to the government for suppressing and preventing the growth of popery; and encouraged students and preachers having Irish, that they might be useful in those parts; and do still continue to send such to assist the ministers where popery abounds, by preaching catechising, and instructing of the people, for counteracting the trafficking priests



among them: in which design our sovereigns now concur by their yearly bounty of a thousand pounds sterling.—Also the assembly have been at great pains to get schools erected in every parish through the land, and appoint ministers to see that none be suffered to neglect the teaching of their children to read, and that the poor be taught upon charity.

63

The commission of assembly 1690, according to their instructions, sent four worthy ministers, Masters Shields, Boreland, Stobo, and Dalglish, with the Scots colony to America; and one great design was for propagating the gospel and converting the Heathen in those parts. The assembly 1700 appointed a national fast, and one special ground was for their success. Of which they acquainted them by a letter, in which they directed them, upon their landing and settling in America, “to keep a day with all the people for solemn prayer and fasting, bewailing former sins, renewing baptismal engagements, and with the greatest seriousness dedicating themselves and the land unto the Lord.” The assembly 1704 set on foot that noble project of propagating Christian knowledge in the Highlands, Islands, and foreign parts of the world, by erecting charity schools and otherwise, which they began by a voluntary subscription and contribution through the nation, instructing their commission to encourage and carry on the said design, which was done from time to time, until they obtained letters patent from the sovereign, *anno* 1709, for erecting the subscribers into a society and corporation for managing that affair; and many collections have our assemblies appointed for that blessed design, whereby, and by donations from pious persons both at home and abroad to the society, their stock is greatly increased, and they are now enabled to maintain above 130 charity schools in our Highlands and Islands at home, besides several missionaries in America, for propagating Christianity among the Heathen. And we have certain information of the happy success of these schools at home; thousands of ignorant and barbarous people have been civilized and reformed, and many of them, we hope, have become truly religious. Likewise the assembly have been at great pains to get new impressions of the Bible in Irish, and also to get the Psalms, Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms translated into Irish, and dispersed through the Highlands; and by the help of piously disposed persons, both in this and our neighbour nation, they have got to the number of 80 libraries settled in particular places through the Highlands and Islands. And what reason have we and all Scotsmen to give thanks to God for directing, countenancing and prospering this noble design so far in our land?—They also established an excellent form of process in church judicatories with relation to scandals and censures, by act 11. Ass. 1707; likewise an useful method for ministerial visitation of families, by act 10. Ass. 1708.

64

These, and many other good things, have our old suffering ministers and our general assembly been instruments, under God, to set on foot and promote, since the revolution; for which we desire always to offer up our hearty thanksgiving and praises to Almighty God, for helping them so far in advancing of our holy religion.

It has been indeed complained by some, that after the revolution they did not pass distinct recissory acts, for *Christ's headship over his church, the Divine right of Presbytery, the church's intrinsic power, the obligation of our covenants, &c.*—No doubt it might be some stop to them, that the magistrate entertained a jealous eye then upon the church, with respect to these points, lest they should have carried matters to too great heights against those who differed from them; and therefore the king and parliament, parl. 1. sess. 2. rescinded all the old acts in favour of the church which enjoined civil pains upon their sentences of excommunication. Yet notwithstanding, we wish they had done more, if possible, for asserting these principles which they held, than they did, immediately after the revolution. Had they foreseen what a handle their not doing it would have given to some to promote a separation from this church, we persuade ourselves they would have essayed to have done more. These old sufferers indeed might reckon that the world was sufficiently apprised of their principles with respect to the foresaid points, and that no man would question them, seeing they had hazarded the loss of all things for adhering to them; for it was upon that very account they were cast out of their houses and benefices, imprisoned, fined, banished, and hunted as partridges in the mountains. And although they past not distinct *Assertory Acts* with respect to these points, yet we have plain declarations of their mind about them in several public acts and deeds. It was upon their solicitation that the parliament, June 7 1690, past an act for establishing Presbyterian government among us, as being agreeable to the word of God; and at the same time ratified our Confession of Faith, and inserted it *verbatim* in their public records, in which Confession it is expressly asserted, chap. 30. sect. 1, 2. *The Lord Jesus, as King and Head of his church, hath therein appointed a government in the hand of church officers, distinct from the civil magistrate. To these officers, the keys of the kingdom of heaven are committed, &c.* And chap. 26. sect. 6, *There is no head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ.* And chap. 23. sect. 3. *The civil magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the word and sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, &c.*—Likewise they rescinded the act for the king's supremacy in church affairs.—Our first, assembly, by many acts, have, approven our *Confession* with all the aforesaid articles, and appointed all the members of this church to adhere thereto; also ministers, elders, and intrants to the ministry, are bound to make solemn profession thereof, and subscribe the same; and parents at baptism are daily required to train up their children according to it.

Likewise the moderators of all our assemblies, at the close of every assembly, do publicly assert, and declare before the king's high commissioner, that as *the assembly met in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ the only King and Head of his church, so they part in the same name;* and also they named the diet of the next assembly.—And when the commissioner dissolved the assembly 1692 abruptly, without naming a diet for another; the moderator did in his face, with consent of the whole assembly, remonstrate against it, and declare, That *the office-bearers in the house of God have a spiritual intrinsic power from Jesus Christ, the only Head*

65

66

of his church, to meet in assemblies about the affairs thereof; and he named a diet for another assembly. All this is recorded in the assembly's books. In like manner did the assembly remonstrate, when dissolved in the year 1703. And the very next assembly 1704, in their answer to the queen's letter, *do plainly tell her, that they were now again met in a national assembly in the name Of our Lord Jesus Christ. Also, they approved the several synod-books through Scotland, which had Assertory Acts recorded in them, for Christ's Headship, the Divine right of Presbytery, the church's intrinsic power, &c.* To prevent which approbation, was the reason (as then generally believed) why the commissioner dissolved the preceding assembly. Again, the assembly 1705, in their 7th act concerning Mr. Hepburn, *do assert in plain words, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the alone King and Head of, the church.* And Ass. 1707, act 11, declare, that our *Lord Jesus Christ hath instituted a government, and governors ecclesiastical in his house, with power to meet for the order and government thereof.*—And as for the Divine right of Presbytery, the assembly 1711 *do expressly declare for it in their 10th act, when they appoint all intrants to the ministry, both when licensed and ordained, to subscribe and declare, not only that our Confession of Faith and purity of worship are founded upon the word of God, but also that the Presbyterian government and discipline of this church are founded upon the word of God, and agreeable thereto; and also solemnly to engage that that they will firmly and constantly adhere to the said doctrine and worship, and to the utmost of their power, in their station, assert, maintain will defend the discipline and Presbyterian government of this, church, by kirk-sessions, presbyteries, provincial synods, and general assemblies, during all the days of their lives.* Whereby all ministers and preachers *do plainly renew our covenants.*—And that ministers in former Years were of the same mind appears by the church's declaration by their commission in the year 1698, published in their *Seasonable Admonition*, p. 5. in which they say, *We do believe and own that Jesus Christ is the only Head and King of his church: and that he hath instituted in his church, officers and ordinances, order and government, and not left it to the will of man, magistrate or church, to alter at their pleasure. And we believe this government is neither prelatical nor congregational, but presbyterian, which now, through the mercy of God, is established amongst us; and believe we have a better foundation for this our church-government, than the inclination of the people, or laws of men, g&c.g* And that commission's whole actings and conclusions were ratified and approved by Ass. 1699, act 12.—Besides all which, our assemblies and commissions have frequently owned the obligation of our covenants by mentioning the breaches of them among our causes of fasting. Ass. 1700, act 5. they lament *our continued unfaithfulness to God, notwithstanding of our solemn covenants and engagements to the contrary.* Again, Ass. 1701, act 9. they say, *Our sins are the more aggravated, that they are against so many solemn repeated vows and engagements, and covenants with our God, which have been openly violated and broken by persons of all ranks, and treated with public contempt, indignities and affronts, g&c.g*—We bless God, that has determined our church to own these truths so openly, over



the belly of all their difficulties and discouragements; and we desire heartily to join with them in declaring for the *Headship of our Lord Jesus Christ* over his church, in opposition to the pope, magistrate or any other; likewise for the *spiritual intrinsic power of the church* to chuse [choose] her officers, meet in her judicatories, inflict censures, and govern the church, in opposition to all Erastian opinions or practices promoted by any party or person whatsoever; as also for the Divine right of Presbyterian government in the church, in opposition to Prelacy, independency, &c. and for the lasting obligation of our covenants, seeing they bind us to nothing but what we are antecedently bound to by the Scriptures of truth.

Thus the church of Scotland continued owning and adhering to her ancient principles and doctrines, and using means to promote religion through the land for many years after the revolution, without any visible declension. But, alas! her degeneracy and defection hath of late years become too visible; and our union with England in 1707 may be looked upon as the chief source thereof, next to the corruption of our hearts. When this transaction came to be laid before the Scots parliament in 1706, the nation was most intent about it, not knowing the nature or articles, whether it was a federal or incorporating union: but when it was seen to be the latter, and the majority of the house disposed to agree to it, both the church and the body of the people were vastly uneasy, great numbers of addresses came up against it, and insurrections were much feared. The commission by appointment sat during the whole session, and was exceeding numerous; members attending by turns. They presented three addresses to the parliament, the first was for *an unalterable security of the established religion, to the people of this land and all succeeding generations, so far as human laws can go*. To satisfy them, the parliament enacted, That *the establishment of the doctrine, worship, discipline and Presbyterian government of this church should be held as an unalterable, fundamental and, essential condition of the union of the two kingdoms*, if concluded. This seemed to quiet many, reckoning the security of the church not so precarious and uncertain, when thus established by the mutual agreement of both parliaments in a solemn treaty of union, that when settled by acts of the Scots parliament only; for the faith of the English in keeping treaties was at this time much spoken of. But the most part of the church continued still averse to an incorporating union, and their coming under the jurisdiction of a British parliament, in which the English members, being prelatical would be ten to one of Scots members wherefore the commission presented a second address, declaring this aversion. They indeed met with great opposition from noblemen and gentlemen, elders in the commission, who had views of temporal offices and advantages from court by being for the union; yet they represented the grievances the church and her members might fall under by the union, such as oaths, tests and impositions inconsistent with their principles. And in their address they plainly testified against *the subjecting of this nation to a British parliament, in which twenty six prelates would be constituent members and legislators; For (say they) it is contrary to our known principles and covenants, that any churchman should bear*

civil offices, or have power in the commonwealth. To this they got no answer, save a clause put in the act for securing the church, that *no oath, test or subscription shall ever be imposed within the bounds of this church and kingdom contrary to our Presbyterian establishment.* By which (it is to be regreted) the parliament neither shewed regard to the principles of Scotsmen when out of the kingdom, nor to the obligation of our covenants: nay, they proceeded to worse afterwards, by declaring that *the parliament of England might provide for the security of the church of England within the bounds of that kingdom, as they should think expedient;* whereby they consented to the securing of the prelacy and ceremonies of that church as a fundamental of the union. This being both against the word of God and our solemn league, we have cause to mourn over it as a national breach of covenant, in some respect; though it is a mercy the church was helped to remonstrate against it; for the commission when informed of it, presently presented a third address (though greatly opposed) craving that *there might be no such stipulation or consent for the establishment of the hierarchy and ceremonies, as they would not involve themselves and the nation in guilt, &c.* From all which it is evident, that this church did remonstrate against making an union with England upon terms not consistent with our ancient covenant union with that kingdom: for the ensuing assembly 1707 approved the commission in what they did.

71

But, notwithstanding of the church's remonstrance against this union and the foresaid sinful stipulation, it was concluded and ratified by both parliaments; but it doth not appear that this memorable transaction has been followed with the special blessings of heaven, seeing it hath brought on very much sin, and many growing evils upon this poor land, to the dishonour of God, and decay of true Christianity among us. For after the union, when our correspondence and communication with the English was greatly increased, the Lord's day began to be profaned after their example, and other immoralities much to abound, and the societies for reformation of manners to dwindle away. Likewise our nobility and gentry have been since that period giving up gradually with family religion, and the very form of Godliness, and falling into a looser way of living; for many of them since the union do either dwell or spend much time in England, whereby they learn many of their vices and evil customs; they are either reconciled to the English hierarchy and worship, or live much in the neglect of all public worship; and, being there under the inspection of no parish-minister they and their families get leave to live as they list: and, when they come down to Scotland, they get many to follow their loose examples. Also, since the union, public oaths are prodigiously multiplied, in qualifying men for offices, in collecting and paying of taxes; and manifold perjuries are thereby committed, and particularly by custom-house oaths, and running of goods, which also opens a door to many other sins. And hereby Atheism, Deism and infidelity have made progress in the land.

72

Likewise soon after the union, the English service and ceremonies were set up in several places, and afterwards the parliament gave a toleration for it, and the body of the Episcopal

clergy embraced that worship, though their ancestors had always supposed it heretofore. Yea, by this law, almost all errors are tolerated; and now even the Popish worship is kept openly, and connived at.—A superstitious form of swearing was soon introduced; from England, by laying the hand on and kissing the gospels. The sacramental test, and conformity to the liturgy and ceremonies, is imposed upon the members of this church while serving the king in England and Ireland. Likewise many other incroachments are made upon the government, rights and privileges of this church by the toleration act, and by the act for restoring patronages, by the act for a vacation of the lords of session and other courts in the end of December, whereby the keeping of holy days is encouraged; and lastly, by refusing access to the house of peers, unless the address be directed to the lords spiritual. And all these grievances are brought upon us, notwithstanding of our security by the union-act, and the English faith so much talked of. From all which we may conclude, That as our union with England was made upon sinful terms, so in the event it hath proven a great judgment upon this land and church. Alas! we have been perfidious to God, and no wonder though men should be left to prove perfidious to us.

73

Very soon did Scotland feel the bitter effects of the union; for, in the view of its being concluded, several of the Episcopal clergy began to set up the English service in meeting houses, hoping to find more countenance and support from England on this account. This way of worship was wholly new and strange, and could never find place in Scotland before. Wherefore the general assembly 1707, that met soon after the conclusion of the union, gave an honest testimony against this new worship, by their 15th act, intituled, *Act against innovations in the worship of God*; wherein they say, *The purity of Divine worship, and uniformity therein, hath been the great happiness of this church ever since her reformation; and that the introduction of these innovations was not so much as once attempted, even during the late prelacy; that they are dangerous to this church, and manifestly contrary to our own known principle, viz. that the assembly moved with zeal for the glory of God, and the purity and uniformity of his worship, doth discharge the practice of all such innovations of Divine worship within this church; and doth require and obtest [supplicate] all the ministers of this church, especially these in whose bounds any such innovations are, or may happen to be, to represent to their people the evil thereof, and seriously to exhort them to beware of them, &c.* And they appoint the commission to use all proper means for suppressing such innovations. Which the commission did, as appears by their act 5th August 1709, which they ordained to be read in all the churches through Scotland. But the more the church opposed this new worship (as they judged they were warranted to do by the laws of the land) the more forward were their enemies to set it up, and at length got the parliament to espouse their cause.

74

Likewise, soon after the union, gross profanation of the Lord's day began to abound, by traveling, carrying goods, driving cattle, and other abuses on that holy day; as appears from the 12th act of ass. 1708. For preventing whereof, the assembly in that act appointed

each presbytery to send some of their number to attend the lords of justiciary [judicial officer] at their first circuit that falls to be in their bounds, and to represent to their lordships the profanation of the Lord's day by the foresaid wicked and sinful practices. And the general assembly did seriously recommend to the lords of justiciary to take effectual course to restrain and punish the foresaid abuses; which, the assembly say, *they will acknowledge as a singular service done to God and his church*. Also they enjoin all ministers to represent to their profile, among whom such practices are, the great hazard their immortal souls are in by such courses; and also to proceed not only with ecclesiastic censures against sabbath breakers, but also to apply to justices of peace and other magistrates in their bounds, to execute the laws against them.—But our commerce with England still increasing, the profanation of the Lord's day among us is come to a great height, in spite of all the church hath done against it.

75

But, our sins and provocations against God being highly aggravated; as a just punishment upon us, God was pleased to let loose our enemies in the British parliament to bring in a bill, which they got past into a law, for allowing those of the Episcopal clergy the use of the English liturgy in Scotland, containing some grievous clauses in it against the just and legal rights of the established church. While the bill was in dependence March 1712, the commission met and addressed the queen, in which they gave free and faithful testimony against the said bill, which the assembly that met in May 1712 did unanimously approve; and, as a token of it, did insert their address in their books, and print it with their acts. In it, they say,

The church of Christ in Scotland is in hazard of sad alterations and innovations, inconsistent with and contrary to that happy establishment, secured to us by the laws of both of God and the realm; by the said bill.—If the matters in question did only relate to our own case and better accommodation, we should patiently bear the same: but when we see the glory of God, and the power and purity of our holy religion, and of the ordinances of Jesus Christ in this church, so much concerned, we cannot but hope that your majesty will allow us to plead our just right, &c.—

Afterwards they plead the several acts of parliament for settling and securing the worship, discipline and government of this church, with her rights and privileges; all which acts were ratified by the parliaments of both kingdoms in the treaty of union, and declared to be a fundamental, essential and unalterable condition of the said treaty of union in all time coming. It is observable, after their pleading the 5th act parl. 1690, which allows the Presbyterian ministers and elders to have power to try and purge out all insufficient, negligent, scandalous and erroneous ministers by due course of ecclesiastical process and censures, and likewise to redress all other church disorders;—They add, *By which act it is evident, that Presbyterian church government being thus established, the ministers and elders of this church have all the powers committed by our Lord and Master to his ministers and officers, to watch*

76

over the flock, and to guard against all usurpers and intruders.—Afterwards they add, *We cannot but express our astonishing surprise and deep affection to hear of such a bill, offered for such a large and almost boundless toleration, not only threatening the overthrow of this church, but giving a large licence almost to all errors and blasphemies, and throwing up all good discipline, to the dishonour of God, and the scandal and ruin of the true Christian religion, and the infallible disturbance of the quiet, and to the confusion of this church and nation.—And therefore we do in all humility, but with the greatest earnestness, beseech, nay obtest your majesty, by the same mercy of God that restored this church, and raised your majesty to the throne, to interpose for the relief of this church, and the maintenance of the present establishment, against such a manifest and ruining incroachment.*—The church being most earnest to oppose this toleration and other grievances then coming upon the church, they sent three of their number, Masters Carstares, Blackwall, and Baillie, to London, to present this and others of their petitions, and to agent the church's cause: but, notwithstanding of all that this and other acts were past against the church; all Episcopal ministers were allowed to preach, pray, administer the sacraments, and marry, without any other caveat that appears for their doctrine save that *that they shall not deny, in their preaching or writing, the doctrine of the blessed Trinity.* They are not by that act obliged to satisfy the church, or any person or society, concerning their belief of the doctrine of the Trinity; it is enough if they do not openly impugn it: so that there is a liberty given to the most erroneous or scandalous men to preach and dispense sacraments, without being accountable to any.

We do here join with the church in testifying against such a boundless toleration, as being contrary to the word of God, and the practice of reforming magistrates and churches therein commended: as in [2 Chron. xxxiv. 33.](#) [Rev. ii. 2.](#) and to these texts wherein such a toleration is reprov'd, as [Rev. ii. 14, 15, 20.](#) as also it is contrary to our Confession of Faith, chap. 23. and to our Larger Catechism upon the 2nd commandment.

At the same time there was another distressing bill presented in the parliament for restoring of patronages, and repealing the act 1690, which gave liberty to parishes to call their own ministers.—This also carried against the church, notwithstanding of the common's address, which was in like manner approv'd by the assembly. In this address they plead and assert, That



the act 1690, abolishing patronages, is a part of our Presbyterian constitution, ratified by the acts of parliament of both kingdoms in the treaty of union, and declared to be unalterable: That, from our first reformation from Popery, patronages have still been reckoned a yoke and burden upon this church; and this is declared by the first and second books of Discipline: that the restoring of them will inevitably obstruct the work of the gospel, and create great disorders and disquiet in this church and nation; and that there is one known abuse attending patronages, *viz. the laying a foundation for Simoniacal pactions betwixt patrons and those presented by them.*



Though this did not avail to stop the bill, yet it was a plain testimony from the church against Patronages; which we cannot but approve and adhere to.

Likewise we approve of that noble testimony which the general assembly gave against both the toleration, and patronages, May 14th 1715, when they approved a memorial concerning them, which they appointed to be sent to the duke of Montrose principal secretary of state, most humbly entreating him to lay it before the king, *viz.* King George I. The tenor of it is as follows:

The church of Scotland, being restored at the happy revolution, was by the claim of right, and acts of parliament following thereupon, established in its doctrine, worship discipline and government; and, that this legal constitution and establishment might be unalterably secured, it was declared to be a fundamental and essential condition of the union, and accordingly ratified in the parliaments of both kingdoms. But the zeal of the established church of Scotland for, and their steady adherence to, the Protestant succession, did expose them to the resentments of a disaffected party. And now they account themselves aggrieved by some acts past in the parliament of Great Britain; as 1mo, By the act granting such a large and almost boundless toleration to these of the Episcopal persuasion in Scotland, while the liberty allowed to Protestant Dissenters in England (who had always given the most satisfying proofs of their undoubted zeal and good affection to the Protestant succession) was retrenched. And though the church of Scotland hath an equal security in a legal establishment with that of England, yet there is a vast inequality as to the toleration of the respective Dissenters. In Scotland the toleration doth not restrain the disseminating the most dangerous errors, by requiring a Confession of Faith, or subscription to the doctrinal articles of the established church, as is required of Dissenters in England: it also weakeneth the discipline of the church against “the scandalous and profane; by withdrawing the concurrence of the civil magistrate. It is also an inequality and hardship upon the established church of Scotland, that these of her communion who are employed in his majesty’s service in England or Ireland, should be obliged to join in communion and conformity to the church of England; whereas conformity to this church is not required (nor do we plead that it should be) of members of the church of England, when called to serve his majesty in Scotland, who here enjoy the full liberty of Dissenters without molestation; and the common and equal privileges of the subjects of the united kingdom, stipulated by the union, do claim the same liberty to the members of the church of Scotland, when employed in his majesty’s service in England and Ireland.

2do, By the act restoring the power of presentation to patrons, the legally established constitution of this church was altered in a very important point: and while it appears equitable in itself, and agreeable to the liberty of Christians and a free people, to have interest in the choice of these to whom they intrust the care of their souls, is *an hardship to be imposed upon in so tender a point*, and that frequently, by patrons who have no property nor residence in the parishes; and this besides the snares of Simoniackal pactions [a “Simo-

79

80

niacal paction” is the buying or selling of ecclesiastical pardons, offices, or emoluments *via* an agreement or bargain.], and the many troubles and contests arising from the power of patronages, and the abuses thereof, by disaffected patrons putting their power into other hands, who as effectually serve their purposes; by patrons competing for the right of presentation in the same parish; and by frequently presenting ministers settled in eminent posts to mean and small parishes, to elude the planting thereof: By all which, parishes are often kept long vacant, to the great hindrance of the progress of the gospel.

Although the church of Scotland was brought under the distress enough by the toleration and patronages, yet, to add to it, the oath of abjuration was also imposed upon the ministers thereof in the year 1712. This occasioned a great question among them, and much writing upon it, whether the conditions or qualifications required of the successor to the crown, in the act so of parliament settling the succession, of which this is on that *he must join in communion with the church of England*, be understood as any part of the oath, or not? These who were not clear to take it, apprehended these conditions might be reckoned a part of the oath, because in it they were to swear to maintain the succession AS entailed by such acts of parliament, in which these conditions were contained. Others again understood these conditions as no part of the oath, seeing when the oath was first framed in the English parliament in the year 1701, and a clause was offered to be added to it for maintaining the church of England, it was rejected, because the Dissenters could not take it: and at the union the parliament had expressly exeemed these of this church from all oaths inconsistent with their principles: and consequently, that the AS in the oath was not reduplicative upon the qualifications of the successor, but merely indicative, as only pointing out the act wherein the succession was settled, and the illustrious family and persons on whom it was entailed failing the heirs of king William, queen Anne and her heirs, g&c.g And therefore they understood that the oath brought them under no other obligation, but to allegiance to the sovereign, and to an engagement against a Popish pretender, and to the succession in the Protestant line: and, to prevent mistakes and misrepresentations they might be liable to in this matter, they resolved to give in written declarations to this purpose upon instrument, at taking of the oath, which generally they did. At this time the commission addressed the queen (as also did the assembly) in favours of these who still scrupled at the oath, as if the AS in it did some way refer to the conditions required of the successor, that such might be favourably dealt with, as her loyal subjects. As also they petitioned her, that their declarations of loyalty to the queen, their renouncing the Pretender, and engagements to support the succession to the crown in the Protestant line in the family of Hanover, as contained in their



address, might be accepted by her as their sense of the said oath, without respect to the condition scrupled at.—In answer thereto, the queen, in her letter to the assembly, declared that the address of the commission did so much manifest their loyalty to her, and their true concern for the succession in the Protestant line by law established, that it could not but be acceptable. This answer did very much confirm these who judged that the AS in the oath did not reduplicate upon the qualifications of the successor, and gave freedom to many to take it.

82

After king George I came to the throne, and understood our difficulties by the representation of assembly 1715, and former addresses, he interposed for the relief of these who scrupled at the oath, and got the parliament to turn the AS into WHICH, as also to declare that the oath was not meant to oblige his majesty's subjects in Scotland to any thing inconsistent with their church establishment according to law. This removed the scruples of many; but nevertheless there were not a few worthy ministers who remained uneasy and scrupulous upon account there was still mention, made in the oath of the act of parliament that required the conditions of the successor, and therefore wanted to have it wholly taken out of the oath. Which, upon application, the king was so good as to grant, by an act of parliament in the 5th year of his reign.—Thus did the Lord in his mercy settle the great commotions that were in the church by reason of that oath, and extricate her out of some of her difficulties; yea, so far, that the most strict and zealous ministers in Scotland were brought to declare both from the pulpit and the press, that the embracing or refusing the oath of abjuration did not afford the least ground for separation.

It is remarkable, that in the midst of all these grievances and pressures which the church groaned under, the Lord did not suffer her to sink.—The times indeed became very cloudy and dark; the church's friends were turned out of place, and her enemies were exalted in power; Jacobites were put in places of highest trust, and many of them became so insolent, as to maltreat and abuse the ministers of the gospel, and sometimes to cause burn at market-crosses the acts of synods for fasts, because in them they appointed prayers to be made for maintaining the Protestant succession, and for defeating the designs and plots then forming for overturning it, and for bringing in a Popish Pretender. Yet even then the Lord inspired the commission with courage and resolution to emit their famous seasonable warning at their meeting 19th August 1713, which was read from the pulpits; wherein they obtest all good Protestants and lovers of their country to look to themselves, that they be not deluded by the subtile devices of a Jacobite party, who would bring us under the yoke of a Popish Pretender.—Here the commission mention their artifices at large; one whereof is, *They with great appearance of zeal, espouse and promote the English liturgy through the land, though neither they nor their fathers would receive it heretofore; and at the same they omit all, the prayers for queen Anne and princess Sophia.*—Likewise they make a great outcry, especially in distant places, of their having suffered grievous persecutions because of their being of the

83

Episcopal persuasion though without ground. Blessed be God (say they) we ran appeal to the consciences of all who know our conduct, that we have never since the late happy revolution in the least returned the severities, and unparalleled cruelties, which we met with when they had the ascendant; and which we from their present temper, as well as from their former behaviour may reasonably conclude they want nothing but power to renew against the ministers and members of this church.—Wherefore they, seriously obtest and beseech all ranks of persons to humble themselves deeply under the many sad causes and tokens of the Lord's anger, and turn to him with all their hearts, and flee to the blood of sprinkling for reconciliation, and pray earnestly to God to disappoint the designs and hopes of a Popish and Jacobite party, preserve the Protestant succession in the house of Hanover, sanctify the troubles which have afflicted our Zion, and turn us from all these sins which have procured them, &c.

84

And glory be to a prayer hearing God, who soon blasted all the Jacobites' plots and hopes, and made the Protestant succession take place, by the accession of K. George I within less than a year, to the of this poor oppressed church, and of all true Protestants.

Towards the end of the queen's reign the Jacobites turned so uppish, that they encouraged Episcopal ministers to intrude into vacant churches, and ministers and preachers who were sent to preach in them were rabbled. They and their preachers did publicly solemnize the Pretender's birth day, set up bonfires, drink his health as king before great multitudes, and confusion to all the Presbyterians. But upon the accession of king George I these riots and insults were suppressed, and the laws and good order began again to take place. The church represented her grievances from the laws lately made; but the breaking out of the rebellion in 1715 put a stop to designs of that sort for a time. Until then, there were a good number of Episcopal ministers continued in churches through the North; but they, joining with others in that rebellion, were soon afterwards turned out. The Lord was pleased again to pity us, and work a great deliverance for us: for though the Jacobite and Popish party rose of a sudden, and gathered together in great numbers, threatening to carry all before them, to cut off our sovereign king George and all the friends of the Protestant succession, attacked the king's forces, and killed many; yet the Lord soon brake all their measures, poured shame upon their attempt, and made many of them flee their native country: so that in a wonderful manner God delivered us from the bloody sword, and the cruel designs of Papists and Jacobites, and restored peace in all our borders, in the year 1716.

85

It might have been expected, that such astonishing mercies and deliverances would have produced humility and thankfulness to God, have led us to repentance and reformation, and have animated our zeal for God and his truths, and our activity to get the church's grievances redressed, when such a fit opportunity seemed to offer.—But, alas! we became unthankful to God, and soon for got his goodness; we turned secure and confident under king George's protection and favour, and began to lose that zeal for preserving the purity of doctrine and worship, for suppressing error and immorality, and for the advancement

of religion and godliness, which former assemblies manifested. Now our old zealous suffering ministers were generally gone off the stage, and a woeful lukewarmness and indifferency began to seize upon the following generation.

At this time there was a great noise of Mr. John Simson, Professor of Divinity at Glasgow, his venting and teaching Arminian doctrine and gross errors. The worthy Mr. James Webster, one of the ministers of Edinburgh, having conversed with him thereupon, was the first that complained of him: And he was therefore appointed to process him before the presbytery of Glasgow; though it seems hard that Mr. Webster should have been burthened with an affair which was the common cause of the church. But Mr. Webster's appeal, the libel he gave in against Mr. Simson, and Mr. Simson's answer thereto, came before the assembly 1716, who remitted the same to a committee to consider the whole process, and to make a full and distinct report to the next assembly. In Mr. Simson's answer to this libel, and his letters to Mr. Rowan, there were found several very dangerous errors, contrary to the word of God, and our Confession of Faith and Catechisms; such as,

That there is nothing to be admitted in religion, but what is consonant to reason.— *That* regard to our own happiness in the enjoyment of God ought to be our chief motive in serving him; and that our glorifying God is subordinate to it.— *That* the Heathen may know by the light of nature, that there is a remedy for sin provided; and if they would pray sincerely for the discovery of the way of salvation, God would grant it to them.— *That* if men would with diligence, sincerity and faith use the means for obtaining saving grace, God has promised to grant it: and that the using of the means in the foresaid manner is not above the reach of our natural powers.— *That* there was no proper covenant made with Adam for himself and his posterity; and that he was not our federal head.— *That* it is inconsistent with God's justice and goodness to create souls wanting original righteousness; and that the souls of infants since the fall are created pure and holy.— *That* it is probable there are more of mankind saved than damned; *And* it is more than probable that baptized infants, dying in infancy are all saved.— *That* there is no sinning in hell after the last 'judgment,' &c.

All which erroneous scheme of doctrine is fully refuted and exposed by the reverend Mr. John Flint and Mr. John M'Claren, both ministers of Edinburgh, in two different books, the one written in Latin, and the other in English, to which Mr. Simson never offered any reply.—Mr. Simson, when before the assembly and their committee, declared his adherence to our Confession of Faith, and studied to put senses upon his doctrine to make it seem to agree therewith, and made use of very subtle distinctions for that end: but such hath been the zeal sometimes of our assemblies against error and for purity of doctrine, that they would

86

87

have had no great difficulty to have agreed that Mr. Simson, or any man that vented or taught such doctrine as above, was not fit to be continued a professor of divinity, to instruct and train up young men for the holy ministry.—But, when his process came to be finished by assembly 1717, there were so many members in it, who either had been his scholars, or were his relations, comrades or acquaintances, who stood up for saving him, that the assembly were brought to dismiss him with a very gentle censure, by their 9th act; wherein they only say,

He hath given offence, and hath vented some opinions not necessary to be taught in divinity, and that hath given more occasions to strife, than to the promoting of edification: That he hath used some expressions that bear and are used by adversaries in a bad and sound sense, though he doth disown that unsound sense. And, for answering more satisfyingly, (as he supposeth) the cavils and objections of adversaries, he hath adopted some hypothesis different from what we commonly used among orthodox divines, that are not evidently founded on Scripture, and tend to attribute too much to natural reason, and the power of corrupt nature; which undue advancement of reason and nature is always to the disparagement of revelation and efficacious free grace. The general assembly, for the reasons above mentioned, prohibits and discharges the said Mr. John Simson to use such expressions, or to teach, preach, or otherwise vent such opinions, propositions, or hypothesis as foresaid.

88

But, as a just rebuke upon the assembly for their lenity, Mr. Simson persisted in his unsound doctrine, contemned their sentence, and still went on in a course of error, till in a few years he is arraigned before the assembly for Arianism.

About this time there arose debates and great noise, as if some ministers were bringing in a new scheme of doctrine, because in their sermons they disused and censured several old approved words and phrases as too legal, and affected some new modes of speaking; and because they recommended to their people an old book called the *Marrow of modern Divinity*.—This book was laid before the assembly 1620, as containing gross Antimonian [Antinomian] errors; and several passages and propositions being excerpted from it by a committee, the assembly proceeded in a hurry to pass a condemnatory act against them all *in cumulo*; and, among the rest, they condemned as erroneous two propositions, *viz.* That *believers are altogether set free from the law as a covenant of works;—And that they are set free both from the commanding and condemning, power of the covenant of works.* Which two are surly sound and orthodox propositions in themselves.—Likewise that same assembly, by another act, recommended to ministers to insist in preaching several doctrines, and

89

among others,—*the necessity of a holy life in order to the obtaining of everlasting happiness*. This certainly was very ill worded, however sound their meaning was.

Although there were several stumbling and unjustifiable expressions in that book called the *Marrow*, g&c.g yet before the assembly had proceeded to pass their acts concerning them, it had been their wisdom, to have first remitted them (as in other cases) to the consideration of Presbyteries; which happy step would have prevented the oversight or mistakes of the assembly aforementioned, and consequently the *Twelve* brethrens' representation against the foresaid acts, given in to the assembly 1721, which was once likely to have landed in a schism. But it must be owned, that, when the assembly 1722 came to review and explain these hasty acts past in 1720, they did justice to truth, and declared their minds, concerning, the acts and propositions quarrelled, in very sound and orthodox terms.—And particularly, as to *the necessity of holiness for obtaining everlasting happiness*, they declare the expression is meant of *obtaining the enjoyment and possession, of everlasting happiness*, but not of *the right and title to it*, which (they say) all justified persons have already attained, viz. through the imputation of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Thus peace and truth were preserved in the church at that time.

No doubt it had been much for the interest of truth, as well as the honour of our assemblies, that they had manifested as much zeal against other erroneous books which have been published or recommended before or since that time by other ministers of this church, and some of them far more dangerous than the *Marrow*, such as Dr. Whitchcot's sermons, &c. Oh that our ancient and trite zeal for truth and purity, and against all kind of error and corruption, were again happily revived in the land!—But, alas! how little ground have we in an ordinary way to expect any national reviving or reformation in the church and land, while the flood gates of error and corruption are still kept wide open by the laws for the *Toleration and Patronages*?

In consequence of applications to the king by the church, some amendments were made upon these laws by the parliament in 1719; As, *1mo*, They discharged any person to preach or pray in any Episcopal meeting house in Scotland, that did not pray for king George, and take the abjuration oath, under the pain of six months imprisonment, and having the meeting house shut up. This act, had it been executed, would have put a stop to many of the erroneous Jacobite preachers; but not being executed against them, they still went on in disseminating many popish errors through the land.

2do, The parliament enacted, That presentations given by patrons to vacant churches shall be effect, if the person presented do not accept or declare his willingness to accept of the presentation given him.—By which act the parliament put it (as it were) in the church's power to ease herself of the great grievance of patronage; which was ground of joy to many: for, at that time, it was generally thought that this limitation was equivalent to plain repealing



of the patronage act, and that no Presbyterian would ever expressly declare his accepting of a presentation, or go so far to approve or comply with patronage, which Presbyterians had always declared heavy yoke and burden on the church of God. And accordingly there was no man that presumed to take, accept or make use of a presentation to a church for several years after this act was past; and so the church was easy, and continued to settle vacant churches upon the call of congregations, without any molestation from patrons.

During this lucid interval, the church seemed to turn secure, as if she feared no danger from the acceptance of presentations; and therefore was at no pains to shut or bar the door against such acceptances. Had this been done, the church was effectually delivered by the foresaid favourable act from the yoke of patronage. Now was the proper juncture for our assemblies to have made a new declaration, in corroboration of what former assemblies had done, concerning the woful corruption and evil consequences of patronage; and to have warned all the members of this church of the evil of encouraging or promoting the same, and particularly all ministers and preachers of the sin and danger of complying with this corruption, by accepting of presentations; especially seeing there was no law requiring it as necessary, but, by the late act of parliament, an open door was left for their entering into churches in a gospel way, if they pleased to chuse and accept of it. No doubt, if things had been set in such clear light by our general assemblies, the authority of the church would have restrained these woful acceptances.—But, alas! while the church slept, the enemy was busy sowing his tares, and prompting some to devise subtile conditional acceptances, wherein they might disapprove of patronages, and declare for Presbyterian principles with respect to the people's rights, and yet, in the mean time, take such hold of the stipend presented to, that another could not make a legal title to it. When this was complained of to superior judicatories, some leading men, alas! were found to patronize these accepters, till at length they proceeded to the most open and barefaced acceptances. For these practices indeed some preachers were censured and silenced, but they were reponed [replaced] by superior courts; whereby at length acceptances went on without controul. So that, by such defections, the yoke of patronage is faster wreathed upon the church than ever, and her condition under it more lamentable than in any former period: for informer times all honest men groaned under patronage as a burden; and though they were presented by patrons to churches, yet they neither said nor wrote any thing in favour of the patron's deed, but silently submitted the presbyteries proceeding to their settlement, when they had parishes concurring in it: but, alas! By such active written acceptances as now in use, the whole church shall in process of time be involved in approving of patronages, in such away as was never done by the church of Scotland since the reformation.

Wherefore we judge it the duty of all the lovers of truth and purity in the church of God, to bear open testimony against the yoke of patronage, and the acceptance of presentations,

as we hereby desire to do, especially seeing they have been productive of such dreadful evils in this church of late years.

It is well known that the church of Scotland hath ever since her reformation remonstrated against patronages, and asserts in her 2nd book of Discipline, chap. 12. That *patronages have flowed from the pope, and the corruption of the canon law; and the intruding of persons this way into churches, hath no ground in the word of God, but is contrary thereto, &c.*—Likewise the parliament 1649, in their act abolishing patronage, do say, *It is an evil and bondage under which the Lord's people and ministers have long groaned; and that it is a custom popish, brought into the church in times of ignorance and superstition; and that it is contrary to the 2nd book of Discipline, &c.*—Also the assemblies 1712 and 1715 give plain testimonies against patronages to the same purpose, and assert, That *they lay a foundation for Simoniackal practices, and many other evils.* To these testimonies we do adhere, and likewise shall add some further reasons against patronages;

1^{mo}, Patronages are neither agreeable to the rules of God's word, nor to the apostolical practice: seeing it is evident from the word, that it was only the church herself, with her officers, that exercised the power of nominating and electing ministers and officers to the church, according to the authority derived to them from Christ their Head and Founder, [Acts i. 15—vi. 2—viii. 14.—xiii. 3.—xiv. 23.—xvi. 9—1 John iv. 1—2 John 10](#). So that a patron's right of nominating the officers of the church, is nothing but a manifest usurpation over the church of God.

2^{do}, Patronage is also contrary to the practice of the primitive and purest ages of the church, and was not known in the church until true religion and Christianity began to decline, and then it came in gradually with other Popish corruptions and abuses. We find Cyprian, Athanasius, the apostolical constitutions, with many ancient councils and fathers, declaring in the plainest terms for the free liberty and power of the church to chuse her own pastors, without any extrinsic influence whatsoever [whatsoever].

3^{tio}, As it is disagreeable to Scripture and antiquity, so it is contrary to reason, and to the interest and safety of the church, that the power of chusing her pastors should at anytime be lodged in the hands of heretics and profane men, as frequently the right of patronage is, being conveyed to them with their earthly inheritances. Can there be any thing more unreasonable and absurd than that the power of chusing officers to the church, should fall into the hands of the declared enemies of the church! or that this power, which is a spiritual and ecclesiastical privilege, should be conveyed, disposed [given to another], sold, or bought with money, like other civil rights or heritages, and so be lodged frequently with infidels and the worst of men.

4^{to}, For patrons to impose ministers upon Christian congregations, is a plain incroachment upon the natural rights of mankind, and upon the laws of free societies; as much as it would be for them to impose physicians and lawyers upon societies, to take care of their



bodies or estates. The churches of Christ are as free societies as any in the world, having their liberties from Christ to chuse their own pastors; and ought not to be brought in bondage to any in this matter.

5to, It is cruel imposition to oblige societies of men, who duly value their immortal souls, and would place them under proper spiritual guides, to intrust the edification, comfort, and eternal concerns of these precious souls, to the care of patrons; many, whereof are indifferent about the concerns of their own souls, being negligent, erroneous or profane; and so are not like to be much concerned to chuse proper pastors to take inspection of the souls of others. How can serious Christians be easy who it be that chuse their pastors, or these who know that patrons cannot secure them against the bad consequences of a wrong choice, nor be responsible for their souls at the great day.

Lastly, Patronage by long experience has been found to be an open door for a corrupt ministry to enter into the church; and this is sadly exemplified in these churches where this corruption doth reign without controul.

Upon all which accounts, we judge it our duty to hear testimony against the usurpation of patronage, as most sinful in itself, and injurious to the church of God; and to pray that God may open the eyes of all patrons, that they may be convinced and repent of it, and cease from in oppressing Christ's church any more.

And as we bear testimony against patrons and their usurpation, so we judge ourselves bound to testify against all these who encourage and voluntarily comply with this Sinful usurpation, and particularly by accepting or declaring their willingness to *accept* of presentations from patrons, which, alas! is now become the common practice; and, being so common and general, both preachers and people are like to lose all sense of the evil of it.—But that these *acceptances* are sinful, and provoking to a holy God, is evident from these considerations:

1mo, If a patron be guilty of a sinful usurpation over the church of God, in spoiling her of the right she hath from Christ to chuse her own officers (as certainly he is) then the *accepter* of a presentation doth become partner with the patron in his sin, by homologating [approving of] his usurped power, and strengthning him in it. Now, the scripture expressly forbids us to be *partakers of other mens' sins*

2do, As the law now stands, the *accepter* is more guilty of robbing the church of her right than the patron is: for the legislature have been so tender of the church by their act 1719, as to put it absolutely in the power of ministers and preachers to *accept* or *reject* the *usurpation* of patronage as they please; so that a patron can give no trouble to the church, if he be not encouraged and assisted in it by an *accepter*. His presentation would be but like a dead serpent, altogether lifeless and harmless to the church, if an *accepter* did not come and inspire it with life, and put a sting in it. Though patronage be a grievous usurpation and burden on the church, yet it is now so limited and tied up in Scotland by law, that the

church would not feel the burden of it, if it were not pulled down upon her by *accepting presentees*; so that now the *accepters* are properly the oppressors of the church of Christ. If Christ condemns the Pharisees for *binding heavy burdens, grievous to be borne, and laying them upon other mens' shoulders*; how condemnable must accepters of presentations be, who bind such a grievous burden as patronage on the shoulders of Christ's church?

3tio, The minister or preacher, who accepts of a presentation, doth not only bring sin upon himself, by oppressing the church, and spoiling her of her just right; but also takes the ready way to encourage and harden a patron in his guilt and sinful usurpation, and to obstruct his conviction, repentance and reformation: for he will readily think that his conscience needs not be more strait-laced than theirs, who should inform him. Wherefore we earnestly wish and pray, that God would bring accepters, with their *advisers* and *supporters*, calmly to consider what a sinful hand they have in ensnaring patrons in a corrupt course and in hardening them in their usurpation over the church of God.

4to, This way of *accepting* presentations doth open a door to many sad evils, such as Simoniack pactions and intrigues, unchristian contentions and divisions in judicatories, oppressive concussions in parishes, vexatious prosecutions and appeals, and many scandalous intrusions into churches, to the great discredit of religion, and reproach of the ministerial character: hereby congregations are robbed of their just rights to call their own ministers, and very often Christ's flock is scattered and broken in pieces, the godly are grieved, and the wicked hardened: hereby ordinances come to be neglected, the Lord's day profaned, ignorance and vice encouraged, and church-discipline weakened. Yea, this pernicious practice has given occasion to many violent settlements, and to a wofull schism in the church, to the deposing of several worthy ministers, and to the discouragement of many pious students and preachers from serving the church: so that our accepters have need to consider how they will answer for all these direful consequences of their practice, and whether the commonness of it will excuse the sinfulness of it; O that we could look to God, who only can open their eyes!

5to, Accepters of presentations, act contrary to the known principles of Presbyterians, and to their own engagements; and so are chargeable with sad defection and breach of faith. Our *second book of Discipline*, which is sworn in our *national covenant*, declares patronages to be contrary to the word of God, chap. 12. And it was the general opinion of this church in the year 1719, that accepting of presentations was inconsistent with Presbyterian principles, and with the rights and rules of this church, which all ministers and preachers oblige themselves to maintain; upon which account, none adventured to meddle with them for a good many years thereafter. In our opinion, they act contrary to their engagements which they come under by the assembly's *formula* 1711; wherein they subscribe and promise, that they will never directly or indirectly endeavour the prejudice or subversion of the discipline and government of this church, but that they will to the utmost of their power maintain and

support the same. Now, it was still reckoned a branch of our discipline and government, for parishes to have the liberty of free elections, and for Presbyteries to have access to free moderations in the calling of ministers. And it is visible to all, that accepters of presentations do stop and hinder this free liberty and access, contrary to their engagements by the formula, and also by the national covenant.

6to, Seeing it is notour [well known] that the design of accepting, presentations is to secure the stipend to the presentee, so as another cannot have a title to it; it is plain that the *accepter* doth hereby invert the order, which Christ hath appointed in his church, *viz.*—That a minister's right to maintenance should be consequential to his ordination to the ministry: whereas, by the method he takes, he would make a minister's ordination to the ministry consequential to his having a right to the maintenance; which is contrary to Christ's stated order, and the nature of things.

7mo, By accepting presentations, ministers do sadly prejudice the success of the gospel and their own ministry, by offending and stumbling the parishes concerned, besides many others, at their conduct. And is it any wonder though a parish he offended with a man for going about to secure a title to their stipend, before they have access to know him, or shew any inclination for him; and for his binding the yoke of patronage upon them, and spoiling them of their just right of chusing their own pastor; and for hindering them to get another worthy pastor whom they dearly love? What must they think of a man that tells a reclaiming parish by word or deed, *I'll be your minister in spite of your teeth, I'll have the charge of your souls whether ye will or not; and, if ye refuse ordinances and means of salvation from me, ye shall have none?* Nay, come of your souls what will, though they should perish in a state of ignorance and prejudice, I'll possess the kirk, manse and benefice, and hold out another minister from you. Have they not too good ground to suspect such a man, of earthly-mindedness, greed of filthy lucre, or of being more concerned for *his own things, than for the, things of Jesus Christ*, and the salvation of their souls? Which apprehensions are sufficient to stuff the breasts of people with prejudice against him at his entry, and to blast his ministrations to them for many years thereafter. For it is no wonder, though they think such language or practice is not like that of one who sincerely designs to advance Christ's kingdom, and win souls to him, as a faithful minister ought to do; but rather of one that hath base worldly ends in view! The language of a pastor, whom Christ sends, is that in [2 Cor. xii. 14](#). *I seek not yours, but you;* whereas that of an *accepter* seems to be the very reverse, *I seek not you, but yours.*

8vo, It increaseth the prejudice of many against such accepters, when they see there is no necessity for their accepting of presentations. Indeed, if there were no coming to a church or stipend but by the Patron's right, something might be said to alleviate the crime: but at present there is no necessity from the law to accept of them; nay, on the contrary, the law leaves an open door, by which ministers and preachers may have an orderly gospel access,

99

100

both to churches and benefices, without having any dealing with Patrons at all, if they would but exercise a little patience till six months elapse. Now, how can people think charitably of these who refuse to enter by the safe *gospel-door*, and chuse, rather to climb up by the *window* of presentations and violence, when they cannot but see their so doing tends to blast their own ministry, and bring a, heavy yoke on their mother-church, after she was in effect freed of it by the tenderness of the legislature in 1719? Now, seeing these acceptances were unnecessary, and of the most pernicious consequence to the church and the interest of the gospel, it cannot but be surprising that our general assemblies were at so little pains to discourage or prevent them, when it might have been easily done at the beginning. We find indeed that the assembly 1724, referred it to their commission, to think of an overture thereanent [concerning or in reference to anything], and lay it before the next assembly; but it doth not appear that there was any more done, notwithstanding of repeated instructions from Presbyteries concerning the same. We know no reason can be assigned for the assembly's indolence in this matter, but their pusillanimity [cowardice], or sinful fearfulness of offending the government: but this fear of man hath brought a woeful snare upon the poor church. Several synods indeed shewed a willingness to restrain these acceptances but, Presentees knowing where to have recourse, their acts were soon disregarded. At first one or two probationers began to mint at accepting presentations; but the outcry against them was so great, that they soon retracted, and past from them again. But sometime after, when Principal George Chalmers adventured to accept a presentation to the church of Old-Machir, several young men took courage and followed his example; and though at first they qualified their acceptances with having the peoples' consent, yet they would not retract them after the people shewed their aversion to them; which occasioned many intrusions and violent settlements through several places of the church, contrary to our known principles, these intrusions came gradually into the church, but were act commonly practised, nor countenanced by superior courts, till after the year 1728. For we find the assembly 1725, after a great struggle about calling a minster to Aberdeen, appointing, that besides the voting of the magistrates, town-council and elders in the call, the inclination of heads of families shall be consulted about it. And the assembly 1725 censured the commission for proceeding to transport Mr. James Chalmers from Dyke to Aberdeen, without having due regard to the inclinations of the people of that city, who opposed his call. But, alas! our assemblies did not continue long in such a disposition; for they and their commission began soon afterwards to pay more regard to patrons and heritors in planting of churches, though few of these were hearers, than they did to the whole body of the people that attended ordinances. The crown having the patronage of most of the churches of Scotland, this melancholy turn of affairs was thought to be brought about by strong court influence, and by the activity of several leading ministers, who had their dependence upon or expectations from that airth [probably "direction"]. These began to vent themselves in judicatories against the rights of the Christian people

101

102

and to assert that there were no stated rules nor directions in Scripture about the calling of ministers, or who should be the electors. Some of them wrote pamphlets against the peoples' rights, pretending to answer the Scripture-arguments for them; and maintained that the clergy or judicatories were the proper electors. These were sufficiently answered by Mr. Currie, Mr. Hill and others; but their opponents had the ascendant in judicatories, and carried things there as they pleased.

At this time the church of Scotland was in a most lamentable condition, and the wrath of the Almighty seemed to be kindled against her, in letting loose many adversaries at once to attack and destroy her: for at the same time we find her many ways dreadfully tossed and shaken: as by patronages, and intrusions pushed on by the court and great men;—By *Independent* schemes and constitutions of churches zealously promoted by Mr. Glas and Mr. Archbald;—By Arian errors taught and propagated by Professor Simson;—By many gross errors vented by others, both Presbyterian and Episcopal;—And by legal sermons and moral harangues (to the neglect of preaching Christ) introduced by many of the young clergy. All these evils, working and fermenting through the land at once, occasioned dreadful shocks and convulsions in this national church, likely to rend her in many pieces. Yet, alas! We were not sensible of, nor suitably affected with our danger and misery, nor with the sins which were the procuring cause of all.—*Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger towards us to cease. Oh, wilt thou be angry with us for ever? wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?*—Whatever the Lord think fit to do with this backsliding church and land, we Judge it incumbent upon us to bear witness against the foresaid evils.

As to the impugning and invading the rights which congregations have to chuse and call their own ministers, and the intrusions made upon them, which, alas! still continue to be practised; we shall give our reasons for testifying against them, and for the rights of the people. And the first and great reason is, because by the rule and pattern of God's word, and by the dictates of sound and sober reason, the Christian people have an unquestionable interest in the choice of these pastors to whom they are to intrust the care of their souls: and particularly, this right of the people is established by several passages of the *Acts of the Apostles*, a book intended to give us the apostolical practice and pattern in the settlement of the Christian church.

1 *mo*, In [Acts i. 13, 14, 15](#), &c. when the eleven apostles met for the choice of an apostle, the laity present with them, were allowed a share in the election of two, of which God did chuse one to fill the vacancy of the apostolical college. From which we infer, That ministers should much more consult them in the choice of ordinary pastors, who are to have the stated inspection of their souls, and that this condescension of the apostles to the people in this case, doth condemn their practice who violently impose ministers upon Christian congregations, while they are dissenting and reclaiming against them, and willing to receive others every way as fit for them. And we find our reformers and Protestant divines, such as Calvin,

103

104

Beza, Junius, Zanchy, Chamier, Voetius, Amesius, Turretine, Cartwright, Calderwood, Gillespie, Forrester, Lauder, and many others, improving this passage for the peoples' rights against Papists, Prelatists and patronages.

2do, In [Acts vi.](#) the apostles called the multitude, or body of the disciples to the choice of first standing church-officers which they appointed, viz. the deacons for taking care of the poor; from which we infer, If the disciples have a right to chuse these officers who are to dispose of their charity, then much more these who are to oversee their souls. And if these apostles reckoned the people competent to judge who had the qualifications for deacons which they prescribe, viz. *who were most eminent for honesty, wisdom, and the gifts of the Holy. Ghost;*. why are they not competent to give their judgment of the like qualifications in those who are to be their pastors? The apostles being under immediate Divine direction, were abundantly capable to chuse these officers without the people; yet they will needs have them concurring in it, as a pattern to the church in their after chusing of church-officers. And it is observable, the apostles took this method, to silence the complaints among the people about providing for the poor. Which loudly calls upon judicatories to follow their example, in order to silence peoples' complaints of violent intrusions made upon them, contrary to the apostles practice and our acknowledged principles, to the great hindrance of the gospel and the edification of souls. Likewise we have the forecited Protestant divines concurring to improve this passage of the deacons for the peoples rights: and it might be expected that the ministers of the church of Scotland would not oppose them, or join with the Papists in this question.

3tio, The apostles practice in the election of church-officers being sufficiently evident by the foresaid two instances, the sacred penman of the Acts insists no more upon this subject, save that he hints at their known practice in ordinations. [Acts xiv. 23.](#) In cur version it is, *And when they had ordained them elders in every church.* Now, the word here rendered *ordained*, is but half translated; for in the original it is *Cheirotonesantes*, which Erasmus renders *cum suffragiis creassent*; and Beza, agreeing with him, hath it *per suffragia creassent*: So that according to these learned men, and many others, the passage should have been rendered, *When they had by suffrages appointed to them elders in every church.* So it is in all old English translations, and so it was brought in by our last translators, until the version was committed by king James to some of the English bishops to be revised, who altered no less than fourteen passages of the New Testament, and this among the rest, to make them speak the language of the church of England; but the original language, being that of the Holy Ghost, is to be our rule. The word here is not *Cheirothesia*, which signifies the action of ministers in ordaining; but it is *Cheiro tonia*, which is expressive of the peoples act in electing of pastors, by stretching or lifting up the hand, as was the custom: and in this sense doth the apostle make use of the word *Cheirotonia*, and ascribe it to the people, [2 Cor. viii. 19.](#)

105

106

4to, The spoiling congregations of their right of calling their ministers, and imposing pastors upon them, is not only against the example of the apostles, but also contrary to the commands of our glorious Head, to our own prayers, and to the very spirit of the gospel. Doth not Christ enjoin us in his word to *glorify him in all things, to do all to the glory of God, and to do all things to the edification of his people! to condescend to men of low estate, and to be gentle towards all men?* Doth he not forbid us to *exercise dominion over the church, to set at nought our brother, and rule over his people with rigour?* Doth he not command all Christians to *judge of what they hear, to try the spirits, to beware of false prophets?* Are not all ministers and others bound to pray that *God's name may be hallowed, that his kingdom may come, and that the whole earth may be filed with his glory?* And do not they act the very reverse of these commands and prayers, who would in a magisterial way intrude ministers upon Christian congregations, and thereby stop the spreading of his gospel, the conversion of souls, and the increase of his kingdom upon earth? Are forced settlements agreeable to the meekness and gentleness of Christ our Master and Pattern? Or are they like the mild disposition and condescensions of the apostle Paul, who used the most tender, soft and condescending methods to advance the gospel among men, and was willing to *become all things to all men for their spiritual good?* and, when he saw it needful to for the winning of their souls, he laid aside his authority, and fell to intreaties and beseechings with them, [Rom.](#)

[xii. 1. 2 Cor. v. 20.](#)—[x. 1. Philemon 9, 10.](#) And observe what he says, [1 Thess. ii. 7, 11.](#) *We were gentle among you as a nurse cherisheth her children;* And (saith he) *we exhorted you as a father doth his children.* Now, as a tender nurse or father will not impose any upon weak children to feed them at whom they have the greatest aversion, nor tell them that they shall have no food unless they take it from such hands; so neither ought judicatories to intrude pastors upon dissenting or reclaiming parishes. They pray for the spreading of Christ's glory and kingdom, and therefore should not counteract their prayers, as they manifestly do by violent settlements; for thus they lay the foundations of strong prejudices in peoples breasts against ministers and the success of the glorious gospel, and frequently drive people quite away from the gospel-net, to the great increase of ignorance and immorality. This course is directly against the Bible, that forbids us to give any *occasion of stumbling* or prejudice unto others, whereby their edification may be hindered, [Rom. xiv. 13, 19, 21.](#) Alas! people have naturally strong enough prejudices against the gospel itself, be the pastor never so acceptable; and what a pity it is that occasion should be given them to conceive prejudice also against the preacher of it? seeing thereby the strong holds of Satan are rendered more impregnable. For how can it be expected that a parish will be free of stumbling or prejudice against a man, that makes it his first business to obtain a right to their stipend, and will not part with it when they shew the utmost aversion to him, but gets himself *viis & modis* thurst [sic] in upon them? Will they not be ready to look upon him as an *earthly-minded man*,

greedy of filthy lucre, that thrusts himself into the priest's office for a piece of bread, that seeks the fleece more than the flock, and minds his own things more than the things of Jesus Christ? Is not this the way to bring both the person and ministry of such a man into contempt among the people, to shut their ears against his admonitions, and render his labours among them unsuccessful? Whereas, should a minister come among a people by their call, he has a fair door opened to him to promote their salvation: they think themselves bound to attend his ministry, receive him into their houses, hearken to his counsels, and submit to his reproofs; and so the gospel hath free course among that people.

108

5to, Seeing the right of Christians to judge for themselves in matters of religion, is undeniably secured to them both by the light of nature and of revelation; they must consequently have an interest in the choice of their teachers. For if a man may judge for himself concerning the schemes of doctrine and ways of salvation laid before him, and may prefer one to another; it must follow, that he hath also a right to judge who is fittest to instruct him according to it; otherwise he might fall into the hands of these who would lead him into schemes quite opposite to what he hath chosen. It is evident that both Scripture and reason allow men a judgment of discretion about the pastors to whom they are to commit the instructing, guiding, and edifying of their precious souls. That text is plain for it, in [1 John iv. 1](#). *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world*, Likewise that text, [Mat. vii. 15, 16](#). *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheeps clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits*. And that in [2 John, ver. 10](#). *If there come any to you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not*. From all which texts it is evident, that Christians have right to judge concerning these who bring them true gospel doctrine, and whom they are to receive, and whom not. The Bereans are highly commended for their using this right, [Acts xvii. 11](#). And Christ declares it to be the privilege of his people to distinguish the *voice of a stranger or hireling from the voice of a true shepherd, and to flee from the one, and follow the other*, [John x. 4, 5](#).

109

6to, The consent of parishes to the settlement of a minister is requisite to constitute the pastoral relation betwixt him and his flock, and the obligation of mutual offices and duties one to another. It was anciently a received maxim among Presbyterians, That the consent of the flock is as necessary to fix the pastoral relation, as the consent of the minister; seeing the tye is mutual and reciprocal.

7mo, The apostles' example in ordaining pastors by the choice and consent of the people, was followed by the primitive church for many centuries after them, as Eusebius and others testify. And the learned Turretine, vol. 3. ques. 24. *De jure vocationis*, quotes many of the ancient fathers and councils as maintaining the peoples' right. And Mr. Petrie in his church history, pag. 63, 65. observes, That the church of Rome in the 7th century had not given up with this principle of Christianity. It hath been the fixed principle of this church, and of our reformers from the very dawning of the reformation, That *congregations ought to have*

ministers settled among them with their own consent. This can be made evident from our books of discipline, and many acts of assemblies; and this is confirmed by assembly 1736, act 14. Wherein in they declare, *that it is and hath been since the reformation, the principle of this church, that no minister shall be intruded into any parish contrary to the will of the congregation; and therefore they seriously recommend to all the judicatories of this church, to have a due regard to the said principle in planting vacant congregations, as they regard the glory of God, and the edification of the body of Christ.*—But it is to be regretted, that neither the ancient principles of this church, nor the recommendation of assembly, 1736, are much regarded in the settlement of churches at this day, more than the Scriptural arguments aforementioned for the peoples' right. O how great ground hath this backsliding church to imitate that famous general assembly 1596, who made the thrusting of men into congregations one special cause of their keeping a day for solemn fasting and humiliation before the Lord! Likewise it is to be noticed, what they observe of these intruders, *That they manifest thereafter, that they were not called of God.* O that judicatories would keep in mind the apostle's warning against being *Partakers of other mens' sins, by laying hands suddenly upon them;* and would consider how far they may be accountable for these souls, who may perish in an ignorant and Christless condition during the scatterings and prejudices of congregations intruded upon! Surely that text hath an alarming sound to all concerned in intrusions, [Jer. xxiii. 1, 2.](#) *Wo be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pastures, saith the Lord. Therefore thus saith the Lord God of Israel, against the pastors that feed my people, Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them; behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the Lord.* Likewise the 34th chapter of Ezekiel hath some very awful things relative to this case. O that the Spirit of God would carry them home to the hearts of men, with such power and efficacy, that their eyes may be opened in time; so that intrusions, scatterings, and contempt of Christ's flock, may not issue in the destruction of vital religion, and of this once famous national church!

This woful contempt and disregarding of the flock of Christ, by intruding pastors upon them, neglecting their petitions, and otherwise, could not but be very provoking to a holy God: wherefore he was pleased to visit this church with several awful rebukes, and particularly with violent attacks upon her beautiful constitution, running it down, and promoting *Independent* schemes of government, and setting up new models of congregational churches with new improvements. This was first attempted by Mr. John Glas minister at Tealing, and Mr. Francis Archbald minister of Guthrie.—After a while's more secret management, they came at length to vent their principles openly, and go about preaching them in the streets, fields, &c. and printed several pamphlets in favours of their new opinions. They found fault with our *Confession of Faith* and *Formula*, and refused to subscribe them.—They maintained, *That there is no warrant for national churches under the New Testament, but only for congregational; That single congregations are not subject to any superior judicatory, nor censurable*

by them: That *they may ordain their own pastors, and that all the members have right to govern. That the church of Israel was but a typical church, and their kings were ecclesiastical officers; That their national covenanting with God was typical, and not to be imitated by Christian nations. That our national covenanting was unwarrantable and is not obligatory on us; That our martyrs, who suffered for adhering to our covenants, were so far unenlightened. That, Christian magistrates have no more power in religious matters than others, and ought not to employ their power to advance religion, to make laws with penalties favours of it, nor to restrain or punish heretics or false teachers, nor to give encouragement to good Christians more than other good subjects; That the Christian religion ought not to be defended by arms; That the example of the reforming kings of Judah in punishing idolatry and false worship, or encouraging true religion, is not to be imitated.* These and a great many other new and strange doctrines they spread; and would by no means be reclaimed, nor forbear venting them.—At length the church did process them both for their singular doctrines and practices. It was the opinion of many, that seeing they were both very pious men acting according to their light, and had been and might be further useful in the church, they should not be severely dealt with, but only brought under prohibitions and restraints; and if they could be engaged to stay with their own congregations, and no more to spread their new opinions, they might be connived at. Likewise many had greater sympathy with Mr. Archbald than with the other, in regard he was led off by him in his simplicity to these new things, neither did he vent himself so against our covenants as he did: but, seeing none of them would promise to forbear, they were both suspended; and, upon their contemning the church's sentence, they were afterward deposed. Yet the church shewed much regard to them both; for, sometime after, they took off the sentences, and reponed [replaced, restored] them both to the ministry in general, though not to their churches.—They did all they could to shake the established church-government, by setting up *Independent* churches in several places of the land, and ordaining several mechanics and illiterate persons to be their ministers: and they preached and wrote for Independency: but their pamphlets are confuted, the Divine right of Presbytery established, and the absurdities of the Independent scheme laid open, by Mr. Aytone in his *Original Constitution* of the Christian church, and by several others: so that we need add no more to what is already written, but our approbation thereof.

At the same very time the Lord was pleased to visit this church with a far more terrible rebuke, by permitting Professor Simson to vent Arian error's among his students at Glasgow, for which a process was commenced against him by the presbytery of Glasgow; and after some time it came to the assembly, and continued before them, assemblies 1727, 1728 and 1729. And though the process was drawn out to a great length, by the extraordinary methods he took to defend himself; yet it must be acknowledged that all the three foresaid assemblies manifested their zeal and concern for the orthodox faith against any thing that tended to Arianism, as appears from the long process in print. At length the assembly found proven

112

113

that Mr. Simson had denied *the necessary existence of our Lord Jesus Christ*, and *the numerical oneness of the three Persons of the Trinity in substance or essence*; and had uttered several other words derogatory to the *supreme Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Notwithstanding the Professor still refused that he taught these opinions as he calls them (the assembly in their act calls them gross errors) and said, They were contrary to the sentiments of his mind; and, if he uttered such words, they must be only a slip of his tongue. He likewise came to give it under his hand that he disclaimed and renounced all these erroneous expressions, and made an orthodox confession of his faith concerning the glorious Trinity and the supreme Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, both before the Ass. 1728 and 1729. And whereas he had said that *Christus est summus Deus*, is to be taken *cum grano salis*; and that *summus Deus*, and *the only true God*, may be understood in a sense as including the Father's personal property, and so not applicable to the Son; he declared he was exceeding sorry for giving any offence by such ways of speaking, and said, That *summus Deus*, and *the only true God*, are equally applicable to the Father and the Son, and not in any lower sense to the Son than to the Father; and that he adhered to the *truth of Christ's necessary existence*, and *the numerical oneness in essence of the blessed Trinity*. But notwithstanding of all these renunciations and declarations (which came so very late) many in the assembly declared that he deserved deposition, because at the beginning of the process he refused to answer questions for clearing himself, and had neglected many opportunities for two years time of giving satisfaction to the judicatories as to the soundness of his faith concerning these important articles, when called upon to do it. But the assembly 1728, because of his confessions and orthodox declarations, and for other considerations, proceeded no further than to suspend him from preaching and teaching, and all exercise of any ecclesiastical power or function and delayed the finishing of the process till next assembly, that they might know the mind of Presbyteries concerning him.—When the assembly 1729 met, he made a long moving speech before them, declaring his orthodoxy; which was printed. The assembly finished the affair, by confirming the sentence of suspension formerly past, and giving it as their judgment, “That it is not fit nor safe that he be further employed in teaching divinity, and instructing of youth designed for the holy ministry.” The generality of Presbyteries, notwithstanding of his confessions and declarations, had sent up to this assembly their instructions for his deposition, with which they ought to have complied; especially seeing by a former process in the year 1717 he had been found teaching Arminian doctrine, which the assembly discharged him to do for the future: and yet, contrary to that prohibition, it was found proven by a committee of assembly, that he persisted to teach the foresaid doctrine. This the assembly knew very well, and might have called for that other process.—Some alledged, it would be better to keep it over his head undiscussed, to prevent after designs of reponing him to teach.—And some said, it would be safer for truth to bind up his pen by a suspension, and by keeping him under it, than by a deposition to provoke a man of his learning to make

open attacks upon the most important truths of our holy religion. And it must be owned that he replied nothing to all that was written against him, but continued silent under the suspension for many years until the day of his death, without any motion or hint by any to get it taken off. It is desirable also to find the assembly, in their last act concerning him, expressing

their thankfulness to God, for directing all the judicatories of this church which had this process under their consideration (which includes all the Presbyteries thereof) so happily, that there hath not appeared the least difference of sentiment; but on the contrary, there hath been the most perfect and unanimous agreement among them, as to the doctrine of the glorious Trinity, and the proper supreme Deity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, according as the same is revealed in the holy Scriptures, and contained in our Confession of Faith and Catechisms.

116

It was much feared that the seeds of Arianism were sown in this church by Professor Simson and others: wherefore there were many excellent books written at this time against Arianism and Socinianism, and in defence of the foresaid doctrine of the glorious Trinity, and the proper supreme Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ; and, being so well written, we need add nothing, but join our testimony therewith, and pray that Arianism may never more set up its head in this land. *Amen.*

Although God was thus visibly contending the judicatories of this church, for their disregarding his flock and remnant in the land; yet it is matter of deep regret, that, in stead of reforming they proceeded to greater heights in their arbitrary decisions relating to them: for in the, years 1729, 1730, 1731, and afterwards, we find the complaints of worthy ministers, elders, and bodies of Christian people, concerning intrusions upon congregations greatly increased; which occasioned many remonstrances, dissents and protestations in the assemblies, commissions, and inferior judicatories. In the assembly 1730, when the stream of violence began to run very high, many entered their dissents against the settlements of Sutton and Old Machir, but were denied liberty to record them; which made a great noise, and increased the ferment among the people, but, instead of yielding or doing any thing to quiet them, that assembly did summarily make an act, *discharging the recording* (as usual) *of reasons of dissent against the determination of church-judicatories*; without remitting the affair to presbyteries to know their mind about it, according to former acts of assembly.—There were several remonstrances and petitions presented by numbers of people to the synods of Merse and Lothian, but not regarded. Likewise they gave in a paper, signed and adhered to by great numbers, to assembly 1731, complaining of violent settlements; but got no hearing.—All which proceedings did awaken many honest and zealous ministers to correspond and meet for drawing up a representation and petition to the assembly 1732,

117

concerning the intrusions and other grievances; which was accordingly drawn up, signed and adhered to by 42 ministers and three elders; wherein: they expressed, not only their own sense of these evils but also the sense of many officers through the church, who had not access to sign the said paper. And seeing we think ourselves called to adhere to the honest testimony given therein against many of the evils of the present time, we shall, as an evidence of our approbation and adherence, briefly insert the contents of it in this our testimony.

In their petition offered to the assembly 1732, they humbly move that the assembly should address the king and parliament concerning several grievances of this church, which they only can redress such as the imposing of the sacramental test, and conformity to the English liturgy mid ceremonies, upon the members of this church, when serving the king in England and Ireland: The, toleration established in Scotland, whereby error, superstition and profaneness are greatly encouraged, and church discipline weakened:—The establishing of patronages, subversive of the right of congregations to chuse their pastors:—The not receiving addresses from this church to the house of peers, because not directed to the Lords Spiritual:—The introducing from England into some courts in Scotland a *new form of swearing, by laying the hands and kissing the gospels*. Also, they represent, that notwithstanding it is the undeniable right of Christian congregations to have the free choice of their own pastors, and their call and consent is necessary to found the pastoral relation betwixt ministers and them, according to the word of God, our book of discipline, acts of the general assembly, and the concurring suffrages and unanswerable arguments of the most eminent divines both at home and abroad; yet many ministers have been imposed and forced upon Christian congregations when dissenting and reclaiming, and that especially by sentences of the commission, for several years past; and not only where presentations were insisted upon, but also where there was none, but the right fallen into the presbytery's hands. And the commission have appointed committees to try and ordain ministers for vacant congregations, not only without the concurrence of Presbyteries and synods concerned, who have best right, and are fittest to, Judge therein, but in direct opposition to their minds: and calls have been received, not moderated in Presbyteries, but attested only by notars public. Likewise the commission have repealed several sentences of synods, when they had but a scrimp quorum of ministers, much inferior in number to these who past them: and of late years especially in the years 1729, 1730 and 1731, there were many supernumerary elders named to be members of commissions, beyond the proportion allowed by acts of assembly, many, whereof reside at Edinburgh, and are brought in to vote upon occasions; and there is ground to question if they be qualified according to acts of assembly.—Wherefore, for remedying and preventing such intrusions, the they humbly move, that the assembly should repeal the commission's sentences appointing them, such as may come regularly before them; and discharge in time coming all settlements without the consent of elders and, Christian people

118

119

and enact, that no call or subscriptions for ministers be sustained but such as are attested by order of Presbyteries, or verified before them or their committees; and, if the commission shall in time coming appoint committees to try or ordain ministers without consent of the congregation and Presbyteries immediately concerned, that the said committees shall be discharged to proceed, until the assembly give their judgment, in case the causes are sisted [summoned] before the assembly by complaint or protestation: and that appeals from sentences of synods be not referred in time coming to the determination of the commission, but reserved for the assembly's decision, unless it be provided that the sederunt [meeting of the court] of the commission judging there in be supernumerary to the synod in ministers as well as elders; it being disagreeable to our principles, that a greater number of ministers should be subjected to the authority of a lesser: and that the commission be better regulated both as to the number and qualifications of elders therein than at present: and that the assembly enact, at appointing of their commission, that if any of their actings shall be found contrary to the acts, constitutions and known principles of this church, that they shall not only be censured for the same, but their said acts shall also be reversed; and, if any protestation or complaint be entered against their sentences, it shall be sufficient to gist all parties concerned before the general assembly.—Also they plead, that the assembly may repeal the 7th act of assembly 1730, *discharging the recording reasons of dissent*, as being past irregularly without consulting Presbyteries, and which must prove a very heavy grievance to many, if it stand in force

120

They complain likewise, that sonic judicatories who have testified their just displeasure against ministers and Probationers for their unworthy and offensive practice in accepting presentations contrary to our known principles, have been condemned by the commission for it. And therefore desire the assembly may give an effectual check to such dangerous practices, and that none be licensed or ordained that favour this course.—Also they complain of several innovations in the method and strain of preaching introduced of late by some preachers and young ministers, which are very offensive to many of God's people, and an obstruction to spiritual edification. And, though some former assemblies have referred it to their commissions to bring in an overture thereanent [in reference to], nothing is yet done; therefore they humbly move that the assembly may provide an antidote against these evils.—They also desire the assembly to emit a solemn warning against Professor Simson's errors, and others which are spread through the land, in order to prevent the infection of them.

As to the act of assembly 1732, concerning the method of planting vacant churches (which was then but an overture) they shew their dislike to it, as it gives much power to Jacobite and disaffected heritors in the settling of parishes, which is not agreeable to the Scriptures and our known principles: but (say they) it cannot be turned to a standing act,

121

unless the generality of presbyteries consent to it, which they hope is not to be expected in this case.

Now, though the evils above complained of were manifest grievances, and the brethren's representation concerning them was drawn up in a humble and modest strain, and signed by 42 worthy ministers, and several of them old reverend fathers, and was presented in a dutiful manner according to order; yet it is to be regretted that it was not allowed so much as hearing by the assembly; which obliged the petitioners to protest, and published their paper to the world. Likewise there was a petition of the same nature from many hundreds of elders and Christian people given into that assembly, which had the same fate. This strange conduct of that and preceding assemblies towards many godly ministers and people, did exceedingly stumble many, lessen the regard which wont to be paid to general assemblies, and pave the way to the schism which soon followed upon it. Yet the assembly 1732 did not stop here, but proceeded to turn the overture anent [regarding] planting of churches into a standing act, tho' evidently disagreeable to the mind of presbyteries, and the general opinion of the church: which increased the ferment thro' the land to a higher pitch than ever. Alas! this was not like the conduct of our old suffering fathers, who dreaded a schism in the church like fire, and were careful to prevent and crush it at the first appearance. But when God hath a controversy with a church or people, and designs to bring a stroke upon them, he ordinarily leaves their leaders to infatuate measures, so as they have neither skill nor will to take any wise step to ward off the blow.

That act of the ass. 1732 did greatly inflame this poor church for two or three years: but seeing at that time unanswerable arguments were brought against it in several pamphlets and sermons then published, to which we adhere, and seeing like wise it was repealed by a subsequent assembly, as contrary to the mind and rules of this church, and prejudicial to it; we shall not here insist much upon the evil of it. Only in regard there are many dissatisfied with the repealing of it, and alledge it was the same with the act of parliament 1690, for which the church had great regard for many years, we shall shew the manifest difference that is betwixt them, both in the words, and the sense which was put upon them.—The act 1690, runs thus;

That in case of the vacancy of any particular church, and for supplying the same with a minister, the heritors of the said parish (being protestants) and the elders are to name and propose the person to the whole congregation, to be either approven or disapproven by them; and, if they disapprove, that the disapprovers give their reason, to the effect the affair may be cognosced [pronounced] upon by the presbytery of the bounds, at whose judgment, and by whose determination, the calling and entry of a particular minister is to be ordered and concluded.

The act 1732 being notour, we shall not resume the words, but observe the difference in these things;—*1mo*, The act 1690 is by a civil court, the act 1732 by an ecclesiastical; and tho' it might be expected that the latter would in their acts keep closer by the rule of the word than the former, yet the act 1732 is more distant from that rule than the act of 1690, in regard the act 1732 tends more to spoil congregations of their rights, and countenance intrusions upon them, than the act 1690 doth.—*2do*, By the act 1690, the heritors and elders are only impowered to name and propose a person to the whole congregation; but, by the act 1732, they are impowered to elect and call one to be minister of the parish.—*3tio*, According to act 1690, the election was not to be held as finished until the man was proposed to the congregation and their approbation had; and, if they disapproved, the affair was to stop as unfinished until the presbytery give their judgment whether to proceed further in it or not; but the act 1732 holds the election as finished by the votes of the heritors and elders, and the man to be legally elected and called to be minister of the parish, before the consent of the people be asked.—*4to*, By the act 1690, and another soon past after to explain it, all unqualified or disaffected heritors were excluded from voting; but, by act 1732, all heritors whatsoever, whether hearers or not, were allowed to vote, if they were not professed Papists: so that, in many parishes where the disaffected heritors were supernumerary to the other, they had power to thrust in a minister upon a well affected congregation.—*5to*, For what appears from the words of the act 1690, the heritors and elders might have acted as distinct bodies in the nomination, and the one might have had a negative upon the other therein, and so the heritors' nomination would not be valid without the concurrence of the body of the elders; for by the act the man was to be named by the elders as well as by the heritors: but, by act 1732, it was expressly provided that the heritors and elders should elect in a conjunct body; so that, considering the superior number and influence of heritors in most places, ministers might be chosen where the eldership and whole body of the congregation reclaimed, as frequently has happen.—*6to*, The act 1790 and the act 1732 differed prodigiously as to the sense and meaning put upon the words thereof. The execution of the act 1690 being intrusted to presbyteries, the sense they then put

upon the approbation of the congregation, and the *Reasons of the disapprovers*, was far from the late sense put upon them: by their approbation the church then understood their judgment concerning the candidate's gifts of preaching and prayer, that they judged them suitable to their capacities, and adapted to their edification; and if the body of the congregation disapproved the man nominate, and gave for their reasons, that his gifts were not edifying to them, nor suited to their capacities, and that they could not in conscience consent to his being their minister: such reasons, given by a knowing well disposed people, were then judged sufficient to stop the affair, lay aside competing candidates, and to proceed to a new election. But, by the sense put upon the act 1732, no reasons or objections could be received but against the man's life or doctrine; and, if the people did not prove error or im-

123

124

morality against him by witnesses, they must receive him as their pastor: so that by this sense the people had no more interest or concern in the settlement of their pastor, than these of any other congregation; which is most absurd, and different from the sense of the act 1690.

Our noble patriots at the revolution being sensible of the violent intrusions which had been made upon parishes under Prelacy and Patronage, they did in the year 1690 restore Presbyterian government, abolish patronages, and put the peoples' rights under the guardianship of Presbyteries, who then took special care of them, according to our known principles; so that their settlements gave general satisfaction. Our judicatories then understood the act 1690 as designed to deliver parishes from the intrusions made upon them under patronages, and to restore them to their primitive liberty according to the word of God. This is evident from the assembly 1712 their approving the commission's address to the queen against patronages, in which are these words: *Whereby your majesty may plainly perceive the act 1690 abolishing patronages must be understood to be a part of our Presbyterian constitution, secured to us by the treaty of union for ever; and that the parliament 1690 was sincerely desirous only to restore the church to its just and primitive liberty in calling ministers in a way agreeable to the word of God.* That this was the sense put upon the act 1690, appears also from the form of calls then constantly made use of by the church, which is printed in our larger overtures, and runs thus: *We the heritors and elders of the parish of _____ have agreed, with the advice and consent of the parishioners, to invite, call &c.g* No call could then be received without that clause, *of the consent of the parishioners*. No doubt the words of the act 1690 might have been perverted to the peoples' hurt in some hands: but the church being allowed to explain and execute that act agreeably to their known principles as they then did; the people continued easy under it, as finding their rights safe, their consent always necessary, and no intrusions made upon them. This consent of the people, in settlements, hath been judged necessary by this church in all periods since the reformation.

Obj. These who favour intrusions object,

That, by act of ass., 1649, settlements might sometimes be made contrary to the inclinations of the majority of the people, if their dissent arose from *causeless prejudices*; and consequently that ministers might be settled against the mind of congregations, in case they had nothing to object against their life and doctrine.

Ans. We must certainly understand and explain the act 1649 by the known principles and practice of the church at that time, and by the 2nd book of Discipline, which the assembly 1649 and the whole church had several times sworn to in the national covenant. In that 2nd book our church doth three or four times declare for the consent of the congregation as necessary in settling of ministers, as also against intruding any man upon them contrary to



their will; and doth affirm, that this order of settlement is according to the word of God, and the practice of the apostolical and primitive kirk. And that famous assembly 1638, which abolished Prelacy and restored Presbytery, did explain the national covenant as binding us to maintain the 2nd book of discipline, December 8th. Likewise the assembly did, within ten days after, expressly renew their declaration for the people's rights, by their act December 18th, viz. *That no person be intruded in any office of the kirk contrary to the will of the congregation to which they are appointed.*—And that the Presbyterians of that period were of the same mind, appears from the 8th act of parliament 1640, by which they restored to presbyteries the patronages of these parishes which the bishops had possessed, but with this *salvo* of the interest of the parishes, *That they be settled upon the suit and calling of the congregations*, according to the acts and practice of this church.—And from the assembly 1642 their act, August 3^d, for making lists of probationers for patrons to chuse upon; they appointed, that *Presbyteries, with the consent of the most or best part of the congregation concerned, shall make up the list of six willing to accept.*—And by the directory for the ordination of ministers, agreed upon by the assembly at Westminster, and approved by the general assembly 1645, the candidate is appointed to preach three several days, and to converse with the people among whom he is to serve, for the end that they may have *trial of his gifts for their edification*; and afterwards they were to signify their consent to the Presbytery as they found cause. From which it is evident, that church judicatories then allowed the people to judge of the suitableness of the candidate's gifts for their edification, and held their consent necessary to his ordination.—And that the assembly 1649 were of the same mind, is plain from their swearing to the 2nd book of discipline, which declares so strongly for the consent of congregations in settlements, which surely they would be careful not to contradict by their act. They indeed lodged the election in the hands of the session; but at the same time appointed them to use all possible tenderness for obtaining harmony in the congregation, and to proceed to a new election in case the major part of the congregation dissented from their choice, if their dissent was not grounded on causeless prejudices. Now these elders, who were the electors being the representatives of the people, and the most eminent in the parish for piety and knowledge, would doubtless previously consult the inclinations of the better sort, particularly the communicants, who are properly the members of the congregation; and, if they found that the most knowing and religious part of the congregation was for the settlement, they might reckon that the causeless prejudices of others, not complete members of the congregation, were to be less regarded. We are firmly persuaded the church in that period were far from reckoning it a causeless prejudice against a man, if the most religious or knowing part of a congregation declared their dissent from the session's choice, because they found the preacher's gifts unsuitable for their edification; no, in that case, the session would have been appointed to make a new election. The people then were not confined to objections only against the life and doctrine of the candidate, but allowed to dissent

127

128

from and object against the election itself, and give what reasons or grounds for it they thought proper; and, if the session could not satisfy them after all pains taken, they proceeded to a new election. All this appears from a known pamphlet, printed *anno* 1733, intituled, *Account of the Method of electing a minister to the parish of Strathmiglo, in two instances in the years 1654 and 1655, in a letter to the minister there.*—If it be asked, What is then to >be meant by causeless prejudices mentioned in the act 1649? *Ans.* Any groundless or trifling objection against a man, because of his mean extract, low stature, bodily infirmity or blemish; or because of some groundless report, or the strictness of his walk, zeal for his principles, or the like: in which groundless prejudice the assembly might judge that ignorant and unreasonable people were not to be too much indulged; though at the same time they enjoin all possible tenderness in dealing with parishes to bring them to harmony, even then when a lesser part of the congregation dissent from the election without relevant objections.

129

But, *lastly*, Seeing this objection from act 1649 is commonly brought to countenance the intruding of men who force themselves in upon reclaiming parishes, by accepting and holding fast by presentations; we take this occasion freely to own, that a congregation's offence against a man for evident tokens of *earthly mindedness, greed of filthy lucre, and unconcernedness for the success of the gospel, is not a causeless prejudice*; as for instance, when there is a gospel door open for preachers to get access to parishes, for a man to despise that door, and chuse rather to enter by the door of a presentation and violence, and thereby endeavour to thrust himself in upon a congregation against their will, secure a title to their stipend so as no man else can have it, keep fast his hold against all persuasions and intreaties, keep the people long without gospel ordinances, bind the heavy yoke of patronage upon their neck, and hinder them from getting a minister whom they love and desire; now, when a man acts so directly against the interest of the gospel, the advantage of precious souls, and his own professed principles and engagements; and when a congregation dissents from his settlement upon these grounds; we cannot say their dissent is grounded upon causeless prejudices: nay, they are so well grounded, that the day hath been, when church judicatories would have stopt their mouths who would be guilty of such things.

Object. “Though it be wrong for preachers to take such methods, yet judicatories are under necessity by the law to settle them, or keep parishes vacant.”—*Ans.* 1^{mo}, Seeing intrusions into churches are contrary to Scripture, reason, and our professed principles, no laws or commands of men can oblige us to be accessory to them: for, seeing Christ commands us to do all for the edification of his flock, we must never act for its destruction, as intrusions manifestly are. Whenever human laws do clash with the Divine, it is indisputably *better to obey God than man.*

130

2^{do}, There is no law yet in being, that obligeth us to intrude men into churches: for though there be an act past in 1712 for restoring patronages, yet it doth expressly reserve to the Presbytery and church judicatories the power of judging of the Presentee's qualifica-

tions and fitness for the charge to which he is presented. Now, the power of judging of a man's qualifications must not be restricted to these which render him fit for the ministry in general, but must be extended to qualifications necessary to make him fit for being minister of the parish to which he is presented; because a man may be fit and qualified for one charge, that is not so for another. Now, if a Presbytery do find that a Presentee is incapable of answering the design of a gospel-minister to a parish, and is in no condition to instruct or edify their souls, by reason of his offending them, or their incurable aversion to hear him, or submit to his ministry; they may safely judge that such a man is not qualified nor fit to be settled in that parish, and therefore may set him aside. And if in case of an appeal, the assembly affirm the presbytery's sentence, the law is most express and clear, that the cause must *take end* as the assembly doth discern, according to act 7. parl. 1567, which act is confirmed by act 1. parl. 1581; and this act is again ratified by act 1. parl. 1592, which act is ratified by act 5. parl. 1690, and stands still in force, being not only ratified by the union, but also confirmed by queen Anne's law in 1712 for establishing patronages. And as the general assemblies of this church have been always before 1612 in Possession of the foresaid power, so well secured to them by law; so also, since that time their sentences concerning all presentations have been submitted to and held as final. From which it is evident, that judicatories are under no force by law to make intrusions or violent settlements. Why then should church-men, who ought to be guardians of the church's liberties, go about to destroy them by violent proceedings? Is it not soon enough for church courts to take such destructive courses, when the parliament makes new laws obliging them to it?

131

But, to return to the state of the church *anno* 1732: this was a very critical time to her, and most afflicting to many of her best friends, by reason of the stretching of church authority; the intrusions made upon parishes; the disregarding of remonstrances and petitions of a godly remnant both of ministers upon many parishes: and the refusing to record ministers' dissents with their reasons against such deeds. These proceedings were grieving to the hearts of honest ministers, and provoked many to go to pulpits and testify against them, particularly at the opening of synods, and other occasions; and severals of them printed their sermons, as a testimony against these prevailing evils. Though this was very offensive to many of our leaders, and to the court chaplains (whose number was then increased) yet none was so much noticed as the reverend Mr. Ebenezer Erskine minister of Stirling, whose turn was to preach at the opening of the synod at Perth in October 1732. The synod judged him censurable, and appointed him to be rebuked for his sermon, because in it he had impugned the acts and proceedings of the assembly, and had used some strong expressions against the judicatories and ministers of this church, which they reckoned indecent. Upon which Mr. Erskine appealed to the assembly 1733, who affirmed the synod's sentence, and rebuked him at their bar. Whereupon Mr. Erskine, with three other ministers, gave in a paper protesting against the assembly's sentence, *viz.* Mr. Wilson at Perth, Mr. Moncrieff at

132

Abernethy, and Mr. Fisher at Kinclaven; and they all protested for liberty to testify against the act of assembly 1732, or the like defections. This protestation the assembly 1733 could not bear with.

As it was very unwise in the synod to proceed against Mr. Erskine for his sermon in such a judicial manner, so it was in the assembly to resent the protestation as they did. In former times such protestations were not reckoned so criminal as now. Mr. Hunter minister protested against the assembly at Edinburgh 1586, for relaxing Mr. Patrick Adamson from the sentence of excommunication without signs of repentance; and Mr. Andrew Melvill and Mr. Thomas Buchanan adhered to his protest, Mr. John Davidson minister at Prestonpans protested against the assembly at Dundee 1598, for allowing ministers to vote in parliament in name of the kirk, where the king was present. Mr. James Melvill protested against the assembly their meeting at Holy rood house 1602, where the king was present. Mr. David Calderwood protested against assembly 1649, for enacting the directory for election of ministers. Yet none of all these were censured for their protestations: neither do the house of peers censure these who protest against their proceedings. Likewise, the Twelve brethren, who were rebuked by assembly 1720 for impugning the act of assembly 1720 against the *Marrow*, offered their protestations against the censure; as did Mr Gabriel Wilson against the admonition of assembly 1723: yet none of these were censured for their protestations. And doubtless it had been greatly for the interest and peace of the church, that assembly 1733 had followed the example of their wise predecessors. But now their authority must be screwed up higher than at former times: wherefore the assembly, without hearing the four protesting ministers any further before them, did summarily proceed to appoint their commission in August thereafter to suspend them, if they did not retract their protestation, and show their sorrow for the same; and to proceed to a higher censure, if they disobeyed the said sentence.

Accordingly the commission in August did suspend all the four brethren for adhering to their foresaid protestation. And, upon their acting contrary to the suspension, the commission in November determined to proceed presently to a higher censure against them, and would not delay it until March, though the assembly's act allowed it. This decision was carried only by Mr. Goudie the moderator his casting vote.—And it is to be observed, the commission went on in this forward and hasty procedure against the four brethren, notwithstanding of the earnest applications and intercessions of many synods presbyteries, kirk sessions, magistrates and others through Scotland in their behalf, pleading that the commission might delay them, spare them, or deal tenderly with them. The sentence which the commission came to against the four protesting ministers was, to *loose their relation from their respective parishes, and declare them no longer ministers of this church, and prohibit all ministers of this church to employ them*. And they declared their charges vacant from the date of this sentence.

133

134

As the judicatories at this time seemed to act with much heat and severity, in order to support or screw up their authority; so we must own that the four brethren seemed to shew no little humour and stiffness in opposing their authority, and despising their sentences: for they would give no ear to their friends, who dealt with them to show some subjection to the judicatories as to their fathers and superiors; and though they were just now abusing their church power, and unwarrantably provoking their children, yet some regard is to be shewn to their authority, even when so doing, as we to our natural parents, though correcting us in an arbitrary way; according to [Heb. xii. 6](#).—As to Mr. Erskine, though he was contending for the truth, many of his friends wished that he had not used such asperity and tartness of expression about the ministers and judicatories of the church as he did; and many of the leading men in judicatories said, This was the only thing they quarreled in his sermon: but Mr. Erskine would make no acknowledgment or submission of any sort, though even Mr. Wilson and Mr. Moncrieff said in their reasons of dissent, that they do not *pretend to justify his modes of expression* in that sermon; and they grant that in several cases it is most proper to use soft and modest expressions in maintaining of truth.—We do not see that it would have been any loss to the truth the four brethren appeared for, that they had all shewed more respect to the supreme authority of the church in their conduct than they did; particularly, though they had forbore to protest, as they did in express words, against the sentence of the assembly as Unjust, and against and censure they should inflict on them as null and void of itself; and if, upon their being suspended, any minister or probationer should preach in their parishes, the same should be held as intrusion upon their charges. And as they protested, so they submitted not to the sentence for one day; though many worthy ministers have formerly submitted to unjust sentences of this sort, to shew their regard to the authority of lawful judicatories of a church, which they owned as a true church: and this is approved by the most orthodox and judicious divines of the Presbyterian persuasion. Again, the brethren had the more encouragement to have submitted for a time, that they had reason to expect the next assembly would take off the sentences, consider their complaints, and do them all manner of justice; and this they might have looked for, from the interposition of so many synods and presbyteries with the commission of their favours.—And though offended at them for their contemning the authority of the church, yet there was a great plurality in the assembly 1734 for restoring them to their charges and the communion of the church; and neither that nor any subsequent assembly did ever approve the commission who past the hard sentences against them.

When the sentence of the commission in November 1733, loosing the relation of the four brethren from their charges was past; many protested against it, as did the four brethren themselves, who also appealed to the first free, faithful and reforming general assembly of the church of Scotland. Had they sisted [stayed the proceedings] here, they had done well! but they went a great deal further, by making secession from the judicatories of this church,

135

136

and in a short time after constituting themselves into a distinct judicatory for licensing preachers, and ordaining ministers, wherever they should find encouragement. At the same time they protested they would still hold communion with all who were true Presbyterians, and groaned under, and wrestled against, the evils they had been complaining of. This was then their declared resolution, though, alas! they soon departed from it. At first they seemed to be determined to continue in ministerial communion with many worthy ministers they had been formerly intimate with, though these had not freedom to secede as they had done, nor go all their lengths: and Mr. Erskine, in his answers to the synod, owned that there was *still a body of faithful ministers in the church of Scotland, with whom he did not reckon himself worthy to be compared.* Which body had the truths contended for heart, together with the peace of the church, as well the four brethren. And, seeing the case was such, the brethren ought in justice to have communicated counsels with that *faithful body of ministers*, who were willing to meet with them at the ensuing assembly, before they had taken two such strong steps as their *secession* and *constitution*: which uncommon steps, they might easily see, tended greatly to affect that whole body, yea, even to divide and rend them asunder, together with the people who should adhere to them respectively, in case that faithful body should not have light to go into all the measures of the four brethren. Whatever thoughts the brethren might have about the union of the church in general, it might have been expected they would have shewed something of concern for the union of that faithful body of ministers, for whom they did then profess a great regard.—Moreover, since they had appealed for redress to the first faithful general assembly they should have delayed any such extraordinary steps until the meeting of the next assembly then approaching, and so have kept the matter entire until the whole case was laid before them; which the brethren themselves should have been ready to do. For, considering how sensibly touched the whole church was with their case, and what preparations were making for the approaching assembly, the brethren could not be sure but it might prove the reforming assembly they had appealed unto. O what dreadful calamities to the church might have been prevented, had the four brethren continued praying, and deliberating upon the foresaid two steps until the meeting of the assembly in May 1734; and not have so precipitantly seceded from the national church, and constituted themselves into an *Anti presbytery*, by which means, alas! they became too much engaged in honour to persist in their separation, whatever steps the assembly should take to redress their grievances; and we know not if there was an assembly since the revolution, more willing to do it than the assembly 1734, had the brethren applied to them for it, as they were urged by many to do.

The whole church had been so much alarmed by the arbitrary proceedings of former years, and the present threatened confusions, that there came up to the assembly 1734 from all parts, and even the remotest, many pious and experienced ministers, with sincere intentions to have matters settled upon a better footing if possible. And, upon trial, the plurality

137

138

of the assembly was found to be upon their side, to the great joy of the friends of peace and truth. Now, it would have exceedingly strengthened their hands in their good designs to redress grievances and advance reformation, if the four brethren had tabled their complaints before them, and represented what they would have the assembly to do for to satisfy them; but this they declined to do, though they were all in the town at the time. But notwithstanding of this discouragement from the brethren, and the mighty opposition of *great men*, ruling elders, who had a strong party in the house to support them; the assembly, in the short time they had, did all that was in their power to satisfy the friends of reformation, and to put a stop to violent settlements and the prevailing evils of the time; and they were zealously inclined to have done much more, if their time and the situation of their affairs could have allowed. Particularly, they renewed and strengthened the old acts of assembly, which were made to be barriers and fences of our constitutions against innovations such as these made by ass. 1639, ass. 1697, ass. 1700, and ass. 1705. And they rescinded the 7th act of ass. 1730, which hindered members to testify against wrong deeds of judicatories, by recording their reasons of dissent; because the said act was not made according to the foresaid rules and barrier-acts. And, upon the same account, they repealed the 8th act of ass. 1732, anent [regarding] the method of planting vancant churches; and because it gave too much countenance to violent settlements, and too much power to disaffected heritors, and was unfavourable to the liberties of the people. They reversed the settlement of a minister made by the commission, at Auchtermuchty, against the will of the congregation, and of the Presbytery of the bounds; and by that decision they declared the commission's sentences reversible. Also they brought the commission under several new regulations, and discharged them to execute any settlements of churches when the presbytery or synod of the bounds declined to do it. They empowered their commission to address the king and parliament for relief from patronages; which they did, though in vain. Also they empowered the synod of Perth and Stirling to restore the four ejected brethren to their charges and the communion of this church; Which they did very soon after the assembly, without requiring any acknowledgments from them. And, to facilitate their return, the assembly sincerely designed in act for removing their apprehensions, that, by the late sentences past against them, they were laid under greater restraints than before as to their ministerial freedom in testifying against acts and deeds of the church: wherefore, for the satisfaction of the four brethren, and all others, the assembly made an act, declaring, *That due and regular ministerial freedom is still left entire to all ministers*. They also appointed a committee to draw up an overture for an act to give directions as to the right preaching of the gospel, and to restrain the legal preaching and moral harangues of many not so agreeable thereto. This had been several times attempted in former years, but still dropt, till now that the assembly formed and referred the overture



to their commission to ripen it They also referred it to their commission to appoint a national fast, which had been long neglected, that all ranks might mourn for the prevailing evils and defections of the church and land; which they did immediately after the rising of the assembly. This ass. 1734 was a singularly faithful and reforming assembly, who did very much in a short time, against great opposition, to rectify what was wrong, and put matters upon a better footing.—They gave remarkable checks to violent settlements, and relief to several parishes oppressed by them; for at this assembly methods were concerted to get sealing ordinances to these persons who submitted not to them, from other ministers they chused to apply to. As this assembly turned out one minister violently settled, so they were ready to have cast out others, if complaints had been regularly tabled before them. Their time of sitting did not allow them to consider and provide remedies for every thing amiss, and particularly for that wrong act of ass. 1733, concerning the presbytery of Dunfermline and their behaviour toward the minister that was forcibly settled at Kinross, wherein the said assembly threaten high censures against these who refuse to own him as minister of Kinross, or who admit of any of that parish to sealing ordinances without his consent. This was plainly oppression, and a very high strain of church authority, to settle ministers contrary to the rules of the word and of the church, and then oblige presbyteries to receive them, and people to submit to them. But the assembly 1734 gave a seasonable check to such oppressive courses; and for the people of Kinross, it was afterward referred to the synod of Fife to do what was proper for their relief, who thereupon allowed them the benefit of church-privileges wherever they should think fit to ask them. And letters were written to presbyteries in other places, to indulge people in such circumstances in the like manner.

Thus did the faithful body of ministers (of whom Mr. Ebenezer Erskine did speak) use their utmost strenuous endeavours in the assembly 1734, and in the meetings of their commission, and in after assemblies, to get the door opened, stumbling blocks removed, and the way paved for the return of their four brethren to communion with them as before. Yea, they got ministers sent up year after year to London, to solicit the king and parliament for relief from patronages. And when honest ministers were in this manner travelling, sweating, labouring and struggling, even above their strength, to get things that were wrong, reformed and rectified; it was extremely afflicting to them, that the four brethren, with whom they had formerly taken sweet counsel, would by no means return to their assistance, though invited and pressed to it; but, instead of that, would be still disparaging their actings, and misconstruing their most sincere intentions. Notwithstanding of this discouragement, they continued struggling, and doing all they were able, to promote reformation in the assembly 1735 and assembly 1736: still hoping the four brethren would bethink themselves, and cease from their dividing course. And though that honest body of ministers could not get all done which they designed, yet they got several good things carried; such as an act for better regulating the commission, and limiting their powers; an act against intrusion of

140

141

ministers, and declaring it to be the principle of this church, *That none should be intruded into any parish contrary to the will of the congregation.* How happy were it if this act were observed, and the foresaid principle maintained and adhered unto! Some things also were done at this time for the relief of those parishes that had been intruded upon; and an excellent overture was agreed upon, with respect to evangelical preaching, which was transmitted to presbyteries, and their consent to it was obtained; so that after long dependence it was got enacted by assembly 1736, May 21st, act 7th, in which

142

they recommend to ministers and preachers to warn their hearers against any thing that tends to *Atheism, Deism, Arianism, Socinianism, Arminianism, Bourignianism, Popery, Superstition, Antinomianism*, or any other errors: And that they insist in their sermons upon our sinful and lost estate by nature, the necessity of

supernatural grace, and of faith in the righteousness of Christ, without which the best works cannot please God: And that they make it the great scope of their sermons to lead sinners from a covenant of works to a covenant of grace for life and salvation and from sin and self to precious Christ our Surety and Saviour.—And as they are to

press the practice of all moral duties, so also to shew the nature and excellency of gospel holiness, without which no man can see the Lord: and, in order to attain it, they are to shew men the corruption and depravity of their nature by the fall, their natural impotence for, and aversion to, what is spiritually good; and to lead them to the true and only source of all grace and holiness, *viz. Union with Christ* by the holy Spirit's working faith in us, and renewing us more and more after the image of God: and that they must count all their best performances and attainments but loss and dung in point of justification before God, and to make it their it great desire only to be found in Christ their Surety, clothed in his righteousness, which is infinitely perfect and law-biding; and to make gospel

143

subjects their main theme and study, &c. And they recommend to all professors of divinity, to use their best endeavours to have the students under their care well acquainted with the true method of preaching the gospel as directed by this act; and appoint presbyteries at their privy censures to enquire concerning the observation of this act.

—This is a short abstract of that excellennt act, which godly ministers had been intent about for many years past, in order to give some check to the legal way of preaching, and the loose moral discourses of several preachers, to the neglect of the true preaching of *Christ and him crucified*, introduced by many of the younger clergy.—However long this act had been

delayed, yet it was most seasonably past in 1736, when a little before there had been a great noise of Deism spreading among the students of divinity at Edinburgh; and one of them, Mr. William Nimmo, had delivered a discourse in the divinity-hall, March 1735, to the prejudice of the Christian revelation; for which he was extruded by the masters, and excommunicated by the presbytery of Edinburgh.

But seeing there is no great reason to fear that the foresaid excellent act concerning preaching is but little noticed and observed by many, and that there is in this church and land very much of a *legal* or *moral* way of preaching, exclusive of Christ and to the neglect of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity; and seeing the church of God, and the souls of men, to be in the greatest danger from this airth: we judge it our duty to give plain and open testimony against this sort of preaching, and to declare for the true gospel way of preaching Christ and him crucified, which ought to be the great study of every gospel minister, as it was of the apostle Paul, [1 Cor. ii. 2](#).

144

We grant that morality, or obedience to the moral law, is an excellent thing, and absolutely necessary to be studied by every true Christian, seeing God requires it, and without morality and *true holiness no man can see the Lord*; but then it must be preached, otherwise by a *gospel-minister* than by a *moral philosopher*: Why? It must flow from gospel-principles, be performed in a gospel-manner, and be pressed mainly, by gospel motives and arguments. But it must be sad indeed, when there is almost as little of Christ or an evangelical strain to be found in the sermons of Christian preachers, as in the discourses of Seneca, Plato, Socrates, or other Heathen moralists.

This Christless way of preaching morality is an inlet to Deism and Infidelity: for, when men are accustomed to hear moral sermons with little of Christ in them, they are apt to think there is but little difference between them and the discourses of moral Heathens; and therefore they may be good enough, and win to heaven by their morality, without Christ or his righteousness.—O how natural it is for men to go about to establish a righteousness of their own, with a view to be saved by it, and to neglect that new righteousness which the eternal wisdom of God hath established as alone sufficient for it! And therefore they need often to be called, after their utmost lengths in moral attainments (which are but poor and wretched at best) to renounce them all, and go to the imputed righteousness of Christ, *to wit*, the obedience of his holy life, and his sufferings unto death, for justification and salvation.

Morality is a desirable thing, when kept in its due place; but, when allowed to possess the place of Christ's righteousness, imputed to us, it is a soul-ruining thing, and the greatest hindrance of the soul's coming to Christ, and of its entering into heaven. God will have us come entirely off from the old bottom of a covenant of works, and from resting upon any thing done by us, or wrought in us for acceptance with God; and look only for attaining to it by believing on him whom God hath sent, and resting upon his righteousness only: nothing of ours must be added to it, otherwise we mar it. Though faith be required of us as

145

the mean or instrument whereby we receive and apply Christ and his righteousness, and also true repentance and sincere obedience are required as evidences and fruits of our faith; yet neither faith, repentance or obedience, nor all of them together, are any part of our justifying righteousness in the sight of God, nor are they the foundation of our acceptance, or of our title to eternal life: Christ must be all our righteousness, or nothing. So that none must think to be saved partly by his own obedience, and partly by Christ's in order to make up his defects; but we must be saved wholly by the complete morality and obedience of Christ imputed to us. Our proud natures must be humbled and changed, and must be brought to submit to accept of an entire new clothing, instead of our own righteousness; for the glory of God will not allow the least place to this in our justification, he will have all boasting excluded for ever.

Quest. "Seeing morality and the duties of the moral law are to be preached and pressed, in what manner then must we do it?"

Ans. If we would do it in an evangelical strain, and with success, we must *1mo*, Press duty as the natural and necessary fruit of faith in a crucified Christ, and love to him, who suffered thus to satisfy for our sins, and to purchase to us the image of God and holiness which we had lost: and therefore let us represent the love and sufferings of Christ in a lively manner to our people, in order to leave them to abhor all known sin, and to love Christ that thus loved us, and live to him that died for us; and pray earnestly for the Spirit of regeneration and sanctification which he had purchased for us: and this is the most effectual way to promote morality and holiness among them.—*2do* We must set before the eyes of our people the attractive charms and beauties of a *crucified Jesus* in all his offices, that they may get a view of his glory, as the *Chief among ten thousand*, and *altogether lovely*, and as the *Pearl of great Price*; that so the Desire of all nations may come to be the desire of their hearts, and they may *count all things but dung and loss* in comparison of a crucified Christ. And as we must recommend to them to close with him as their Priest and sacrifice to atone for their sins, so also to subject themselves to him as the lovely *King of Zion*, whose government is easy, his service pleasant, his commandments not grievous, and his rewards to obedient subjects unspeakably great. The whole precepts of the moral law are the laws of this King; but, to all his willing subjects, he makes his *yoke easy and his burden light*.—*3tio*, We must enforce duties from a principle of love, and of gratitude to Christ for his love. It should not be so much authority, as grateful love to Christ, that should *constrain us to live* to his glory, to study holiness and constant obedience to his commands; and this we should do, as we should approve ourselves to be Christ's disciples, and as we would enjoy communion with him here, and be accepted of him at his appearance to judgment.—*4tio*, We should direct our people to perform duties by the grace and strength of the Lord Jesus Christ our Head, Surety and Treasurer. We must be united to him by faith, as our *Head of influences*, and derive all our life and strength for duty out of his fulness. Alas! this direction is little minded

146

147

by many of our moral preachers, whose discourses generally seem to proceed upon the supposition of the strength of our natural powers, as if we had no natural impotence or enmity to what is good, nor been at all disabled by the fall.—*5tio*, We must persuade men to leave sin, and perform duty, by the terrors of Christ's coming to judgment, and the wrath of the Lamb, that will then be intolerable to all who slight his grace and disobey his laws.—*3tio*, When we press duties, let us put our hearers in mind, that all our duties and good works have no worth or merit before God; they are not our justifying righteousness, nor can they come in any way to share in this matter with Christ's righteousness; they are only accepted of God through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ: and that, after we have done all, we must say, we are but unprofitable servants; and our main desire is to be found in Christ, not having our own righteousness, which at best is but filthy rags, and can not be any skreen or covert to us before God.—*7mo*, Let us instruct our people, that through Christianity doth enforce morality by the strongest arguments, yet unregenerate morality will never please God. Till the heart be renewed, and the soul grafted in Christ the true Vine, the fruit will be always sour and unpleasant to God. A moral man, though he profess himself a Christian, is not really so, unless he be united to Christ, and look for daily influences from him to perform duties, and to the righteousness of Christ to cover him and all his duties; and be still saying, *Though I could perform never so many duties, I should be lost and undone forever, if it were not for the righteousness and mediation of Christ my Surety and Saviour, in whom is all my hope and trust.*— For all true holiness and acceptable morality is the proper result of the soul's union with the holy Jesus our living Head, who is the first and immediate receptacle of the holy Spirit and of all sanctifying influences for the use of his members; and out of Christ's fulness we must by faith receive them for our sanctification.

Let us make every subject we insist on point to Christ. If we discourse upon the attributes of God, let us consider them as they shine forth in Christ and his glorious undertaking;—If upon the blessings and promises of the gospel, let us consider them as the purchase of Christ's blood;—If upon the providence of God, let us mind that the administration is put in Christ's hands, and he is Head over all things for the church; If we exhort to repentance and mourning for sin, let us direct our hearers to look to him they have pierced;—If to prayer, let us direct them to look to Christ, by whom only they can have access and success in this duty.

O how happy were it both for us and our hearers, if we did thus reduce every thing to Christ, and make him the main subject of all our sermons. and if the scope of them all were to persuade sinners to come to Christ, and all that profess him to live by faith on him, and make daily use of him! To this glorious person did all the prophets of the Old Testament give witness, and much more should all the ministers of the New.

Now, this way of preaching is surely the most excellent and preferable to any other way; Why? *1mo*, The preaching of *Christ crucified* is the mean which God hath appointed for

gathering in elect sinners to himself, and to which he promises his blessing. Hence it is that Paul saith, God makes the preaching of the cross and of Christ crucified the Power of God to them that are called: and though natural men count this way of preaching *foolishness*, yet it pleases God by this way *to save them that believe*, [1 Cor. i. 18, 21, 24](#).

2do, It was by this way of preaching among the Corinthians that the apostle Paul had such wonderful success in bringing them to Christ, [1 Cor. ii. 2](#). it was when Peter preached a crucified Jesus and the peculiar doctrines of Christianity to the people, that the Holy Ghost fell on them, and converted multitudes of them; as Luke observes several times, [Acts ii. 36, 37](#). [Acts x. 40, 44](#). It was not when he was preaching morality that the Spirit descended and gave success to the word.—Also he observes, when these preachers from Cyprus *preached the Lord Jesus* to the people of Antioch, *the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed, and turned to the Lord*, [Acts xi. 20, 21](#). 3tio, It is the preaching of a *crucified Christ*, that God in his wisdom hath pitched upon as the way to reform men from their vices, and to bring in virtue, godliness and good order into nations, cities and congregations. The Heathen philosophers and wise men had, for some thousands of years, tried all means which the powers of nature or reason could afford, to bring men to God and virtue, but in vain; for they remained still ignorant of God, and run further away from him into all abominable impieties.—Likewise in many places there are several masters of reason and eloquence, who excel in a sort of rational and moral way of preaching, exclusive of Christ; but what success have they in it for converting souls? Alas! their people still sink in vice and corruption; all their fine reasonings cannot change the perverse will of one sinner. They may, perhaps, entertain two or three, or a few of their audience, who have a taste of the beauties of fine reasoning; but the body of the congregation remain untouched and asleep, so that all they hear is lost to them. Surely the value and usefulness of things are to be reckoned from their capacity and fitness to answer the end they are designed for: now the end of preaching is to win souls to Christ, so that these sermons are the most excellent that serve this design most; and these, we see, are the sermons which are fullest of Christ.—Alas! Christless moral sermons bring few off from their vices to the practice of morality, and far fewer into *Christ*. Such a way of preaching is a longsome unsuccessful method to reclaim and reform the vicious: whereas the short and effectual way to reform sinners, and make them moral, is to preach Christ to them; if you bring them to Jesus, you turn them from all their sins, and make them moral at once, yea, inwardly holy, which is more. O then, let us preach Christ above all things!

4to, If we look through the world, we will find it is only these ministers who preach Christ most, who have most success: and that the life and spirit of true religion rises or falls among a people, according as a crucified Redeemer is faithfully preached among them or not. And these acquainted with church-history observe, that when God is about to leave a people, and his glory to depart from his house, he usually gives them up to a lifeless and

150

151

formal ministry, who neglect the preaching of Christ and the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, such as *free justification by the righteousness of Christ*, and *inward regeneration by the Spirit of Christ*; and do not inform their people that it is from a crucified Jesus the virtue must come for breaking the power of sin in the soul, and subduing it to God. No wonder our flocks look poor and lean, when we take no care to lead them into these green pastures of evangelical truths, but set before them the dry insipid stuff of a Heathenish morality, which can never feed them nor keep them in good liking! How can we expect assistance from Jesus Christ in our work, or the influences of his Spirit in preaching (upon which all our success depends) when we take no more notice of Christ in our sermons than the moral philosophers among the Heathens? Wo will be to this national church, if such a way of preaching shall prevail in it notwithstanding of the foresaid act of assembly, and a sound *Confession of Faith*, which all ministers subscribe to. God forbid that the church of Scotland become ever like the church of England in this respect, who subscribe to sound articles of doctrine, and never mind them more afterwards.

Likewise, as by the word of God ministers are bound to separate between the precious and the vile, the clean and the unclean, the sincere and the formalist; so, by the foresaid act. 1736 concerning preaching, all ministers are appointed, in application of their sermons, to endeavour *rightly to divide the word of truth*, speaking distinctly to the various cases of their hearers, whether converted or unconverted, &c. Alas! it is to be feared, the making of this difference is too much neglected by many, both in dispensing the word and sacraments.

These and several other good things did the assembly 1736, but it is to be regretted they were not steady and uniform in their proceedings; for, while they discouraged and stopt some intrusions, they encouraged others: and they gave no small occasion of offence by their management in the affair of Professor Campbell at St. Andrews, who had vented several dangerous errors in his writings, such as his *Oratio Academica*, his *Enquiry into the original of moral Virtue*, his *Discourse concerning enthusiasm*, &c. wherein he asserts,

That men by their natural powers, without revelation, cannot find out the being of a God; That the law of nature is sufficient to guide rational minds to happiness; That self-love, interest, or pleasure, is the sole principle and motive of all virtuous and religious actions; That Christ's disciples had no notion of his Divinity before his resurrection, and before that they expected nothing from him but a worldly kingdom; and, during the interval between his death and resurrection, they looked on him as an impostor."

Likewise, while speaking against Enthusiasts, he utters several things very disparaging and reproachful to the work of the holy Spirit upon the souls of the people of God. These errors were brought before the assembly 1735, who referred them to their commission; and they

appointed a committee to consider them, and prepare their report to the next assembly. Mr. Campbell laboured to give in sound and orthodox explications of these his positions, which the committee brought before the assembly 1736, with their remark and censures upon them, and the recommendations they judged fit to be given him. The assembly, upon hearing Mr. Campbell at great length, were of opinion that the committee's examining and stating the matter as they had done, was sufficient to caution against the errors charged upon Mr. Campbell, without giving any judgment or formal sentence upon the committee's report; only they recommended to him not to use doubtful expressions or propositions, which may lead his hearers or readers into error. This issue of the process many in the assembly and out of it were highly dissatisfied with, judging that Mr. Campbell did justly deserve a sharp rebuke for the many incautious and unsound expressions he hath in his writings, however orthodox his explications might be: and with these; we do heartily join. Though the assembly gave no judgment upon Mr. Campbell's positions or explications, yet several would charge the assembly with adopting one of his errors; because, when he explained his positions concerning *Self love* he declared he meant no more but *that our delight in the honour and glory of God was the chief motive of all virtuous and religious actions*. Now (say they) this Delight is the same with *Self-love* or the desire of our own happiness, which is the error charged on him; yet the assembly dismissed him without quarrelling it. But this should be looked upon as a pure oversight in the assembly, through their not adverting to the import of the word DELIGHT, but taking *delight in the glory of God*, for the same with *regard to the glory of God*, because of their affinity. For when assembly 1737 was informed that several had taken offence, as if the assembly 1736 had adopted some of Mr. Campbell's offensive expressions on the head of *Self-love*, they vindicated this church from that charge, by making an act, declaring that they do stedfastly adhere to the doctrine expressed in our standards on that head, particularly in the answers to that question in our Shorter and Larger Catechisms, *What is the chief end of man?*

In the year 1735 there was an essay made by an unknown hand to alter our Shorter Catechism, which was printed at London under the title of the *Assembly's Shorter Catechism revised, and rendered fitter for general use*. The reviser casts it into such a mould, as to make it agree with Arian, Socinian, Popish, and Arminian schemes of doctrine. As soon as it was publicly known in Scotland, the commission took it under their consideration, as the synod of Lothian had done before them, and past an act condemning it, and gave warning about it to all the presbyteries in this church, that they might be on their guard against the spreading and infection thereof. And would to God that our assemblies had in like manner given plain and faithful warning to all the corners and members of this church against Professor Simson and Professor Campbell's errors, and others which have been vented and spread in this church, and *shewn* to them their inconsistency with the Word Of God, and

our Confession of Faith and Catechisms!—May God in his infinite mercy revive our zeal for all the truths therein contained, and against all sorts of error opposite thereto!

After all, it is to be regretted that the national church was not duly humbled by all these awful rebukes for her manifold defections and particularly for disregarding Christ's flock in settlements; neither did she amend her ways and doings, and turn to the Lord: wherefore we find the hand of the Lord stretched out against her still, and a new sharp trial carved out for her from an airth [probably "direction"] that none could have expected.—One Captain Porteous, that had been condemned to die for several murders, having obtained a reprieve by the interest of some great men, the mob rose up notwithstanding, and executed him at Edinburgh the 7th of September 1736. The king and parliament resented this affront so highly, that they framed a strange and extraordinary act for discovering the actors: and because some of the church's enemies suggested, without all ground, that the Scots clergy, at least a sett of them, encouraged the people in such mobbish actions, they appointed all the ministers of Scotland to read the said act in time of divine service in their churches every first sabbath in the month for a whole year, beginning in August 1737: and the penalty for the first neglect of reading it was, that *they shall be declared incapable of sitting or voting in any church judicatory*; and this was to be executed against them by the civil judges in Scotland. The most part of ministers in many synods and presbyteries, though they scrupled not to condemn the outrageous insult of the mob as murder, yet they had not freedom to read the said act, because they judged the penalty foresaid to be properly a church censure, seeing by it ministers would be divested of the power of church government and discipline, which is given them by the Lord Jesus Christ the Head of the church, and is essential to their office as preaching or dispensing the sacrament. Now, for the civil magistrate to assume the power of the keys, or of inflicting church censures, which Christ hath put in the hands of his own officers, they judged a manifest incroachment upon Christ's Headship over his church, and contrary to the word of God and the Confession of Faith they had subscribed, chap. 30, par. 1, 2. and chap. 23. 3. And for ministers to become the magistrate's heralds, to proclaim this law on the Lord's day, in such a solemn manner, would be an homologating [to approve or confirm officially] of this incroachment, and a consenting to this Erastian power of the magistrate. Likewise they judged, to approve or concur with a law so prejudicial to the doctrine and discipline of this church, as established by law civil and ecclesiastical, would be to give up with fundamental securities, and act contrary to the solemn engagements ministers come under to maintain the doctrine and discipline of this church, and do nothing prejudicial thereto.—Besides, they did not think it agreeable to the office of these, who were *ambassadors of the gospel of peace*, to become heralds or executors of this or any sanguinary law; especially when they apprehended there were several things in it inconsistent with justice and equity, besides the *Erastian Penalty* aforementioned. These and other arguments, set in a clear light in several pamphlets published at that time, determined us to join with

155

156

these who bore testimony against the reading of the foresaid act, and to run the hazard of all its penalties. And we wish the light of all the ministers of Scotland had been the same with ours in this matter, which would have prevented much division and stumbling that different practices have occasioned.

But yet we must do justice to these of a different light, so far as to own, that there were several pious and conscientious ministers who read this act, because of the quite different view they had of it from these who refused it; and seeing, by the tenor of their lives and actions, it appears they have acted uprightly and honestly in other matters, we are in charity bound to think they acted sincerely in this also. Their reasons for reading were; A sinful penalty in the act, should not hinder their reading those parts of the act which might be lawful; and they judged they were bound to read some parts of it, to warn their people of the danger of harboring or succoring the rioters.—And they did not look on the penalty scrupled at as any church censure, or Erastian incroachment upon Christ's Headship; and, as they judged, no more was meant by it, but that the non-readers should forfeit the magistrate's protection in sitting in church courts; and that the magistrate, without assuming the power of the keys, might, by his civil power as magistrate, exclude or render ministers incapable of sitting in church-courts, by confining or banishing them. And they sincerely declare, that, if they had thought their reading of that act had in the least wronged the Headship of the King of Zion, they would rather have suffered the loss of their stipends, or any thing else. Now, charity obligeth us to believe pious men to be ingenuous in such declarations.

But, alas! notwithstanding of all these shaking dispensations, the church was not brought to a right sense of her sins and defections; and therefore the Lord's controversy with her was not at an end: for we find the assembly 1738 continuing in former steps, and giving new offence to many in the church, by another decision in a process of error. The magistrates and town-council of Edinburgh having chosen Mr. William Wishart a minister at London to be Principal of their college, and having got a call to him also to be one of the ministers of the city, the presbytery of Edinburgh refused to concur with the said call, and charged him with venting several erroneous propositions in two of his printed sermons with respect to the power and office of the magistrate in religious matters, the liberty of Christian subjects, the subscribing of Confessions, the education of children, the influence of arguments taken from the awe of future rewards and punishments, his excessive charity to Heathens and others who reject the gospel offers and institutions, and the sinful and corrupt state of all men from their birth, &c. This affair being brought by appeals to the general assembly, and Mr. Wishart having made his explications, and given in a subscribed declaration of his adhering to the Confession of Faith, and the particular articles of it which his propositions seemed to oppose, and also of his disclaiming all errors whatsoever (whether charged upon him in the presbytery's articles or not) that are contrary to the Confession of Faith, or any article of it; the assembly thereupon assoilzied [absolved] Mr. Wishart from the

157

158

process against him, and also they sustained his call to, be one of the ministers of Edinburgh, and appointed the presbytery to admit him as such.

Here we cannot but testify against such soft proceedings, whether in the case of Professor Campell, Dr. Wishart, or others processed for error; seeing we judge it far from being sufficient to terminate a process for error, or to vindicate persons accused of it that they explain their words into a sound and orthodox sense, though perhaps contrary to the obvious meaning of them, according to the plain and ordinary acceptance of words; or that they profess their adherence to our Confession Of Faith, and its articles, which their tenets are thought to contradict. For a heretic, when in hazard of censure, may make a shift to put an orthodox sense upon his words, if that will save him, though it should be quite contrary to the common sense and meaning of them; and he may declare his owning the words of our Confession of Faith, and yet affix a sense and meaning to them directly opposite to the known sentiments and doctrine of this church: so that it is plain, such a loose superficial way of managing a process for error, is not an effectual way to suppress it. Wherefore we think it further necessary for that end, that these who are processed for venting error or unsound propositions, should particularly and directly renounce the erroneous tenets and principles charged upon them, upon account of their words, and the unsound sense which they naturally convey; and that they be at least rebuked for departing from the form of sound words, contained in the word of God, and our standards, which are framed agreeable thereunto. We see it is God's express command concerning such men, [Tit. I. 13](#). *Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith*. Sharp rebukes preserve soundness, but easy absolutions encourage error. No sooner is Dr. Wishart assoilzied, but he falls a recommending and prefacing books of bad character, such as Dr. Whitchcot's sermons, that savour of Socinianism, as the reverend Mr. Bisset of Aberdeen makes appear in a letter he hath lately published. Ah! how low must the case of this poor church be, when the head of the most frequented college in Scodand recommends such books *impune* [not yet punished] for college-students and preachers to form upon!

These and other proceedings of our assemblies, were very, gracious to many worthy ministers and others in this church; and the four succeeding brethren before mentioned, with other four, *viz.* Masters Nairn, R. Erskine, Mair, and Thomson, who afterwards joined them, took occasion from such actings to carry their secession and separation to very great heights, by licensing preachers, invading parishes, and preaching up separation every where; not sparing their best friends, nor these who dissented from the evils of the time, and took all regular methods to, testify against them; but charging the whole ministry with very black things. They also framed an *Act and Testimony* of many sheets, with very much of church authority in it, which they required all their followers to adhere to. Though we own there were many good things in it, yet there were also many mistakes in it, and misrepresentation of facts, very harsh and unsuitable expressions, and also bitter reflections against their

159

160

brethren, and even our worthy forefathers, &c. These things being laid before the assembly, they appointed the ministers of the presbyteries and synods where the said brethren reside to be at all pains by conference, and other gentle means of persuasion to reclaim them; and to report their diligence to the commission, whom they empowered, if they should see cause, to take all proper steps to sist [stay] the said brethren before the assembly 1739.—Accordingly these eight brethren were libelled and cited to the said assembly, who all compeared [appeared in court] before them, in the capacity of a constitute judicatory; and, instead of answering to their libel, they by their moderator read an act of their court, condemning the judicatories of the national church as not being lawful courts of Christ, and declining all their authority and jurisdiction over them.—Upon which they withdrew, and attended the assembly no more. Whereupon the assembly past an act concerning them, declaring, That for their declinature, [declining] contempt, and schismatical courses contrary to their vows, and for the many groundless and calumnious reflections which they have cast on the church and her judicatories, they deserve deposition: but that they resolved to forbear them another year, to give them further time to bethink themselves and return to their duty; and they appointed them to be cited to the next assembly 1740.

Being cited accordingly, and not comparing the ass. 1740 proceeded to depose the whole eight brethren. But there having been debates about wording the sentence, and different senses put on it, we must look to the words themselves, which are, *They depose them from the office of the holy ministry, prohibiting them to exercise the same within this church.* And we must say, we are sorry to see a sentence of this sort so ambiguous.—If these words, Within this church, be connected with the word Depose, as well as with the word Prohibit, they mean no more but that they depose them from being ministers of this church; and many who voted it say they meant no more: so that, in this sense, the sentence is only a loosing of their relation from the national church; which the brethren themselves had done in effect, by their secession from her, by their renouncing all her authority and jurisdiction, and refusing all communion with any of her ministers.—But, on the other hand, if the words, Within this Church, be not connected with the word Depose, then the assembly meant to depose them *simpliciter* from the office of the ministry itself: and in this sense many members understood the sentence; and therefore a good many voted against it, and dissented from it. For though they did not approve of their wild divisive practices, yet they had not the freedom to unminister them, seeing they looked upon them as pious orthodox Presbyterian ministers, who had been useful in the church, and might still be useful in preaching Christ to lost perishing sinners. And, if the sentence be taken up in this...[unlegible word] we join with those who testified against it; in regard we think the world cannot easily spare any of these ministers who are upright and zealous in preaching a crucified Jesus to fallen men, especially at a time when Deism and dry moral discourses are like to thrust out true Christianity.—Neither do we think it was time for the church to proceed to censure the brethren,

161

162

till once they had done all they could to remove the evils and redress the grievances which were the grounds of their separation, and thereby had made them inexcusable in their schism; which, alas! Is far from being done. And as for the brethren's licensing of preachers, which is one article of their libel, the assembly and commission might prevent that, if they pleased to observe our good rules, and particularly the 14th act of ass. 1736 against intrusions; seeing it is manifest, that, by every new intrusion and forced settlement which they make, they give encouragement to the brethren to erect a new tent, and license a new preacher; and, till such time as they shall cease from the one, they cannot well expect the brethren will cease from the other.—And, with respect to several other parts and articles of their libel, we think them too general, and no ways so particular, nor duly laid, as ought to have been in a process of this kind; and some of the most material things charged against the brethren are left out. But as we cannot justify the assembly in their conduct, so neither can we vindicate the brethren in theirs. And seeing, we proposed in this performance to give a fair and impartial testimony against the defections and evils of the time, whether upon one side or another, we shall briefly mention some of our seceding brethren's defections and strayings from the good old paths; which they have been led into, partly by their own precipitancy and misguided zeal, and partly by the headstrong humours of their followers: Such as,

163

1^{mo}, Their unprecedented secession which they have made from their mother-church, and the lamentable schism they have begun and carried on with so much heat and uncharitableness, when they were under no necessity of going into any sinful terms of communion, and when they were joined with a body of faithful ministers who witnessed against the evils complained of, is well as they.—Our histories assure us, that such a schismatical course is contrary to what was the approved judgment and practice of our reforming ancestors for above an hundred years after our reformation from Popery, though sometimes they had greater provocation to it than our seceding brethren had.

2^{do}, They both seceded, and constituted themselves into a presbytery for the exercise of discipline and government through the whole national church, without ever consulting with their brethren, and fathers in it, whom they then owned to be a numerous body of faithful ministers: though they could not but foresee that the said body of ministers, with their flocks, would be much affected, nay distressed, shaken, perplexed, and rent, by such singular and extraordinary steps as they were taking.

164

3^{tio}, Their irreverend and disrespectful carriage towards their mother church, to whom they had solemnly vowed submission; as appears in their *Declination*, wherein they disown all her authority and jurisdiction over them, and pronounce judicially a sentence of their newly erected presbytery against the general assembly, and all the other judicatories of the church, Finding and Declaring that they are not lawful courts of Christ; which sentence they presumed formally to intimate in face of the general assembly by their moderator, before many witnesses, May 17th 1739. They ought to have remembered, that the laws both of God

and man do highly resent children's beating, cursing, or maltreating their mother, even when she is somewhat severe and out of her duty to them; and that it is necessary that zeal should be attended with meekness, courteousness, and humbleness of mind. Surely such a declinature, and such a sentence as theirs, would seem to import no less than the unchurching the whole church, and unministering her whole ministry, faithful body and all, as if they were all given up to some dreadful apostacy or fundamental errors. Now, we are pretty sure there are few judicious orthodox divines in the world that will adventure to unchurch the church of Scotland, or declare her no church of Christ, for all the faults she hath. They have owned others as the churches of Christ, who have been as corrupt as she, if not more. Nay, the glorious Head of the church, the best judge, hath owned some no less corrupt, as *golden candlesticks*, walked in them, and held communion with them; such as the church of Corinth, some of the churches of Asia, Galatia, and other places. And is it thank-worthy in any of the members to outrun the Head, or to be more forward to unchurch his churches, or to unminister his ministers, than he himself inclines to be?

165

4to, We cannot justify the brethren in refusing to return to assist these whom they owned to be a body of faithful ministers, to promote a work of reformation; when by a surprising providence they had got the upper-hand in the assembly 1734, and were doing all they could to remove the evils they complained of, and had got the door opened for them, and the act 1732 repealed, which was the great occasion of their protesting and seceding; and were most willing to do every thing else in their power to satisfy them and all the friends of reformation. But after they had continued for two or three years to struggle even above their strength, and thereby had got many good things done, still hoping their brethren would return to their assistance; they were grievously discouraged when they saw them still bent upon their begun schism, so as to set at nought all they had been doing, and misconstrue their most honest designs; yea, they were at length so disheartened by their measures, that many of them gave over travelling, and attending the assemblies, who thereupon, alas! soon returned to their old bias. So that it is manifest the brethren's wilfulness in their dividing way, put a stop to a begun national reformation, which, if they had favoured and struck in with, might have been advanced very far through the blessing of God, and many dismal consequences of their schism prevented.

5 to, We must disapprove the brethren in seceding not only from the church, but also from their old Christian temper and disposition, and from that royal law of love and charity which they once preached up: this appears in their excluding from, the room they once had in their charity and communion, all their old friends and acquaintances, though never so sound and pious, or willing to spend or be spent for Christ and souls, if they have not light to secede and join with them. Whatever esteem of them they had before, they must now no longer employ them, hear, them, nor preach for them. Now, why should they treat the body of faithful ministers, they once took sweet counsel with, as if they were gross apostates, when

166

it is not our they continue the very same men they were before, when the brethren sat with them in judicatories? They still witness and contend for reformation principles, as well as they; they give testimony against licensing or ordaining corrupt men, and against all errors and intrusions; against countenancing patronages, and accepting presentations; against all incroachments made upon the rights of the church and Christian people, and upon the Headship of Christ over the church, against the preaching up a sort of Heathen morality, and the neglect of the true preaching of Christ and gospel holiness, &c.—Now, what must be the reason for the brethren's separating and departing from their old friends, as if they were become Papists or Mahometans? Is it a good reason, because they continue to witness against the evils of the time in the judicatories as they did before, and not in conjunction with the eight seceders? Why must it now become such a deadly sin for worthy men to go with Joseph and Nicodemus to backsliding judicatories to plead with their mother, to testify against corruptions, to do all they can to hold out English prelacy *and ceremonies*, and maintain the national establishment of presbytery, and a sound Confession of Faith, and to strive to do all the good in their power, while waiting for better times, when God will open the eyes of men to see the evil of their ways! Now, when honest men think these ends may be better answered by going to judicatories than by joining a few seceders, ought not their brethren to forbear them, and allow them the same place in their charity and communion they had before! *6tio*, We cannot approve of their marking so narrowly the failings, mistakes, and wrong steps of their sincere godly brethren, as they do; and instead of covering and forgiving their weaknesses (as Christ enjoins) aggravating and magnifying them so, as to make every mistake a dangerous error and defection; and not only doing this in private conversation, but going to the pulpit, and proclaiming them at times of greatest concourse, such as sacrament occasions, which should be feasts of love and charity among Christians, and not engines of strife and debate. Such an uncharitable course we judge the ready way to mar the usefulness of many of Christ's faithful servants in his vineyard, tending both to break their ministry, and break their hearts at once; to scatter their poor flocks, and do great harm to many precious souls.

7mo, Likewise we must witness against their exciting and stirring up poor people plainly and directly to leave their godly pastors, by whom many of them have been brought to Christ; and doing so at the very time while they are feeding and profiting under their ministry; and for no other reason but because these ministers have not freedom to join in their secession and testimony, &c. yea persuading the people to leave these, and come to them, as they would not fall under the curse of Meroz, &c. and doing this both when they preach at home, and when they invade the parishes or others abroad—We cannot but testify against such flock-scattering doctrine and practices, as most sinful; and judge it to be a counterfeiting of our Lord's words, *He that despiseth you despiseth me*, and also great cruelty to go and pluck weak children from the breasts, while sucking strength and nourish-

167

168

ment from pure ordinances, and to tell them (as seceders do) that some few occasional meals, like their itinerant sermons, will be better for them; though perhaps they are not so good their daily fare. This doctrine tends to ruin souls, by fostering ignorance, error, infidelity, looseness, carnality, worldliness, Sabbath-breaking, and all sorts profanity through the land: for thus many thousands of ignorant Christless souls, if they obey them, must sit at home on the Lord's day, and live without the gospel, except when they get a transient sermon of this kind now and then from a seceder.

8vo, We must also bear witness against the brethren their narrowing the terms both of ministerial and Christian communion, so as no reformed church ever did. 1. As to ministerial, they have come that length to refuse communion with the most strict and holy minister in Scotland, if he do not secede and approve of their long act and testimony, notwithstanding of the many visible blemishes that are in it.—And this they do in contradiction to their protestation at their first secession, Nov. 16. 1733, by which they profess still to hold communion with all true Presbyterians, who groan under the evils of the time, and wrestle against them: and again they say the same in their first testimony, page 95. But they continued short while in that moderate disposition; for they soon came to refuse communion with all ministers but these of their own presbytery.—2. As to Christian communion, they go a prodigious length in excommunicating from the Lord's table all who hear or communicate with any other ministers, although these ministers might possibly be the instruments of their conversion, and signally blessed to them; and men upon whom they can charge no defection or fault but their not seceding from the church, and acceding to their long testimony in all points. Surely, for men to prescribe such new terms of communion to god's children before they can get their bread, terms not appointed by the Head, is both to incroach upon the headship of Jesus Christ, and break in upon that article of our Creed, *The communion of saints*.

9no, We must regret their casting slanders on their worthy ancestors, and on their mother church, in their *Act and Testimony*, and other papers emitted or adopted by them; particularly by alledging, that the assembly 1690 (which consisted of many confessors and old sufferers) *made no particular acknowledgment of the backslidings of the land under prelacy;—and that they declared the perfidious prelates were not to be deposed for their treacherous defections.—That the parliament which met at that time imposed the oath of allegiance, to exclude the oath of the covenant.—That Professor Simson and Professor Campbell's errors, and these favoured by the assembly's Shorter Catechism revised, have overspread this church like a flood.—That the judicatories have overturned the foundations of the doctrine and government of Christ's church:—That they have subverted both her doctrine and worship:—That they have done what in them lay to pull the crown of Christ's head:—That they have refused to give him the glory of his supreme Deity, and involved themselves in denying the Son of God, which is one especial mark of Antichrist:—That they have made sinful terms*

169

170

of communion, &c. For all which, see *Testimony*, first Edit. Pages 51, 53, 59, 105, 109, 143, 144, 145, 148. besides others of their papers. These are but a swatch of the many false aspersions contained in their writings, besides these which they daily cast upon their brethren in their sermons. Alas! that brethren who are concerned for the same gospel interest, should take such methods to slander their own mother's sons, to discredit their persons, and blast their ministry; especially when God is pleased to countenance severals of them remarkably in their work! There are indeed many evils in the national church; but it is sinful to calumniate her, and make her defections greater than they are. But notwithstanding of all these extravagant steps and accusations of our seceding brethren, occasioned through their intemperate party zeal; we still have regard to severals of them, as good men upon the main, and useful preachers of a crucified Jesus; and upon that account we wish well to them; not doubting but they have as good title to our charity as the *Donatists and Novatians* of old, and the *Brounists and M'Millantes* of later years. And we pray God to incline their hearts to unite with other godly ministers. As we have thus endeavoured to give our impartial testimony against the defections and wrong steps of the national church, and likewise of these who have of late separated from her; so we do also bear our testimony against the defections of the Episcopal clergy in meeting houses through Scotland. Ah, how woefully have they degenerated from the principles and practice of their fathers! Of old their fathers did not differ much from the established church except in point of church government, their doctrine and worship being very much the same: but now they are generally said to be Arminian and erroneous in their doctrine.—And upon our incorporating union with England, and the *Toleration* in 1712, they changed their way of worship, and fell in with the *English service and ceremonies* which their fathers would never receive, and which many Presbyterian writers have refuted to excellent purpose. Though this was a very great and remarkable change in the Scots Episcopal clergy, yet now it appears to have been introductive to a greater: for, being strongly attached to Jacobite principles and a Popish Pretender, they were thereby induced to entertain favourable thoughts of other Popish superstitions and errors, which at length many of them began to vent and stand up for; such as, *A middle state for souls after death, and prayers for the dead;—The making the sacrament of the Lord's supper a proper sacrifice or propitiatory oblation for sin, and mixing the sacramental wine with water; pleading for the necessity of absolution by a priest, and confession of sins to him, in order to the forgiveness of sin;—The anointing with oil in baptism and other cases;—The necessity of Episcopal ordination and baptism to salvation; And the practice of bowing towards the altar, and at the name of Jesus, with other Popish practices*, for which they have no foundation nor warrant in the Bible, but to the contrary. Wherefore they do not much encourage their people to read the Scriptures, unless it be with such commentaries as they recommend to them; telling them that they must only receive the sense and meaning of the Scriptures from the church or clergy, and they must have a special regard to ancient *liturgies*,

171

172

fathers, councils, traditions, &c. And, because the English prayer book doth not favour some of their new usages, they would have some places of it altered, or a new liturgy composed. In the prayers for the church, they leave out the words in the *English Liturgy, Church militant here in earth*, to favour prayers for the dead; and also they begin to favour the Arians, by passing over the Athanasian Creed in their worship. These innovations have occasioned in several places very great divisions both among the clergy and people: but still the innovating clergy gain ground against these who are more orthodox: and when they find people offended, or ready to leave them, upon account of their innovations, they either deny them, or artfully palliate them, until they get the people (who are but too tractable) reconciled to them; and thus they are gradually drawing nearer to the superstitions and idolatry of Rome from time to time.—Yea, some of them begin to preface and recommend Popish books, which contain devotions and prayers to the virgin Mary, and to the saints, besides other errors. May the Lord stop their career, and preserve the land from an inundation of Popery, that Antichristian, tyrannical, bloody, blasphemous, idolatrous and damnable religion!

In such a time of general defection and degeneracy in this and other churches, when infidelity, error, superstition, lukewarmness, deadness, carnality, profaneness, schism and divisions were on the growing hand; what might have been expected from a holy and just God, thus dread fully provoked, but that he would remove our candlestick out of its place, or come against us with some desolating judgment? But, behold! instead thereof, God is pleased to glorify his sovereign mercy and free grace in pitying his forlorn remnant, and to arise and maintain his own cause, by pouring out his Spirit from on high in several parts, to renew the decayed face of the earth. Amazing goodness! when the enemy was coming in as an overflowing flood, and God in justice might have given us all up for prey to him, the Spirit of God was pleased to lift up a standard against him in a very surprising manner, for reviving his own work in many places through the world, and in this land in particular.

In or about the years 1732 or 1733, the Lord was pleased to pour out his Spirit upon the people of Salzburg in Germany, who were living in Popish darkness, in a most uncommon manner; so that above twenty thousand of them, merely by reading the Bible which they made a shift to get in their own language, were determined to throw off Popery, and embrace the reformed religion; yea, and to become so very zealous for the truth and gospel of Jesus Christ, as to be willing to suffer the loss of all things in the world, and actually to forsake their houses, lands, goods and relations, that they might enjoy the pure preaching of the gospel. And O with what earnestness and tears in their eyes did they beseech Protestant ministers to preach to them in the places where they (when banished from their own country) came in different bodies! For it pleased the Lord to stir up Protestant princes and states to receive them, and provide for them, in many different places.

Near to the same time, or about the year 1735 or 1736, the Lord poured out his Spirit on many, in Moravia, another country in Germany, to enlighten them in the knowledge of

173

174

Jesus Christ, and inspire them with extraordinary zeal to propagate it to others; insomuch that Count Zinzendorf bishop of the Moravian church hath sent forth his missionaries to preach the gospel, not only in Germany and other parts of Europe, but in many places of the Heathen world, where they call the Indians, and the Negroes, the Hottentots and Greenlanders to the knowledge of a crucified Christ; and we are told of the great success of their ministry: and the Count himself travels and preaches in very many different and remote places; though it is matter of regret to hear that these zealous preachers of Christ are tainted with several errors; and so indeed were several of our reformers at the first. May the Lord purge them from all error whatsoever. Likewise, about the year 1736, there was a marvellous outpouring of the Spirit upon the people of Northampton in New England, and neighbouring places, where God displayed the riches of his grace and the power of his Spirit, in the wonderful conversion of several hundreds in a short time, under the ministry of Mr. Jonathan Edwards and others there. O how glorious was that work! as appears by the narrative then published of it.

At the same very time the Lord was pleased to raise up and qualify a number of students at the college of Oxford, in our neighbour nation of England, to be instruments of much good, although not altogether purged from the corruptions of that land. They joined in a religious society, wherein they agreed upon certain methods and rules for spending their time in fasting, praying, communicating, visiting the sick and the prisoners, instructing the ignorant, &c. and hence they were called *Methodists*. And, being afterwards ordained to the ministry, they preached with great warmth, chusing subjects very much neglected in that church, such as the *doctrines of grace, of justification by faith in the righteousness of Christ, of original sin and the corruption of our nature, of the nature and necessity of regeneration and the new birth,* g&c.g These doctrines being new, they were much admired and followed wherever they preached: they used also a good deal of freedom in speaking against the loose and negligent clergy, for which they were at length denied the use of churches; whereupon they went and preached in the fields, in houses, and wherever they might have access, collecting money for erecting schools, hospitals, and other pious uses; travelling to many places, and preaching every day, and several times in one day, having many thousands to hear them, in London, Bristol, Gloucester, through Wales, and very many places in England. Many of their hearers were brought under great impressions, shedding tears, and crying out, *What shall we do to be saved?* And great changes were made upon very profligate persons, and upon severals who went to scoff and ridicule them. Also many of the clergy were quickened to their work by them. In the year 1740, Mr. Whitefield, one of the foresaid Methodists, went to New England, and Mr. Gilbert Tennent after him, where they preached some months, two or three times every day, with singular and extraordinary success, the



people being greatly awakened, especially by Mr. Tennent's preaching; so that there followed a remarkable change upon their lives, and a wonderful revival and appearance of religion through all that country for several years. The like also was very observable in Pennsylvania, and the Jerseys, about the same time. It is to be regretted, that the work began to be much clouded by some zealous but imprudent ministers, and a set of illiterate exhorters, who went through the country preaching, and venting errors, and sometimes very rash censures against their brethren, and some of them pretending to visions, prophecy, and great attainments, and running into several extravagancies; upon which account some have endeavored to expose the whole work as *Enthusiasm* and *Delusion*. But it being Satan's ordinary way, when he sees Christ's kingdom advancing in a place, to exert himself to bring a reproach upon religion, by leading some zealous professors of it into errors and disorders; this can prove no more against the work in general, than the delusions of the Anabaptists and Fifth monarchy-men did against the reformation. But these clouds did not long continue. Likewise in the year 1740 and afterwards, in Scotland, even amidst our backslidings and divisions, in some parts promising tokens began to appear of a revival of Christianity: for in Edinburgh and elsewhere, some new praying societies were set up, and sundry students did associate with them, which gave hopes of a further reviving; and for this, many prayers were put up through the land, and that a good time before Mr. Whitefield came to Scotland, which was in the end of July 1741, where he abode some time, and preached many awakening sermons in Edinburgh, Glasgow and other places.

176

In Cambuslang, a small parish four miles from Glasgow, there were several praying societies, who spent much time in prayers and wrestling with God (especially in February 1742) that he might pity them and the whole land, and pour out his Spirit upon them, as on other places. And the reverend Mr. William M'Culloch their minister, who frequently met with them, having at their desire (joined with others in the parish) set up a weekly sermon upon Thursday a little before, and preaching closely to them upon the nature and necessity of regeneration; it pleased the Lord, that, upon Thursday the 18th of February 1742, the holy Spirit so wrought upon his hearers, that about fifty of them, with many attending them came into his house, under alarming apprehensions about the state of their souls, crying, *What shall we do to be saved?* The minister, being much affected with their case, spent that day and night with them, either separately or together, in exhortations, instructions, prayers, and singing psalms; being assisted in the work by some preachers and elders. And, the awakened and wounded people daily increasing, he was obliged to preach to and converse with them every day for a great many weeks thereafter; the people filling all the rooms of his house after sermon and, continuing in prayer and singing psalms in different companies till near midnight.—Many ministers came from other places to Mr. M'Culloch's assistance, with multitudes of people to hear the word, and to be witnesses of that very uncommon work; and there many of them felt the power of the word, and went home with the arrows

177

of God sticking in their hearts; and great numbers of these convinced people attained also to a fair appearance of a hopeful outgate; having their minds filled with peace and joy in believing. This was a wonderful time at Cambuslang for many months in the year 1742, and the pleasant fruits of it continued to appear both in that and the following years.—In Summer same year, viz. 1742, the work began to spread and appear remarkably in Kilsyth, Calder, Kirkintoloch, Campsie, Cumbernauld, Gargunnoch, Baldernock, Muthil, and many other parishes; and even in Edinburgh and Glasgow there was a considerable revival in religion. In May 1742 there was published a narrative of the work at Cambuslang, attested by many; and soon after another narrative of the work at Kilsyth and parishes about it, continued in different parts, and published from time to time by the reverend Mr. James Robe. These narratives, being well attested, were spread and reprinted in America and different places of the world; they were translated into Dutch, and had several editions in Holland, and were well received by the ministers and divines there.

178

The work indeed was very surprising and extraordinary, much resembling that which was in the last century at Stewartoun, Irvine, Kirk of Shots and other places, in the years 1625, 1626, and several years after, though in a very dismal backsliding time; and that work in Ireland, about Antrim, and the Six mile water, about the year 1628; of both which Mr. Robert Fleming, once minister at Cambuslang, gives account, in the *Fulfilling of the Scriptures*; as do Mr. Robert Blair and Mr. John Livingston in the manuscripts of their lives.—And, there being much said and written about this work in the West of Scotland, we have thought ourselves bound to enquire into the nature, fruits and evidences of it; and from what some of us have seen of that work, and hath been attested by the ministers immediately concerned, and others who have seen it, we judge ourselves warranted to give our testimony to it, as a glorious work of the Spirit of God, which he hath been pleased to send in his sovereign free mercy, in a time of great infidelity, formality and back sliding, to glorify his own name, by awakening, convincing, humbling, converting, comforting, reviving, strengthening and confirming many souls through the land; and our reasons for it are these; 1^{mo}, The convictions and comforts of the people of Cambuslang, and other awakened parishes, have come to them in a scriptural way, by Christ's ordinances, and particularly the word preached, and passages of Scripture carried in upon their minds, suited to their cases and circumstances.—2^{do}, The fruits and effects of that work in the people's lives and conversations, do evidence themselves to be from the holy Spirit, according to the Scripture account of these fruits; for these who formerly were blind and ignorant, have soon come to advance in the knowledge of Jesus Christ and Divine things; and the tongues which were dumb in the things of God, have soon learned to speak the language of Canaan.—They who formerly were given to cursing, swearing, drunkenness, Sabbath breaking, scoffing at sacred things, and other immoralities, have presently changed their course into sober living, godly conference, reading, praying, and singing psalms.—They who formerly were trusting to their own

179

performances, attainments and self-righteousness, have presently renounced all these for the righteousness of Christ only, imputed to them for their justification before God.—They who formerly were glewed to the world, and to the love of sensual and sinful things, are made willing to part with all these for the love of Jesus Christ their Saviour, desiring earnestly to be conformed to him in his contempt of the world, self-denial, humility and holiness both in heart and life.—They who before thought it an unmanly thing to shed tears for sin, and piercing of Christ, have been made to mourn as for an only son, and be in bitterness as for a first born.—These who have been guilty of secret acts of injustice, have been filled with remorse for them, and made restitution to the persons injured or their children.—They who halted and mocked the people of God, have their hearts warmed with love to them, and account them the excellent ones of the earth.—They who before were contentious, malicious and revengeful, do presently drop their quarrels, forgive their enemies, wish well to their souls, and the salvation of all around them.—They who before minded only their own things, are highly concerned for the interests of Jesus Christ, and for the declarative glory of God in the world.—Swearers have dropt their oaths, and with reverence mention the name of God. And they who loved carnal company, merry jests, profane songs, and foolish talking, seek after the company of those who will join with them in prayer, praises, and talking about their soul-concerns.—They who before complained of nothing but bodily ailments, worldly losses, crosses, and disappointments, now complain mainly of unbelieving hearts and indwelling corruptions. They who before ascribed their virtues and good things to themselves, do now exalt Christ and free grace for every attainment, and in the whole of their salvation: and yet, while they ascribe all to free grace, the aim in Christ's strength at universal holiness, at the subduing of every sin, and the practice of every duty and good work, according to both the first and second table of the law, and make conscience of stational and relational duties as well as others.—Families that formerly were synagogues of Satan, are now temples where God is devoutly worshipped: and many of all ages and sexes do form themselves into little societies for prayer, praise, and religious discourse. And though tares are mixed among the wheat, and several hypocrites discovered, yet the body of the awakened persevere, as to what can be seen, in the ways of religion.

Notwithstanding of all these gracious changes, which are clear evidences of the operations of the holy Spirit; yet this blessed work is mightily opposed and reproached, and that not only by atheistical and profane men, but even by many of those who have long been praying for the diffusion of the Spirit, and the coming of Christ's kingdom, particularly our seceding brethren, who have (alas!) preached, prayed and printed against this good work, and even kept fasts in all their meetings, for putting a stop to it, as a delusion and work of the devil, who hath transformed himself into an angel of light (as they say;) and have thereby given their followers very frightful notions of it, and stopt them from going near the places where they might have got full satisfaction: And also they have hindered many from giving praise



to God for his wonderful goodness, and from praying for the continuance and spreading of the work. May the Lord lay all this to their hearts, but not to their charge! Their main quarrel with the work seems to be, that it is begun and carried on by the instrumentality of ministers of the national church, and some whom they judge accessory to the defections therein; and because it is attended with *outcryings, trembling, falling down and fainting*, in many of these who are awakened; which (they say) are not symptoms of a work of the Spirit.

182

Concerning which we shall observe these few things;

1mo, Our brethren had certainly acted much more the part of wise and unbiassed judges, if in obedience to Christ's commands to *try the Spirit*, and prove *all things*, they had used all proper means of enquiry, such as going themselves to the places conversing with the ministers, and with the subjects wrought upon, before they had pronounced a judicial sentence in such a weighty case, and intimated it from their pulpits; and not have proceeded to a decision so hastily upon hearsays, or the malicious reports of profane spirits, and these who were enemies of the work. They also had done wisely, to have waited some time to see the issue of the work before they had past such a terrible sentence upon it: for they might have remembered that it is not an easy thing for clergymen, after doing a bad thing, to own their mistake.

2do, It cannot be denied but there have been many eminent godly ministers employed in promoting this work; and, though there had been some not so remarkable that way, we must not find fault with a holy sovereign God for making use of what instruments he pleases. Our brethren cannot but know that it is a most provoking sin to limit the Holy one of Israel, who frequently thinks fit to employ mean and despised instruments to do his work, that so he may stain the pride of our glory, and shew that he is not beholden to any.

3to, We are grieved in our very hearts that our brethren adventured upon such a daring step, as by a judicial sentence to ascribe to the devil such a gracious Godlike work, as that before described; when they cannot bring an instance from Scripture, or any other history, of the Devil's being permitted to work in the like manner before. Surely it may make us tremble to think what kind of sin it must be to make the devil the reprover of sin, and minister of righteousness, and so to assign the office and work of the Holy Ghost to that wicked one! Doth it not look like a fearful limiting of God, for a few men to act as if they would confine the holy Spirit's workings to themselves, and give up the ministry of all their brethren through the *Island* to the devil? As *Jesus Christ* himself, so his ministers, Moses, John Baptist, the apostles Peter and Paul, were of quite different tempers and dispositions; they rejoiced to see the Spirit poured down upon others, and to see Christ preached, sinners brought in to him, and his kingdom enlarged, whoever were the instruments of it.

183

4to, As for the effects of this work upon the bodies of some of the awakened, such as *outcrying, trembling, falling down, or fainting*; these are not at all new in this land; for many

instances of such like symptoms in persons under piercing convictions of sin, or under ravishing views of Christ, can be given, even since our happy *Revolution*, as well as in former times; as is evident from Messieurs Robe, Currie and Webster's writings on this subject. And yet we hear not of any heretofore ascribing the work in these people to the devil, nor condemning it as contrary to Scripture, upon account of these symptoms: No; for the Scripture gives frequent instances of such impressions made on the body, by the great inward exercise and concern of the mind.—The sharp convictions of the *three thousand*, [Acts ii.](#) brought them great agonies, being *pricked* as with a sword in *their hearts*, and forced to cry out, and say to the apostles, *Men and brethren, what shall we do?* The auditory being great, they must have cried in such a manner that the apostles heard them; for Peter was forced to cry aloud, that they might hear him, [Acts ii. 14.](#)—So Paul, when he was thoroughly convinced of his sin of persecuting Christ, and the wrath due to him for it, he was seized with *trembling and astonishment, and fell to the ground*, [Acts ix.4,6.](#)—Also the *jailor*, when awakened to see his sinful and lost state under wrath *trembled and fell down*, saying, *What must I do to be saved?* [Acts xvi. 29, 30.](#) And it appears to have been usual in the apostles' days for sinners to *fall down before God*, when they were first convinced, and got the secret wickedness of their heart laid open to them by the Word, [I Cor. xiv. 24, 25.](#) Even that great man, Felix, was made to tremble under his conviction of sin and apprehension of wrath, while Paul preached to him, [Acts xxiv. 25.](#) And that mighty king, Belshazzar, was strangely affected when he saw the hand-writing on the wall, which he took to be a presage of wrath against him, [Dan. v. 6.](#) *His countenance was changed, his joints loosed, and his knees smote one against another.* A view of the wrath of a sin-revenging God, is enough to throw the stoutest sinner into the most terrible disorder, and to overwhelm all his senses and faculties. We see Baruch, when in danger of the wrath of man, was so overwhelmed with grief, that he fainted under it, and cries out, [Jer. xiv. 3.](#) *Wo is me now, for the Lord hath added grief to my sorrow: I fainted in my sighing, and had no rest.* And how much more would he have been distressed with the immediate views and approaches of the wrath of God; for, *Who knoweth the power of his anger?* Job, when under the apprehension of God being his enemy, and his terrors pursuing him, he was so little master of himself, that he *stood up, and cried in the congregation*, [Job xxx. 15—28.](#) King David says, he *roared by reason of the disquiteness of his heart*, [Psal. xxxviii. 8.](#) Nay he had such impressions of the wrath of God upon his soul, that they made all his flesh to tremble, [Psal. cxix. 120.](#) *My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments.* Heman saith, *While I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted*, [Psal. lxxxviii. 15.](#) We see also how the prophet Habakkuk, was seized with the greatest bodily distress, with *quivering of lips, and trembling* over all his body, at the view of approaching wrath, [Hab. iii. 16.](#)—Again, it ought to be remembered, that God hath told us, that in the New Testament days he would pour out his Spirit upon people in such a manner, that they should *look upon him they pierced by their sins, and mourn, and be in bitterness*, as



parents *for an only son or first born*. Now, it is well known that some parents will not only cry out bitterly, but also faint, upon such occasions; nay, some will be brought to such agonies and faintings by the mere apprehension and prospect of man's wrath and of temporal difficulties: and have they not much greater cause for them, who get a clear and manifest discovery of the heinous guilt of their sins, and of the wrath of an angry God hanging over them? Who can paint forth the distress of these poor creatures, whose spirits are wounded by the amazing apprehensions of God's wrath for sin, and the fearful expectations of judgments and fiery indignation, without having view of relief?—Such a wise man as Solomon would not have been surprised to see such persons tremble, cry out, or faint; for, saith he, *A wounded spirit who can bear!* [Prov. xviii. 14.](#)



We read also in Scripture of persons fainting upon other occasions. Jacob fainted for joy, when he heard that his son was alive and highly exalted; so Daniel, after singular manifestations from God, fainted and was sick certain days, [Dan. viii. 27.](#) and [x. 8, 9.](#) And the apostle John, when he saw the Lord in his glory, fell at his feet as a dead man. So it is no wonder that a poor soul that was like to sink in despair under a sense of sin and wrath, when coming out of this plunge to a surprising view of Christ's mercy, loveliness and fulness, should in like manner be overwhelmed and faint for love and joy.—Wherefore it is our duty to put favourable constructions upon the various cases of awakened and exercised souls, when thereby, they are thrown into extasies, faintings, or bodily distresses. The holy Spirit is a free sovereign agent; and, in times of large effusions, he may, for his own wise ends, take an uncommon latitude in his way of dealing with sinners, for bringing them in to Christ. And as their discoveries of sin and wrath, and the commotion in their affections, prove very different; so the impressions upon their bodies in must be either less or more, and exceeding various, according to the measure and degree of inward exercise and concern of their minds; for as their sorrow for piercing Christ by their sins is compared to that of parents for an only son, which admits of many different degrees, and produceth very different effects in different persons; so it must be reasonable in any to require instances in Scripture for every minute circumstance of the innumerable various cases of persons brought in to Christ; for then the Spirit of God must have enlarged the Scriptures into very many different volumes, which had not been convenient for us. If we read the accounts given us of the conversions of Augustine, Luther, Junius, Beza, Latimer, Bolton, Professor Halyburton and many other eminent saints, we will find particular circumstances in them for which no Scripture precedent can be shewn; but no wise man will say upon that account, that the work in them was delusive or diabolical. But let some object what they will against the conversions in the West, because of the outward impressions attending them in severals (for in many the changes are wrought without any noise at all;) It is our judgment, if these bitter throes and agonies of some, have a merciful issue in landing them in Jesus Christ and true holiness, as it is visible they do in the most part; then there is great matter of praise whatever way the Lord take for



awakening and humbling them before-hand.—But seeing worthy Mr. Edwards of Northampton hath written two treaties concerning this extraordinary work of the Spirit of God, and hath taken notice of all the prejudices and objections of adversaries, we judge it unnecessary to add any more to what he hath written so fully and to such excellent purpose.—May the Lord, by new showers from above, continue, revive, increase, and spread this blessed work through the land and all corners of the earth! *Amen* and *Amen*.

That we may draw to a conclusion, we shall briefly sum up the principal sins, errors, evils and defections in the church and land, which we think ourselves bound to lament and mourn over, declare, warn, and bear testimony against, in order to promote reformation, and healing in the land: for although God, in his boundless sovereignty and rich grace, be pleased in a backsliding time to grant some remarkable reviving to his work in particular corners, to shew his willingness to return to his ancient dwelling place; yet we despair of any general reviving or national reformation, until we are made sensible of public sins, errors and defections, as well as these of a more private nature. Wherefore we desire to be humbled for, declare and testify against, all doctrines and practices which are opposite to the *Bible*, and to our *Confession of Faith*, *Larger and Shorter Catechisms*, *Directories for Worship* and *Church government*, which we judge drawn out of, and founded upon the Scriptures of truth.

And particularly, against all Deistical and Socinian errors, and doctrines, which tend to decry the necessity of supernatural revelation, and cry up the sufficiency of reason or the light of nature to guide men to eternal happiness.

And against all Arian errors, and these doctrines which any ways disparage the Christian revelation, or derogate from the scheme of salvation through the mediation and righteousness of Jesus Christ our only Saviour;—Or from the doctrine of the glorious Trinity, and the oneness of the Godhead; Or from Christ's true supreme Deity, his self existence, necessary existence, independence, and equality with the Father;—Or from the true Deity of the Holy Ghost, and his equality with the Father and the Son;—Or from the truth of Christ's manhood, and of his Priestly office, and the necessity of his death as a real and proper sacrifice to satisfy Divine justice for our sins.

All Popish errors, idolatry and superstition, maintained either by professed Papists, or by Protestants who are making advances towards Popery, by pleading for middle state for souls departed; prayers for the dead; the Eucharist's being a proper sacrifice for sin; the necessity of confessing sin to the priest, and of the priest's absolution in order to the forgiveness of sin; of mixing the sacramental wine with water;—Of bowing to the altar, to the East, and at the name of Jesus; of kneeling at the sacrament, observing saints' days and uninstituted festivals, and putting them on a level with the Lord's day; the cross in baptism, the organ in praise, the reading of prayers, and other human inventions in God's worship and service.

All Pelagian and Arminian doctrines, which derogate from God's efficacious free grace in saving sinners, or put in the power of man's own free will or natural abilities to repent,

188

189

believe, or convert himself; and make a necessary connection betwixt a man's moral seriousness and his obtaining of saving grace.—Also all these doctrines which tend to exalt self, or any ways place it in God's room; and these which make self love, and the desire of our own happiness, the proper spring and principle of all virtuous and religious actions.

The magistrate's assuming the power of the keys, and all Erastian incroachments upon the intrinsic power of the church, or upon Christ's headship and supremacy over her.—The granting an almost boundless toleration to all sects, errors, heresies and innovations.—The imposing the sacramental test upon others civil and military when out of Scotland, as a necessary qualification for there offices; whereby the holy sacrament is much debased and profaned.—The multiplying of oaths without necessity; introducing the new form of swearing by kissing the gospels, the Yule-vacance, the repealing of the laws against witchcraft, &c.

190

The imposing the yoke of patronage upon the church, and spoiling Christian congregations of their right to chuse their own pastors, and obtruding pastors upon them.—As also the practice of these ministers or preachers, who contribute to encourage, strengthen or bind the yoke of patronage upon the church, by allowing their friends to apply to patrons and procure presentations for them; or by accepting these presentations, and cleaving to them when obtained.—And the practice of these ministers or judicatories, who encourage or support these *Accepters* in this pernicious course, or who obtrude them or any other persons upon parishes against their consent. The denying the lawfulness or obligation of our national covenant engagements, the warrantableness of national churches, Confession of Faith, subordination of church judicatories one to another; the maintaining the independency of single congregations upon any superior church-judicatory; the lodging the power of the keys, not in the hands of church-officers, but in the community of the faithful.

The prosecuting or censuring of ministers for preaching or protesting against any of the evils or defections of the time, such as the despising of Christ's flock, making intrusions upon them, incroaching upon the rights and liberties of the church, or Christ's Headship over her, &c. The neglect and unfrequent administration of the Lord's supper, and the abuse and profanation of it by admitting ignorant or ungodly persons to it. As also the neglect of appointing national fasts, and days for humiliation and extraordinary prayer, in a time of national defections, and of abounding sins and provocations, when many spiritual judgments are inflicted, and other great judgments are impending over us. And, when such fasts come to be appointed, alas! what an aversion is there to a particular condescendence of the sins and defections which are the true cause of the Lord's controversy with the land!

191

Likewise we judge ourselves bound to bewail, lament, and witness against, all these God-dishonouring sins and evils which universally abound and prevail among all ranks and sorts of men; such as ignorance and forgetfulness of God their Creator and Preserver; Atheism, infidelity, and enmity to God; ingratitude to God for mercies; putting the creatures, the

world and self in the room of God; consulting with necromancers, wizards and charmers; ascribing our mercies to fortune or second causes, rather than to God. Self love, self-seeking, unbelief, distrust of God, hatred of him and of his image in others. Pride, presumption, carnal security, loving pleasures more than God. Restraining of prayer before God in secret; neglect of family worship; tempting God by neglecting means, using unlawful means, and trusting in lawful means. Superstition and false worship; giddiness and unsettledness in religion, and drinking in error. Mean and low thoughts of Christ, and of the infinite love of God in providing Christ to be a Surety and Sacrifice for us. Contempt of the glorious gospel, and the glad tidings it brings and men's unfruitfulness under it. Not receiving and loving of Jesus Christ; not relying on Christ as all our hope; not making use of Christ in all his offices; not rejoicing in Christ and him crucified. Men's resting upon their duties and frames for acceptance with God: their joining something of their own with Christ's righteousness for their justification before God, and not accounting all things loss and dung for Christ, that they may be found in him, not having their own righteousness, which is nothing but filthy rags.—Grieving of the holy Spirit, sinning him away from ordinances; not lamenting the withdrawing of the Spirit, nor wrestling for his return. Opposing and reproaching the work of the Spirit in awakening and convincing sinners; calling it Enthusiasm, delusion, or ascribing it to Satan. Blind and intemperate zeal; discontent and impatience under the dispensations of Divine Providence. Backslidings from God, and the decay of the life and power of godliness. Setting our affections upon earthly enjoyments and sensual satisfactions; and neglecting these things wherein our chief happiness doth consist, namely, *the enjoying of God, and communion with him*.—Our unthankful forgetting of the many signal deliverances which God hath wrought for his church and land; and our unthankfulness for and abuse of the valuable mercies we still enjoy, such as health, peace, plenty; freedom from pestilence, sword and famine; and the continuance of the gospel and pure ordinances with us.—Our minding our own things, more than the things of Jesus Christ. Our little praying for the coming of Christ's kingdom, and for the peace and prosperity of Jerusalem.

192

Our neglecting the ordinances of God's appointment, careless attending upon them, and not regarding them as trysting-places [meeting-places] for meeting with God, and as means of communion with him. Our being wise above what is written, and advancing men's devices before Divine appointments. Our resting upon outward attending of ordinances, and a name to live, without the new birth, and a work of grace in our souls.—Our contenting ourselves with man's teaching, without the teachings and influences of the Spirit with the Word. Our being little affected or afflicted with the blasting of ordinances, and the suspending of the Spirit's influences.—Our unworthy communicating, and formal approaches to God, at his holy table; neglecting due preparation, by self examination, secret humiliation, renewing covenant with God, and wrestling with him for his presence. Our loosing soon the impressions of Christ's sufferings, his precious blood, and matchless love, set forth in that ordinance;

193

and not living answerably thereto. Our putting our *hearing, praying, communicating, charitable acts, just dealing or moral honesty* in the room of *glorious Christ*, who alone is the *Lord our righteousness*.

We also lament and witness against the abounding profanation of God's holy name, by the irreverend use of it in common discourse, by formal and hypocritical addresses to him, by customary and rash swearing, cursing, blaspheming, perjury, swearing falsely in matters of trade or taxes, bribing, and tempting others to do so. By perfidious dealing with God, in breaking both national and personal covenants, sacramental vows, and sickbed resolutions.—Decay of zeal for maintaining of truth, purity and piety, in opposition to abounding error, superstition and profanity. The profaning and abusing of God's titles, attributes, ordinances, Scriptures, servants and providences; by many scoffing at sacred things, jesting upon the Scriptures, mocking the professors of religion, misconstruing God's providences, wresting and misapplying his word to favour their corrupt sentiments and practices; vain jangling and disputing about smaller points, and taking up their thoughts and time therewith, to the neglecting and eating out the life of religion. Slighting, aspersing and reviling many of God's faithful servants, thereby marring the success of their ministry, and scattering their flocks, to the prejudice and ruin of many precious souls.—Many taking up a profession of greater strictness in religion than others, while strangers to humiliation for sin, regeneration, heart-holiness, tenderness of walk, humbleness of mind, meekness, and the true spirit of Christianity. Alas! many are so puffed up with pride, vanity, self conceit, and contempt of others, that they cast out of their charity and communion every one that agrees not to their sentiments and practices in all respects, though some of these have more evident marks of the image of God upon them than they themselves! And many are hereby tempted to infidelity, even to mock, hate, and cast off all religion, because of the divisions among the professors of it.—Ah! many professed Christians shew a great propension to exalt natural reason, and decry supernatural revelation; to magnify the religion of nature, and disparage the religion of Jesus! to ascribe such to man's freewill and natural powers, and overlook the free grace of God, and preventing work of his Spirit.—Many speak more of their own moral performances, than of Christ's imputed righteousness; and seem to regard Christ more as a pattern than as a propitiation; exalt their natural powers and self righteousness, through ignorance of the righteousness of God; cry up the preaching of morality, while they themselves remain immoral, and ignorant of their own corrupt natural estate, and of the nature and necessity of regeneration. Alas! There is ground to fear that many outwardly assent to our Confession of Faith, who scarcely read it, consider it, or believe it; and it is to be feared that severals, even preachers, may come to subscribe it, as these of the church of England do their 39 articles, rather as *vinculum pacis*, than as *vinculum veritatis*.

We also bewail and testify against the profanation of the Lord's day which sadly abounds, as being a nursery of, and an inlet to, all manner of sin and corruption: by many speaking

194

195

their own words on this day, and discoursing of worldly affairs and business;—By many doing their own works, such as unnecessary pieces of servile labour, or travelling about worldly business;—By many finding their own pleasures, by idle walking, needless visits, and other worldly diversions and recreations:—While in the mean time few make conscience of setting apart and spending this day as a day of sacred rest, according to its institution, for entertaining serious thoughts of the works of God and redeeming love, for attending religious worship without distractions, for promoting spirituality and heavenly mindedness, for holding communion with God through Jesus Christ, and for loosing their hearts from the world, and preparing for death and heaven. Alas! many, instead of such exercises, do dedicate this holy day to profanity; and, in place of serving God the Author of it, they serve the devil and their lusts upon it, by gaming, drinking, swearing, uncleanness, filthy speeches, jesting upon sacred things, and reproaching the devout worshippers of God! And so they go faster to hell upon the Lord's day, than upon any other day of the week.

We likewise bewail and testify against the stational and relational sins which abound in the land, among parents and children, masters and servants, husbands and wives, magistrates and subjects, ministers and people; superiors, inferiors and equals. Alas! many superiors are guilty of contempt of their inferiors, of proud and imperious carriage towards them, of oppressing them, or ruling them with rigour, of discouraging them from what is good, and encouraging them to what is evil.—Many inferiors are guilty of despising their superiors envying their situation, disobedience to their commands and counsels, and not imitating their good examples; and particularly many children are thus dreadfully guilty with respect to their godly parents.—And, among equals, there is little brotherly love, mutual esteem and good offices to be seen; but, instead thereof, very much appears hatred, anger, malice, envy, evil-speaking, reproaching and backbiting, and also of tempting and encouraging one another to sin.—Ah! Many parents forget their engagements at baptism, and neglect to instruct and pray for their children, to admonish and reprove them when needful, and either do not correct them at all, or do it unduly, provoking them to wrath.—Oh! many heads of families neglect family religion, prayer, praises, and catechising of children and servants, and requiring an account of the sermons they hear; or at best they perform family prayer and other duties in a cold and formal manner. Oh how many have no more care of the souls of their families than if they had none! They seek only their own things, pursuing the business of a present *animal* life, and not the things of Jesus Christ, or what concerns their spiritual or eternal life!—And many who have formerly come a good length, and kept good order in their families, have sadly declined, lost their wonted liveliness and spirituality in God's service, and let their duties dwindle away into a dead formality, contenting themselves with external performances, ordinances and communions, without any communion with God in them.

We must also regret the untenderness and looseness of the walk and conduct of some in the ministry, whereby not a few are tempted to abhor the offerings of the Lord; and a



Gallio like indifferency in others about the public interest of Christ, if it go well with their own private affairs. And few, alas! are lamenting after a departing God, and searching into, or mourning for, the causes as they ought, or wrestling for a returning God, and a returning glory. Many preachers are running unsent, and using means to thrust themselves into the vineyard, not waiting for God's call, nor regarding the prayers or inclinations of his people; and who in their sermons generally confine themselves to subjects of natural religion and moral virtue, and neglect the doctrines of Christ and the Spirit, the peculiar glories of Christianity; and do not preach the absolute freeness of grace through Christ, as the spring of a sinner's justification and salvation.—Likewise, not a few ministers and Christians want love and due forbearance to others who differ from them in some lesser matters; entertain harsh thoughts, and break out into uncharitable censures, and severe reflections one against another, to the hindrance of that sweet fellowship and social prayer which they should have together, and to the taking them off in a great measure from the vitals and essentials of religion, and from pure ordinances, which God continues still to own.

We lament the malicious and revengeful thoughts of many, and the frequent sallies of their ungoverned passions, which sometimes break out into provoking language and acts of violence, and even into bloodshed and murders; and often the law is not dully executed against murderers.

We testify against the prevailling sins of tippling, [habitual drinking of alcoholic beverages] drunkenness, gluttony, chambering, wantonness, fornication, adultery, unnatural lusts, and all sorts of uncleanness, wanton gestures, obscene talk, immodest apparel, lascivious songs and dancings, lottery games, balls, assemblies, and stage-plays, which, however fashionable they may be, we look upon as unbecoming the gravity, seriousness, faith and hope of true Christians, who profess to place all their happiness in the enjoyment of God, and to be careful abstain from all appearance of evil, and wait for the coming of their Lord and Saviour from heaven.

Likewise, we bear witness against the prevailing evils, of stealing, robbing, extortion, defrauding, prodigality, simony, bribery, running of goods, men's using unlawful occupations, living above their incomes, undertaking vexatious law suits, pleading for causes manifestly unjust;—Lying, slandering, spreading evil reports, aggravating smaller faults, rash censuring, suborning false witnesses, backbiting, scolding, scoffing, misconstruing the actions, words or intentions of others:—Men's discontent with their lot and condition in the world: envying or grieving at the prosperity or credit of their neighbours being glad at their adversity, miscarriage, or disgrace; coveting or entertaining inordinate motions and affections to these things which belong to their neighbours.

Moreover we bewail and testify against all the foresaid sins, evils and defections of the land, as bring highly aggravated in the sight of God, being committed against clear light, the Spirit's strivings, manifold warnings, alluring mercies, solemn covenants, and wonderful

198

199

deliverances;—against great pains taken by God upon the land to reclaim and reform them, such as reproofs, challenges, exhortations, expostulations, invitations, promises, threatenings and lesser judgments.—And these our sins and defections have been long continued in, until very many are become secure, senseless, and hardened in them, nay, even bold and impudent, so far as to avow and justify them, to despise admonitions, and mock at reproofs. Likewise they are turned very universal; all, ranks and degrees of persons are involved in the guilt of them, rich and poor, great and small, nobility, gentry, magistrates, ministers, commons, &c. Alas! our nobility and persons of distinction, who once appeared with zeal for God's truths, and for advancing reformation, are sadly degenerated, and generally corrupted, either with erroneous principles, or vicious practices. Our commons, many of them are destroyed with ignorance, profanity, or earthly-mindedness. Our professors of religion, alas! carnality and formality prevail among them, and lively piety is like to dwindle away. Oh how desperate doth our case appear when under such terrible aggravations of guilt! How ripe do we seem to be for desolating strokes, and sweeping judgments! What cause have we to look out for them every day, and to fear and tremble before a holy, just, and provoked God! according to these awful texts of Scripture, [2 Chron. xxxvi. 15, 16](#), [Isa. xxii.](#)

[12. &c. Jer. vi. 15—viii. 12.—xi. 10, 11.—xxii. 7, 8, 9. Amos.viii. 2, 3. &c. Micah iii. 11, 12. Hos. xiii. 5, 6, 7.](#) which is very applicable to our case.

But is there no *hope in Israel* concerning this thing? *Is there not balm in Gilead? Is there not a Physician there?* Is there not virtue in Christ's blood for the most desperate cases that churches can be in? Oh if ministers and people were applying to him by faith, there would be hope. Should we not then *plead with our mother* to consider her defections from God, and to be deeply humbled and mourn for them, and to turn from them to the Lord by true repentance and reformation, and to pray and plead his promises of mercy through Jesus Christ, such as that in [Jer. iii. 22. Return, ye backslidden children, and I will heal your backslidings!](#)—We have very lately had a surprising evidence of the Lord's willingness to return and heal us; what a wonderful step has he made towards it, by pouring out his Spirit upon several congregations of the land! O what encouragement doth this give the whole land to apply to him for mercy, and to set about reformation! particularly to our general assemblies and all inferior judicatories to go but and meet a merciful returning God, who, has no delight in our ruin, and that in the way of faith, humiliation and prayer; essaying sincerely to do all in their power to remove the grounds of the Lord's controversy, redress grievances, amend what is wrong, and take every stumbling-block out of the way of serious well meaning people, which is improven as an occasion of our lamentable divisions. For these ends, let us humbly plead with our Mother.



I. In as much as the church is and ought to be the pillar and ground of the truth, and her judicatories are bound to assert, maintain and defend every one of God's truths when attacked by adversaries, to transmit them in their purity to posterity, and to give their testimony and approbation to them, for upholding them against those teachers who would overturn them; and seeing all the members of the judicatories in this church have subscribed our Confession of Faith, and profess to adhere to the truths therein, we humbly plead that they may shew more concern for the support of these truths than has been done of late years. It is to be regretted, that not only the Episcopal clergy, but several ministers of this church, have taught and vented errors, and recommended erroneous books; and some of them have been arraigned before the general assembly, as Professor Simson, Professor Campbell, and Dr. Wishart; and though we are far from thinking that this church hath adopted or homologated [approved] any of their errors, yet many well-wishers of the church are of opinion they were not sufficiently animadverted upon, but too easily dismissed, which may give encouragement to others to spread error. And the therefore we beg leave to plead, that the general assembly would in the most proper manner testify their abhorrence of these errors whereof the foresaid persons were accused, and these Popish errors which the Episcopal clergy are introducing, and other errors which are propagated through the island; and give warning to all the ministers and members of this church to guard against them, and study to prevent the infection of them: and particularly these errors which strike against the doctrine of the glorious Trinity, and the oneness of the Godhead; or against the supreme Deity of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; or against the doctrines of free grace, in our justification and salvation; and of the glory of God being the chief spring and motive of virtue and religion.—And also, that the assembly would declare, that it is not sufficient to assoilzie [absolve] any man processed for error, that he profess his adherence to our Confession of Faith, or explain his words into a sense consistent with it; but that he expressly renounce these errors which are charged upon him from his words, according to the plain and obvious sense of them.

201

II. We would also plead, That though the precious doctrines of the supremacy and headship of our Lord Jesus Christ over his church, and the church's intrinsic power derived from him, are well asserted in our *Confession of Faith*, *Larger Catechism*, *Form of Church government* approved by assembly 1645, *Form of Process* 1707, and other public deeds of this church, agreeably to the holy Scriptures; yet, in regard some things have been done both of old and of late which appear not so agreeable to these excellent principles, that the assembly would declare their detestation of every thing, whether in sentiment or practice, that is inconsistent with Christ's Headship, and the church's intrinsic power, asserted in our *Confession of Faith*, particularly chap. xxx. Sec. 1, 2. in these words; *The Lord Jesus Christ, as King and head of his church hath therein appointed a government in the hand of church officers, distinct*

202

from the civil magistrate. To these officers the keys of the kingdom of heaven are committed, &c.

III. We must likewise plead with our Mother to cleave closely to our reformation principles, and carry always towards the grievance of patronage as a sinful usurpation upon the church of God, as the church hath frequently declared both of old and of late. And although we know there hath been laudable endeavours used by this church to be freed from this usurpation, such is the commission's address in the year 1712, approved by the next assembly; the memorial of assembly 1715; the commission's sending ministers to London in 1717 to seek relief from it; and also the commission 1734, and again the assembly 1735, sending commissioners with addresses for repealing the patronage act; and, when all these endeavours proved unsuccessful, the assembly 1736 did, by their solemn and deliberate resolution, printed to the world, give it as their judgment that it was still most just and fit, upon the first favourable occasion, to apply for redress of this grievance; and did record their weighty grounds and reasons for it: and also the said assembly 1736, act 14. did assert our principles against intrusions, and homologate [approve] our standards and former good acts of assembly relative thereto:—Yet we cannot but lament, that notwithstanding all these deeds, there are many ministers and preachers who still encourage and strengthen the usurpation of patronage, and chuse settlements by presentations rather than by gospel-calls, for which the law still leaves an open door. And the judicatories connive at this their unaccountable practice, and even obtrude severals of them upon reluctant congregations, capable and willing to make a right choice for themselves; which has occasioned a dismal scattering of the flock of Christ, and miserable animosities, disorders, and distractions in many places of the land to the great hinderance of the gospel. For remedying whereof, it is humbly proposed, *1mo*, That the general assembly would declare, that Presbyterians having free access to moderate in calls to vacant parishes, and congregations having freedom to chuse their ministers, is a part of the discipline and government of this church, which by the *Formula* 1711 all ministers and preachers are bound to support and maintain, and to do nothing directly or indirectly to the prejudice thereof, as it is there worded.—*2do*, That the assembly would discharge all ministers and preachers to take measures to obtrude themselves or others upon congregations against their will, by presentations or any other way; and to declare, if any, by his accepting of or adhering to a presentation, shall stand in the way of a Presbytery's free moderation, or of a parish's free election, he shall be looked upon as a deserter of the principles of this church, and treated as guilty of contravening his solemn engagements by the said *Formula* and otherwise. *3tio*, That the assembly would enforce the 14th act of assembly 1736 against intrusions, and take care in all settlements, and in all acts which may be framed concerning them, to maintain our principles, and the just rights of Christian congregations; and expressly discharge all inferior judicatories to plant any parish contrary to the mind of the eldership and Christian people, with certification; seeing their is no ground to expect that the great

203

204

ends of a gospel ministry can be obtained in such forced settlements.—4*to*, That the assembly would enjoin all judicatories and ministers to have a due regard to all the members of Christ's flock, and to all serious praying Christians, and not to despise those of them who are poor and mean in the world, but to esteem and put honour upon them, and seek an interest in their prayers, and have a great regard to their inclinations in planting parishes: and in all decisions about settlements, and cases wherein the glory of God and good of souls are highly concerned, to guard against the *fear of man*, which *brings a snare*. And to be ware of all such lax managements, or untender steps, as may drive good men from judicatories or the communion of the church.—5*to*, That the assembly take care that all concerned in calling of ministers have freedom to act, without any compulsion or undue influence.—6*to*, That the assembly order that congregations who have been aggrieved by the settlement of ministers without their consent, shall be treated with compassion and lenity; and to fall upon methods to transport or remove such ministers from them, when parishes cannot be brought to submit to them.—7*mo*, That the assembly appoint, that all appeals from the sentences of synods be only to the general assembly; and, if there be any of them which the assembly cannot overtake, that they be referred to the commission to be judged by them at their meeting immediately after the assembly, when their diets are numerous; it not being agreeable to Presbyterian principles and parity, that a great number of ministers should be subjected to the authority and judgment of a lesser.—8*vo*, That Presbyteries be strictly enjoined to be most careful and conscientious in licensing men to preach the gospel, and in observing the many good acts of assembly thereanent [in reference to]; and that both presbyteries and synods shall enquire, not only into their literature, but also into their sense and savour of true godliness, and into their acquaintance with the true godliness, and into their acquaintance with the true gospel-scheme of justification, and the way of making use of Christ, and living by faith upon him, and with the work of the Spirit upon their souls, and experimental religion; and also enquire into their sentiments concerning patronage and other grievances of the church: And that presbyteries recommend none to synods or other presbyteries to be entered upon trials, but such as they can safely attest in terms of these acts and rules.—9*no*, That the assembly declare, that as it is the duty of ministers, so they are still at full freedom, to testify in a becoming manner, and upon proper occasions, against the prevailing corruptions of the times, and even against what is wrong in the acts and proceedings of church judicatories.—10*mo*, That presbyteries be enjoined to be strictly conscientious in attesting ruling elders who are to sit in assemblies or commissions, and particularly that they be qualified in terms of the 9th act of assembly 1722, as their attestation is appointed to bear; and that every presbytery shall cause read the said act every time before they either choose or attest any elder.—11*mo*, That the assembly make more narrow enquiry into the right and warrant which colleges and royal burghs have to choose ministers or elders to sit in the general assembly.

205

206

IV. We humbly plead, that national fasts and thanksgivings may be more frequently appointed, when God in his providence calls unto them; and that no occasion be given to any to say that the church has resigned her power into the hands of the magistrate. And seeing at this time there is a manifest growth of infidelity, error and impiety; of defections, gross sins and abominations; of Contempt of God, perjuries, and unnecessary multiplying of oaths; of woful divisions, breaches, and want of brotherly love and Christian charity; besides grieving of the *Holy Spirit*, and manifold spiritual plagues every where abounding; and also the terrible judgments of the sword and plague raging in other nations, which may very soon reach us; all which are visible tokens of the Lord's anger and indignation gone out against us, and call us loudly to mourning and humiliation before the Lord; Wherefore we think it our duty to plead with all humility, that the general assembly would lay these things to heart, and appoint a solemn national fast to be religiously observed because of them; and that they would be more particular than heretofore, in enumerating the grounds and causes of the said fast, namely, Our own and our forefathers sins and defections, by covenant-breaking, and treacherous dealing with God, and the fearful indignities done to our solemn covenants in the late times, taken notice of by the assembly 1701; the blasphemous advancing the magistrate's supremacy over the house of God; the imposing and taking of sinful oaths, especially the self-contradictory *Test*; the shedding the blood of god's servants and people for not complying with the civil course of these times; the *Erastian* encroachments made upon the Headship of Christ, and the rights and privileges of his church; the encouragement which is given to all manner of errors; our backsliding from reformation principles, the intrusions made upon congregations, and the scattering of the Lord's flock; the abounding of all manner of profanity and immorality, Atheism and blasphemy, especially in our armies and fleets, which, alas! Are so great and avowed in them, that instead of serving as hedge and defence to us, their sins may provoke the Lord to bring desolating strokes both on them and us. These, and many other sins, evils and defections before mentioned and witnessed against in this Testimony (to which we refer) may very fitly be brought in among the clauses of a national fast, seeing they greatly abound in the land; and especially that sin which may be reckoned the source of all the rest, namely, the *undervaluing of redeeming love, and slighting of the Lord Jesus Christ* offered to us in the gospel, and our woful misimprovement of the means of grace, and walking unanswerably to them.

V. As we think ourselves bound thus to plead with our mother, to put away her sins and provocations, and put a stop to all her defections; so we think it our duty to plead with her to deliberate upon, and take the most proper and effectual methods for reviving the power of godliness, and the practice of gospel holiness; and particularly that our general assemblies, when they meet, would set apart diets for these ends, and would also recommend it warmly to synods, presbyteries, kirk sessions, and private Christians to consult together for promoting religion and godliness in the bounds where they live, and to have their set

times of meeting for spiritual conference, fasting, prayer and wrestling for the down pouring of the Spirit upon the whole church and land, for awakening, convincing, converting and reforming a secure and sinful people; and at these meetings to quicken, excite and exhort one another to all religious duties and Christian offices, looking earnestly to the Lord for his Spirit's influence and special blessing upon all these means and endeavours, and continuing still in the use of means, waiting for a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit, until at length the whole land arrive at the happy frame and disposition of our forefathers, when they with one consent renewed covenant with God, and dedicated themselves and their posterity unto the Lord. And that they recommend it especially to the ministers to be exemplary and actively instrumental in such religious projects and designs among their people, and even to travail in birth till Christ be formed in their souls; and carefully to observe the direction of the 7th act of assembly 1736, concerning the preaching of Christ and regeneration to them, and pressing morality in a gospel-strain; and in their ministrations to make a difference betwixt the precious and the vile, between humble, praying circumspect Christians, and formal professors; to honour them that fear the Lord, though they be poor; to speak well of them, support their characters against enemies and scoffers, and carry with them greater familiarity to them than others.

O how pleasant and desirable a sight would it be to see ministers, elders and Christians joining in such noble designs and endeavours! What a promising token of good would it be, if all the ministers and members of this church were setting about wrestling and prayer for the Lord's returning unto us by his Spirit, and endeavouring a personal and general reformation of all that is wrong among us, and in this way studying to *keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, with all lowliness, meekness and long suffering, forbearing one another in love!* These things, if gone into, we hope would tend to the glory of God, the honour and welfare of this church, the credit of the holy ministry, the edification and comfort of the Lord's people, and the healing of our present miserable rents and breaches.



ADVERTISEMENT.

IT is fit the Reader should know, that the preceding *Testimony* was signed and sent to the press before the assembly 1744; otherwise some occurrences, which have made some noise since that time, had been noticed in it, some of which I shall mention in a *Postscript* after the Adherence and subscriptions subjoined to this Testimony.



Likewise it is proper to acquaint the Reader, (lest he be surprised with the paucity of the subscribers) that there were not very many who had opportunity to see and peruse the *Testimony* before it was published; and a great part of these who did see it, though they agreed to the scope and substance of it, in regard it contained their sentiments, yet they thought not proper to subscribe it upon some prudential considerations, which (with all submission) I cannot say have the same weight with me as with them. Yet at the same time I am bound in justice to own, that sundry of these are persons whom I highly value, and reckon to be real friends of truth and reformation as well as others. Wherefore, when I found things turn out in this manner, and not as I expected, I desisted from asking more subscriptions to this *Testimony*, which (as told in the *Preface* and in the *Adherence*) was not designed to be the badge of a party, or a term of communion.—But if any now, upon seeing and considering this *Testimony* when published, with the reasons for it, shall incline to join with it, and send their subscriptions to the Printer, with such form of Adherence, Exceptions or Amendments, as they think proper, they shall be taken in, and justice done them in a second Edition, if it be called for.

As for these who have willingly offered their subscriptions to this Essay, I could not warrantably suppress them, though few, without their own consent. God may countenance the honest mints of a small number when he thinks fit. Wherefore I shall annex them here, with the form of *Adherence* which they agreed unto.



ADHERENCE.

WE, whose names are underwritten, having seen and considered the above Paper, called, A Fair and Impartial Testimony, &c. do hereby declare, That we think the scope and intention of it good, and that it doth express the sentiments of many ministers, elders and Christian people of the church of Scotland, concerning the principles, wrestlings and attainments of the said church, and concerning the defections, corruptions and evils therein mentioned. And in regard the said testimony seems to be drawn up with impartiality, plainness, and uprightness of design, not to be the badge a party, or a term of communion; but a banner for truth, a prompter to reformation, and the means of healing breaches: we humbly judge it needful and seasonable in this day of Backsliding and Division; hoping it may be useful for maintaining and preserving truth, purity and godliness in the present age, and for transmitting the same to posterity; and that it will either be some check to the progress of corruption, or a standing witness against it. Wherefore we join with the said Testimony in witnessing for the truths, and against the evils therein, specified; and in pleading with our Mother to exert herself to stop Defection, and essay Reformation. And have subscribed these presents.

Jo. Willison, M.A. Minister at Dundee.
 Jo. Gillies, M.A. Minister at Carraldstone.
 Jo. Row, M.A. Minister at Navare and Lethnot.
 Ja. Small, M.A. Minister at Carmylie.
 Dav. Blair, M.A. Minister at Brechin.
 Geo. Aitken, M.A. Minister at Montrose.
 Geo. Lyon, M.A. Minister at Longforgan.
 Geo. Marr, M.A. Minister at Murrose.
 George Peter, Elder.
 Gideon Rutherford, Elder.



POSTSCRIPT.

THE reason why some late occurrences are not noticed in the *Testimony* was given before.—Wherefore I must now add a word relating to some of them. And, 1st, concerning Mr. Leechman's sermon on prayer, first published last year, which was quarrelled by the presbytery of Glasgow, and brought before the synod, and afterwards to the assembly this year 1744. Had Mr. Leechman written what he saith in that sermon by way of a letter to a Deist or an enemy to prayer, in order to prove the reasonableness and advantages of prayer, it might have passed without observation: But for a preacher of Christ to deliver such a sermon to a Christian audience, that perhaps never heard him before, and might never hear him again, and to publish it too, in this form, to the whole world, is to me very surprising and offensive. For when he proposes to teach his Christian hearers and readers the nature of prayer, he presents God as the object of it merely as our Creator, without any relation to *Jesus Christ* the only Mediator betwixt God and man: he never speaks of God as upon a throne of grace, nor of the merit, satisfaction, or intercession of Christ, through which prayer call only be offered acceptably to God, more than the old Heathens; nor speaks he of the influence or assistance of the *Holy Spirit*, by which the duty is to be performed.—The disposition of mind which he chiefly recommends to his hearers, for acceptance with God, is all assured trust and confidence in the mercy and goodness of their Creator, without once telling them through all the sermon (which is long) of the channel through which God's mercy and goodness doth flow to men, or that he is a *consuming Fire* to sinners out of Christ. Nay, without noticing the Scripture account of the conveyance of Divine mercy, he asserts that these who pray, trusting in their Creator's mercy, shall be heard and accepted. See sermon, 2d edit. P. 7, 8, 10, 42.—I know it is said, that the preacher, notwithstanding these defects, is orthodox; and that he made sound declarations for the truth before the judicatories.—But in my humble opinion, let his after declarations when in hazard of censure be never so sound, yet the foresaid omissions in a printed sermon are so very culpable, and such a bad example to students of divinity in one that is their teacher, that the sermon ought to have been disapproved, the preacher admonished, all preachers warned against such a Christless way of preaching, and a warm recommendation given them to observe the 7th act of assembly concerning Evangelical preaching: Nay, the presbytery of Glasgow deserve thanks for the pains they had taken to enquire into that sermon, in obedience to the said act of assembly, which enjoins all preachers to have special regard and eye to Christ in all their sermons, and presbyteries to see that they do it. Oh how worthless, lifeless, sapless and fruitless must all our preachings and prayers be, if precious *Christ* be left out of them!—Mr. Leechman's sermon is one instance, among many, to shew how too well grounded these fears are, which are expressed in the *Testimony*, p. 143, that the said act of assembly is but little regarded, and that the numbers are increasing of these who preach moral duties without

213

214

relation to Christ, through whose strength all our duties are to be performed, and through whose righteousness they must be accepted.—And alas! it seems to portend little good to this poor church, when men so little versant in the Christian mediatory scheme, or so unaccustomed to evangelical preaching and teaching, are made professors of divinity, and intrusted with the education of young men for the holy ministry. Neither doth it bode well, when men, as soon as they acquire some title to a Professor's chair by the choice of a patron, or of laicks [people in distinction of clergy] of any sort, do straightway demit [resign] their pastoral charge, and push on their own translation to the chair, without any call or concurrence from the church—As that was not the practice of former times, so it looks too like the disallowed practice of these *Prophets* who *ran* before they were sent, [Jer. xxiii. 21](#). A running, alas! that greatly abounds in this day! May the Lord in mercy put a stop to it!

Another thing I must here notice: there is something dropt in the *Testimony*, p. 89. in favour of the 7th act of assembly 1722, relating to the *Marrow*, &c. which act I see is heavily charged by the Associate Presbytery in their act *concerning the doctrine of grace*, which I had not occasion to read before the *Testimony* was sent to the press. I have now again read over the assembly's act, and upon second thoughts I shall not say it is so well worded as could be wished, or that the word *causality* is fit to be used in asserting the necessity of *holiness* to salvation: but I truly believe the meaning of the assembly of 1772 was sound, and their intention good, *viz.* to disapprove every opinion or expression that tended any way to slacken our obligation to the study of holiness; and the brethren have not just ground for their harsh censure of that assembly, because of their saying, in explaining the necessity of holiness for obtaining everlasting happiness, that *it is to be meant only of obtaining the enjoyment and possession of happiness, and not of the right and title to it; and that it is dangerous to assert that holy obedience is not a federal or conditional mean, nor has any kind of causality in order to the obtaining of glory, as it seems to exclude all usefulness and influence of holy obedience, in order of means towards possession of heaven.*—This last clause of the assembly's words doth plainly limit the sense in which they disapprove the foresaid assertion, *viz.* in so far as they seem to exclude the usefulness of holiness *in order of means* to salvation. Yet the brethren, without noticing that explanatory clause, do in their act concerning the doctrine of grace, published this year, declare that the assembly 1722, by their said 7th act, have opened a wide door to Arminian and Socinian errors to overflow the church and land.—It is surprising that this heavy charge against that assembly has lien dormant for 22 years, until the most part of that assembly are in their graves; and that they did not openly complain of it at passing the act, but submitted and lived quietly in the communion of the church for many years hereafter. It is uncharitable to charge that assembly with holding opinions contrary to the *doctrine of grace*, when, in the very act they attack, the assembly profess a close adherence to our standards with respect to the doctrine of grace. And, from their own words, we have all reason to conclude they really did so, and that they held that *Believers*

215

216

have complete salvation and happiness, both as to the title to it and possession of it, only through Christ and his purchase; and that their holiness here, which is a part of their begun salvation, is also a part of Christ's purchase, as well as eternal glory; seeing it is Christ that recovers the lost image of God to us, and restores that which he took not away. And that they held, that no believer hath any thing in himself, or of his own doing, to rest upon or glory in; but that he owes all to Christ, who has obtained the whole of our salvation, and every part and degree of it, by his blood and merit. That they held all this, is evident from several places of the said act of assembly 1722, wherein they assert, according to our standards, that "God in the covenant of grace freely offers to a sinner life and salvation by Jesus Christ, and promises and gives his holy Spirit to all the elect, to make them able and willing to believe and give holy obedience."—Also they assert,

That God justifies us freely, not for any thing wrought in us or done by us, but for Christ's sake alone: not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience, to us as our righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto us only.

That our repentance doth not make any satisfaction for sin, nor is any cause of the pardon thereof: That our best works can't any way merit eternal life: that it is a precious gospel truth, that believers are free from the law as it is covenant of works, so as thereby they are neither justified nor condemned, &c.

217

From these and several other expressions of assembly 1722, we may justly conclude, that their meaning in the expressions quarrelled was sound, and they intended no hurt to the doctrine of grace: that they did not mean that a believer's holiness hath any causal influence or virtue to purchase heaven; but that it is necessary *in order of means* (as they speak) towards the possession of it, in regard that God requires holiness in every believer, as the means of preparing, and making him meet for possessing heaven. So that the assembly's sense is plainly this, That as Christ's righteousness is necessary in the way of merit and purchase for obtaining the believer's right and title to heaven, so holiness in a believer (which also Christ hath purchased) is necessary in the way of preparation and meetness for qualifying him for the possession of heaven. Now, we see, it is God himself that makes it so necessary, by fixing an inseparable connection betwixt holiness and happiness, declaring, [Heb. xii. 14.](#) that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*. Wherefore, that our brethren after all this should pass such a severe censure against the assembly's doctrine, as opening a wide door for Arminian and Socinian errors, is very unjust and unbecoming the duty of children to their mother.—And it is yet more so, for them to assert (as they do in the same place, p. 41.

without any proof for it) that *Arminian and Socinian errors have actually overflowed this church like a flood*; whereas they may see a late act of assembly, as well as older acts, condemning all Arminian and Socinian errors, viz. act 7th assembly 1736.—Had they charged some members of the church with such errors, the fault had been less; but to assert that a flood of Arminian and Socinian errors do overflow the church herself, as if all were covered with them, is a charge most terrible and shocking! I scarce have any words to answer to it, except to regret that any of the reverend and dear brethren, whom I must still regard, should allow themselves to go on in such a *Latitudinarian* way of speaking and calumniating their brethren. Some may think to excuse themselves, that it is from zeal for a good cause, and a design to promote the interest of Christ, that they speak so reproachfully of other ministers: but let such remember what Job said to his three friends when they took the same course, [Job xiii. 7](#). *Will you speak wickedly for God, and talk deceitfully for him?* After all, however ill-grounded this charge be, yet, seeing it comes from a body of men within the land, the church is called to take some course to vindicate herself and her doctrine, though it were no more but to maintain her credit among foreign churches. Surely such a bold charge from our brethren, with other considerations should at length rouse us, and prevail with the general assembly to fall in with the desire of many ministers and presbyteries, to give a testimony against these errors which abound in the land, to declare their abhorrence of them, and to give warning to all the ministers, preachers, and members of this church, to guard carefully against them, and against every appearance or approach of error.

There is not room here to notice any other thing in the brethren's *act* concerning the *doctrine of grace*, in which though there be many precious truths, yet there are also some assertions too loose, unguarded, and even bordering too near the doctrine called *Antinomian*; which should be carefully avoided, as well as that called *Neonomian*. But notwithstanding of all these uncharitable sallies, unguarded assertions, and extravagant heights, which our brethren's desire to support their interest against the established church may drive them to at present; there is ground to expect, that, after calm and cool thinking, they will not approve themselves in these things, but will come at length to a more charitable temper, and shew regard to others whom they see to be sound in the faith, and zealous for the doctrine of grace as well as themselves. And considering our brethren's great resolution, and their zeal for the purity of doctrine, I would fain hope God will yet honour them to be useful for maintaining his truths, and make them a witnessing remnant for Calvinist principles, and the doctrine of grace, against all kinds of Pelagian and Arminian errors, which this backsliding age seem too much inclined to fall in with. Upon which account I still wish well to them.

There is also joined with the foresaid act, another *act for renewing the covenant's* national and solemn league, with a *new covenant* of the brethren's framing, in which some things might be noticed: not that I quarrel the duty itself; No: I approve of covenanting work, whether it be national, presbyterial or congregational, when rightly managed and gone

218

219

about; and I pray earnestly for a covenanting frame and disposition to the whole land. I likewise own, there are several excellent things in the brethren's covenant, which we are all bound to by the word of God and our national engagements; and also in their *Confession of Sins*, there are many evils enumerate, which all ranks amongst us ought to be deeply humbled for before the Lord: but, alas! they have marred their *Confession*, by throwing into it several things which either are doubtful, or else plain mistakes or falsehoods; and yet all these must be confessed and condemned as sins and evils, as if they were the most plain and undoubted facts, and that by a solemn oath: For their confession of sins (which is very long) is adopted and sworn to in their covenant. Yea, the Associate Brethren have carried this matter to a prodigious height, by making an act, dated at Edinburgh, February 14th 1744, wherein they agree and determine, that the swearing the foresaid covenant shall be *the term of ministerial communion* with them, and likewise *the term of Christian communion* to the people, with respect to their partaking of the seals of God's covenant.—A surprising act indeed! This new oath and covenant of theirs is called in it, not *a term* but *the term* of Christian communion, as if it were the only qualification for admission required, and as if it answered for the want of others; and indeed there is not another qualification besides swearing this covenant mentioned in their act. Now, by this act, let a man be never so well qualified according to the terms Christ hath determined in his word, yet, if he have not freedom to go in to this *term* of the brethren's making, he must be excluded both from ministerial and Christian communion; *that is*, he must neither be owned as a minister of Christ, nor allowed any of the Children's bread, so far as their authority can go. Wherefore I cannot but testify against this act, as framing new terms and conditions of access to the benefits of Christ's purchase, for which the framers have no warrant in God's word; and therefore it must be a manifest usurpation and encroachment upon the Headship of the King of Zion, and an infringement upon that precious article of our Creed, *the Communion of Saints*; which is too much for any judicatory or power on earth to adventure upon. Though the foresaid oath were in things indifferent or lawful, yet it were unwarrantable to impose it as a term of communion, but much more when it is in things sinful, doubtful or false.

Ques. How do you make it appear that the brethren's new oath and covenant (which they make *the term* of communion) is in itself sinful?

Ans. Because by this oath they adopt and approve a *Confession of sins* prefixed to it, and swear by *the great name of the Lord our God*, with their right hand lifted up to the Lord, that they shall testify against the evils named in that confession, sundry of which are false in fact, calumnious, unjust and uncharitable; and yet, by the foresaid solemn oath, the takers own them to be real, just and true. As for instance, they swear that the general assembly dismissed Professor Simson without any censure or express testimony against his errors, p. 104. which is false.—Also, they swear that the taking the oath of abjuration is a national sin, p. 103. which they cannot make out. They swear that assembly 1736 adopted Professor Campbell's

220

221

error against self love, p. 106. which is false. They swear that assembly 1738 condemned the brethren's testimony in bulk, p. 107. which is not fact.—They swear that assembly 1739 condemned their *Declination*, as containing nothing but groundless prejudices, p. 107. Which is not fact.—They swear that the kind reception of Mr. Whitefield hath increased the sins of the land, and is a denying any particular form of church-government as being of Divine institution, p. 109. which is false. They swear that a scheme is now laid for uniting parties of all denominations in church-communion, in away destructive of any testimony for Christ's declarative glory, p. 110. which they can never make appear. They swear that the blessed work in the West of Scotland is a delusion, p. 110. though it hath been demonstrate to have the plain Scripture tokens of a glorious work of the Spirit of God.—They also by their oath condemn all the old persecuted Presbyterian ministers, who accepted of the liberty of preaching the gospel, under king James's toleration, as involving the land in heinous guilt:—Which is a most rash and uncharitable censure of these worthies, who were honoured to be great sufferers for truth, were men of eminent piety and tenderness of conscience, were signally owned of God in their ministry during that liberty, and never saw cause to repent of their accepting of it to their dying hour. And now, after these glorified saints and sufferers have for many years been triumphing before the throne of the Lamb, a heavy blot and slur must be cast upon their memory by a solemn oath; and they, who have not freedom to join in that calumnious oath, must be denied Christian communion: This indeed seems to be an act exceeding hard and tyrannical. Alas! there are thousands who are appointed to swear this oath, and the things above mentioned, besides many other things in it, who cannot say they know any thing of the truth of them from their own proper knowledge, but only have them by hearsay or by information from others: and yet they must swear to the truth of them as fully as if they had been eye or ear-witnesses of them, or had read all the histories concerning them. Now, what is this but to make people swear rashly or inconsiderately, or upon implicit faith? which is contrary to the Bible, that requires us to swear *in truth, judgment, and righteousness*, [Jer. iv. 2.](#) and also contrary to our Confession of Faith, which declareth, chap. 22. *That whosoever taketh an oath, must avouch nothing therein, but that he is fully persuaded is the truth.* O that God in mercy would open the eyes of those who impose this oath, and these who are drawn in or intend to take it, that they may bethink themselves, repent, and proceed no further! For *because of swearing the land mourneth* already, and there is no need to add to the grounds of this mourning.

Likewise, in the foresaid oath and covenant, there are some things ambiguous, obscure and doubtful, which great numbers of the takers know not the meaning of, and so cannot swear them in *judgment and righteousness*; as for instance, when they abjure *Independency and Latitudinary Tenets*, these are words very general, dark and dubious, to which the imposers may affix any meaning they think proper. Now, seeing it is commonly granted that the words of an oath ought to be very clear and plain, and these which are dubious may be

222

223

refused; what a cruel thing must it be to excommunicate all these sincere Christians and tender consciences who may scruple to swear either to or against what they know not! I am sure, there are many valuable ministers of Jesus Christ, and precious sons of Zion, whom Christ doth honour and admit to near communion with himself, who will not adventure to swear such an oath; and will our brethren, notwithstanding, take it on them to reject them as earthen pitchers, and refuse all communion with them? Oh, where have they their Master's warrant to act so, or to exclude his redeemed ones from his table, and the food he hath provided for them, for refusing an oath of their framing, containing so many things false, uncharitable and dark? when in the mean time these *excluded persons* appear evidently to be the *Friends of Christ*, whom he himself invites most heartily, saying to them, [Cant. v. 1.](#)—*Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.*

224

I acknowledge that our brethren appear and declare for many things valuable and excellent, for which I wish there were a true universal zeal throughout the land; but, when they mix so many other things choking with these in their *Testimonies* and *Covenants*, how can they expect that people of tender consciences should swallow them. Nay, by this way they give occasion to many to slight and speak evil of the precious things they stand up for.—My reverend brethren may believe (if they please) that I write not these things with any ill will against them, but out of love to them and others, to prevent more sin in the land, and to bring them, if possible, to a more moderate, charitable and Christ like temper, that they may be willing to break down these partition walls they are setting up between themselves and others of Christ's ministers and people. O how lamentable a thing is it, that orthodox and zealous preachers of Christ should be carried away to such extravagant heights, by the intemperate zeal and headstrong humours of others who join with them! that they should go about this manner to divide and distract the flock of Christ, and to rend and tear the members of his body one from another; yea, and to rear up partition walls in the midst of his church so high, that these upon one side cannot get over them to hold communion with the other! Is this good service to the Lord Jesus Christ! Is this the way to promote his cause and interest in the world? Is this the way to heal breaches and promote union among the true friends and lovers of Christ, which he makes the duty of all faithful gospel Ministers? Is not our glorious Master the *prince of Peace*? Hath he not said, *Blessed are the peace makers*? Was it not he that prayed for the union and peace of his church? Was it not he that recommended peace to us, and enjoined us to *pray for the peace of Jerusalem*? Let none mistake me, as if I were for peace on any terms; for they may see by the foregoing *Testimony* I am for *truth* as well as *peace*, and desire through grace to be zealous for both.

225

Some, who have seen this *Testimony*, object, That it is not impartial with respect to Mr. Whitefield's success while he was in Scotland. The plain truth is, several things were said relative to it, where he is mentioned, p. 176, which were dropped to gratify some of the subscribers, who were not then satisfied as to the facts narrated. But, since that time I am

well informed of the lasting good effects of his ministry upon not a few in and about Edinburgh and elsewhere, who once were careless and profane, but now are wonderfully changed and reformed, and still living as becometh Christians, persevering in the ways of the Lord; though at the same time I know no reason to make him the instrument of that extraordinary work at Cambuslang, Kilsyth and other places, but to ascribe it, under God, to the ministry of their own worthy pastors, whom God made instrumental both to begin and carry on that work a good time before Mr. Whitefield came to preach at any of these places. But seeing God hath honoured Mr. Whitefield's ministry in other nations and countries (though ordained a minister of the church of England) and also had opened his eyes so far, as to become Calvinist and sound in the doctrine of grace, and to witness against several corruptions of the English church, for which he was persecuted and under process; and seeing he had conformed to us in doctrine and worship, professed to lye open to instruction as to our constitution and government, and was come at length to assert openly *Christ to be the King and Head of his church, and that the church of Scotland was the best constitute national church in the world*; and also had wrote and said some other things that gave ground to hope that his eyes might soon be opened to see the evil of Prelacy; and in the mean time he was most indefatigable in preaching Christ to sinners, and remarkably owned of God in his ministry: To have refused a kind reception to a stranger and persecuted man, in such circumstances when he came among us, had neither been charitable nor generous. Now, for the brethren to make this reception such a sin, that none can be admitted to baptism or the Lord's supper without condemning it by a solemn oath, is most surprising; especially considering they were the first themselves who recommended him to the people of Scotland, and that in very strong terms! Surely it becomes us to be silent, and adore the sovereignty of the great God, in employing whom he will to promote his interest and kingdom in the world. If God think fit to make use of Mr. Whitefield or other Methodists to turn sinners from their evil ways, to seek after a Saviour, and God through him, we should not oppose it, but let *them alone, lest haply we be found fighting against God*. We must not limit an Agent that is infinitely wise and sovereign in his actings, who may raise up the instruments of his glory from churches and societies he pleases, and sometimes glorifies his free grace the more by bringing them from these airths it could have been least expected. And frequently God doth honour and employ some to awaken, convince, convert and reclaim sinners from their evil ways, who yet remain unenlightened all their days as to several points of truth themselves: witness Luther and many of our reformers. To confine an infinitely sovereign Lord to our ways and means of working in advancing his kingdom, is it sin most grieving and provoking unto God.—He makes it one of his greatest quarrels with his professing people in the wilderness, that *they tempted God, and limited the holy One of Israel*, [Psal. lxxviii. 41](#). It is fit then that we lay our hands upon our mouths, and adore him that *doth*

226

227

according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: And none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what dost thou? [Dan. iv. 35.](#)

I doubt not but some may quarrel me and this *Testimony*, for making too free with the Associate Brethren: but they may see I have been as plain and free with others, and even with the established church, relating to things I judge wrong; and this seemed to be necessary to render the *Testimony* the more impartial. But, after all, when I look inward, and view the sins of my own heart, and the sad corruption of my nature, besides outward defects; I have reason to blush and be ashamed to take notice of the sins and failings of others; and even to lie in the dust, and cry, *Unclean, unclean*; and with much self-abhorrence to look towards the blood of Jesus, that cleanseth us from all sin. May the holy Spirit apply it to me and the whole land!

I shall now conclude with my interest wishes and prayers,

that the Lord may excite a praying remnant, to wrestle and be importunate with him for sparing mercy to these guilty nations; and that he would revive a covenanted work of reformation through Britain and Ireland, and the dominions thereto belonging, from which these lands have woefully departed; and uphold and encourage all who breathe after reformation, and the coming of Christ's kingdom in the world; and even countenance more and more these instruments who, according to the light given them, labour with earnestness to awaken perishing sinners from their lost natural estate, to flee to a crucified Jesus for safety from sin and wrath; and, wherein any of them remain unenlightened, that the Lord would send out his light and truth, to lead them, and graciously deliver them from all mistakes, errors and corruptions whatsoever: That what they see not, the *Father of lights* may teach them, that so they may be honoured more and more to bring multitudes from following sinful courses, to the ways of true religion and gospel-holiness; and from resting on their own righteousness, or a form of godliness, to come and embrace him who is the *Lord our Righteousness*, and follow him whithersoever he goeth.

And particularly,



That the Lord would come and revive his work in Scotland, that once was famous through all the churches, and esteemed one of the most bright and shining, *Candlesticks* of Christ in the world, but now under a lamentable decay of zeal for pure religion and reformation; and that he would cause us remember with godly sorrow from whence we have fallen, repent, and do our first works.—That he would pity these who, *Gallio*-like, are indifferent and unconcerned about our defections, and the grounds of the Lord's controversy which he is pleading with the land, and awaken these who *are at ease in Zion*, in such a time, and would fain sit down, *Issachar*-like, and *couch under the burden*.—That he would come suddenly to his temple, even in a national way, and sit as a Refiner and Purifier of silver, and purify the sons of Levi, and cast out buyers and sellers out of his house.—That he would in mercy shut that door whereby a corrupt ministry enters into the church, and raise up a faithful, zealous and reforming ministry through the land, and make all ranks among us concerned to attain to the reforming spirits and dispositions of our fathers.—Oh! when shall we come their length in reformation!

229

That the Lord would help us to bless him for his astonishing kindness to this land, in such a backsliding, withering and decaying time, in vouchsafing to water several spots of his vineyard here and there with the refreshing rain of his Spirit: And that he would continue, increase, and spread the shower, until the whole garden be watered; that so our dry ground may become a green pasture, and our wilderness blossom as the rose.—That in his free mercy he would forgive our ingratitude for former kindness, preserve us from the errors, power and cruelty of Papists, and avert these black clouds of wrath which now threaten us; and that, instead of pouring out the vials of indignation on us which we deserve, he would pour out a spirit of repentance and reformation upon all degrees of men from the highest to the lowest.—That amidst the reelings, shakings, backslidings and divisions of these times, he would preserve pure religion, and support all these who desire to cleave to the Lord Jesus, love him in sincerity, and witness for his truths and ways;—That he would encourage them under all their discouragements, and keep them from being carried down the stream of defection with others.—That he would unite the hearts and minds of all that desire honestly to witness against the evils of the day, and help them to temper their zeal with knowledge, wisdom and meekness; and graciously forgive all these who fail in this respect, rectify their mistakes, and honour them to be instruments of his glory in the land.

230

This is and shall be the earnest prayer of

Jo. Willison.

July 9th, 1744.

*This Adherence to this Testimony was signed at Hespieshaw in Teviotdale, on the 26th
of July 1744, by*

Tho. Hardie, Elder.



POSTSCRIPT.

Containing Remarks upon Mr. Leechman's sermon, and upon the Acts of the Associate Presbytery, concerning the doctrine of grace, and the renewing of the Covenants; and upon their act anent [regarding] the terms of Ministerial and Christian Communion, February fourteen, 1744. Together with some Observations relating to Mr. Whitefield's success while he was in Scotland. And, lastly, Some concluding wishes and ejaculations for pity to these lands, and for the revival reformation and true Christianity therein.

FINIS.

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APPENDIX

A Complimentary Subject Index to Willison's Testimony

Compiler's note: This subject index is not exhaustive and meant only to supplement the "Contents" found in the work itself. When there is an indented list, either the first entry is of the same subject matter or the indented list that follows contains different subjects found on the same page. At times, subjects may occur more than once in the list. The list mainly follows the chronological sequence of pages and subjects found therein. Therefore, various subjects will be found more than once.

GENERAL

Preface	iii
Testimony	25
Advertisement	210
Adherence	211
Postscript, 1 st	212
Contents	231
Postscript, 2 nd	234
Subscriber's Names	235

PREFACE

Popishness	ix, xxii
Corruptions listed	viii - ix
Acts of Synods against corruptions	xii
Disregard of Synods	xiii
Ministers with no scruples of patronage or error	xiv
Men with no scruples for orthodoxy appointed as professors and masters	xiv
Acceptation of errors	xv
Luther & David Ps. cxix — against loss of truth	xix
Truth not sacrificed to preserve peace	xix
Peace as Judgment	
Jeremiah 9:3; Rev. 21:8	xx

War — France & Spain	xxi
----------------------	-----

TESTIMONY

Aurelius & Dioclesian persecutions	26
Druids	26
Paladius; Lollards of Kyle; Luther; Melanchthon; Patrick Hamilton	28
John Wicliff; John Huss; Burning of Mr. Hamilton	29
George Wishard; John Rough; Jon Knox; John Wilcock; Mr. Craig; John Erkin of Dun;	
Parliament & Reformation - Confession of Faith	
Cromwell	40
Invades and oppresses Scots	40
Charles II — King 1651	41
Laws over the Church	42
Clarification of the original WCF 23 (This may be another incident [1649] after the 1647 ratification and exception stated by James Bannerman in his book, "The Church of Christ" p 179.)	37ff.
Death of James Guthrie — 1660	43
Decapitated and his head placed in one of the ports in the city of Edinburgh	
Death penalty of Charles II against preachers	45
Destruction of Family Worship	45
Forced denunciation of vows	46
Persecution to the death	47, 48
Persecution by Magistrate	51
Subscription etc.	57
Qualifications for elder	61
Colony to America	61
Confessional Subscription	62; 79
Minister visitation	64
Schools	64

Westminster Confession 23.3; 26.6	66
Renewal of covenant vows by ministers	67 (bottom) ff.
Sins against vows	68
Civil Magistrate & Church — tensions	69ff.
Profaning of the Lord's Day that came with union with England Episcopal worship opposed	71-74
The abandonment of Family worship etc.	72
Worship deteriorated	72-73; 75
Humility of Divines under God's just punishment	75
Power of Presbyterian ministers to purge scandalous and erroneous ministers	76
Riots	85
Security of the people found under King George—not God.	85
Mr. James Webster against gross false teachings of Mr. Simson — Arminianism etc.	86
Heresies stated in a way that they would seem consonant with the Westminster Standards	87
Marrow of modern Divinity laid before 1620 Assembly Arguments from natural reason Exceptions detailed Rebuke of ministers not to teach false doctrine ignored Sermons watered down, old doctrine “harsh”	88
Church elects officers; Acts 1:15, 23 ; 6:2 ; 8:14 ; 13:3 ; 14:23 ; 16:9 ; 1 Jn. 4:1 ; 2 Jn. 10	93
Christian choice of pastors	94,95, 98, 99, 103, 104
Acts 6 ; 14:23 etc., original languages	105
Evils no longer sensed	95
Unchristian contentions in judicatories	97

Scattering of the flock	
Simonatical practices, effects of	
National Covenant	98
Patrons	101, 102
Church planting	
Rom. 12:1 ; 2 Cor. 5:20-10:1 ; Philemon 9,10 ; 1 Thess. 2:7	106, 107
Rom. 14:13, 19, 21	107
1 Jn. 4:1 ; Mt. 7:15-16	108
2 Jn. 10 ; Acts 17:11 ; Jn. 10:4, 5	109
Eusebeius, Turretine	109
Wicked Shepherds, sheep scattering, Jer. 23:1-2	110
Eze. 34	111
God visits church with rebukes <i>via</i> attacks on her	
Constitution	
Independent schemes of church govt., new improvements	
Fault finding in the Confession	
Democracy	
The Lord' rebuke	113
Arian errors of Professor Simons still taught though he was forbidden to do so	115
Disregard for the flock and the Lord's discipline	116
Calls received apart from Presbyteries	118
Inferior numbers for a quorum	119
Reversal of unconstitutional acts	120
Innovations in preaching	
God's providence in causing leaders to act foolishly on measures	122
Selection of pastors	127
Multiple days used for examination of gifts, home visits, preaching by candidate	

Causeless grounds for not calling a minister, appearance, doctrine, etc.	128
No obligation to laws of men	129
Protests against assembly, synod considered criminal	132
National fasting	140
Preaching against loose moral discourses & neglecting Christ	143
Little of Christ in people	144
Not much difference between heathen moralisms & preaching	
Morality verses Christ's righteousness in preaching	145
Preaching and the moral law	146
Christ the only source of strength	147
Moral preachers and presupposition of natural power	
1 Cor. 1:18, 21, 24; 2:2; Acts 2:36, 37; 10:43, 44; 11:20-21 on preaching	149
Preaching	150
Eloquent moralisms that exclude Christ	
Entertainment	
Christless moral sermons	
Indicators of when God is about to leave a people	151
God gives people up to lifeless moral sermons	
Sermon applications	152, 153
Self love, law of nature sufficient for happiness	
Catechism revised with out approval	154
Rebukes of the Lord, persistence in sin	155
Act against Church censures by magistrate	
Magistrate & power of the keys	156
Contrary to Confession	
WCF 30.1,2; 23.3	
Erastianism	
Headship of Christ, not upheld	157
William Wishart	158

Charitable toward heathens	
Soft proceedings against	
Innovative words on Confessional matters	
Plain & ordinary sense of words necessary	159
Heretics put orthodox sense in their words	
Rebuke to those who do not hold plains sense, Titus 1:3 .	
Zeal for truth & humility needed toward an erring church	164
Uncharitable attacks against weaker brethren	167
Marking narrow failings, mistakes, magnifying errors instead of covering sins (as Christ enjoins)	
Flock scattering by those overzealous for truth	168, 169
Judicatories overturn foundation of govt., make defections greater than they are	170
Episcopal Church	171
Differ only in govt., defections of, drift into Arminianism, corruption of worship in, slide into Popish superstitions, middle state for souls after death, corruption of Lord's Supper (as sacrifice), absolution by priest, baptismal regeneration	
Revivals	173
1732 or 1733, Saltzburg Germany, conversion from Popish superstition, 20,000 people, loss of worldly goods to enjoy pure preaching of gospel;	
1735 -1736, Moravia Germany;	
1736, Northampton New England, Jonathan Edwards	
Revivals (cont.)	175
Oxford England, Methodists,	
Whitefield, Gilbert Tennant	
Revivals, errors in,	176
Pretended visions, prophecy, great multitudes, great attainments, Satan leading into error	
Praying societies in Edinburgh	176
Whitefield in Scotland 1741, Cambuslang 1742	
Psalm singing	176

Revival, effects of	179
Revival, opposition to by seceders zealous for truth	181
1 Cor. 1:27	182
Revival, reactions in	186
Bodily faintings, ecstasies, examples in Scripture— Dan. 8:27 ; 10:8, 9	
Examples of effects of revival on Reformers	187
Jonathan Edwards on revival	187
Need for awareness of sin	188
Strict subscription	
Against natural reason	
Trinity	
Against:	189
Popish inclinations	
Holy Days held equal to Lord's Day	
Arminianism, Pelagianism	
Doctrines that exalt self	
Self love	
Magistrates assuming power of keys	
Erastianism	
Toleration of sects	
Sacramental test	
Against:	190
Swearing by kissing gospels	
Those in denial of:	
National Church	
Confession	
Subordinate judicatories	
Maintaining independency	
Power of keys in hands of community not officers	
Sins:	191
Atheism	
Witchcraft	
Fortune	
Self seeking	

Neglect of Family worship	
Sins (cont.)	192
Opposition to Holy Spirit	
Forgetting God's mercies	
Sins (cont.)	193
Following men's teachings	
Decaying zeal to uphold truth	193
Misapplication of God's word	
Contempt of others who do not agree	
Natural reason above supernatural revelation	
Elevation of religion of nature	
Freewill	
Christ as moral pattern	
Confession of Faith, outward consent to & scarce reading of	194
Abuse of Lord's Day	195
Parental neglect	196
Ministers, unsent but go anyway	197
Confession of Faith, warning against errorists not adhering to; WCF 30.1, 2	202
Remedies for unaccountable practices	203
Presbyteries have free access to moderate	
Church Planting	204
Freedom to call minister without undue influence,	205
Qualifications for ministers	
doctrine	
godliness	
experimental religion	
Ruling elders	206
Reproach on the Confession of Faith	220

Indexes

Index of Scripture References

2 Kings

[24:3-4](#)

2 Chronicles

[2 34:33 36:15-16](#)

Job

[13:7 30:15](#)

Psalms

[38:8 48:13 78:5-7 78:41 88:15 94:16 101:3 102:18 119 119:72 119:120 145:4](#)

Proverbs

[18:14](#)

Song of Solomon

[5:1](#)

Isaiah

[22:12 43:10 43:10 43:12 44:8 58:1](#)

Jeremiah

[3:22 4:2 6:15 8:12 9:3 9:3 11:10-11 14:3 22:7-9 23:1-2 23:1-2 23:21 30:11](#)

Ezekiel

[8:19 34 43:11 43:11](#)

Daniel

[4:35 5:6 8:27 8:27 10:8-9](#)

Hosea

[13:5-7](#)

Amos

[8:2-3](#)

Micah

[3:11-12](#)

Habakkuk

[3:16](#)

Matthew

[7:15-16 7:15-16 10:32](#)

Luke

[24:48](#)

John

[5:33 10:4-5 10:4-5 15:27](#)

Acts

1:8 1:13-15 1:15 1:15 1:23 2 2:14 2:36-37 2:36-37 6 6 6:2 6:2 8:14 8:14 9
10:40 10:43-44 10:44 11:20-21 11:20-21 13:3 13:3 14:23 14:23 14:23 14:23 16:9
16:9 16:29-30 17:11 17:11 22:15 22:18 24:25 26:19

Romans

12:1 12:1 14:13 14:13 14:19 14:19 14:21 14:21

1 Corinthians

1:18 1:18 1:21 1:21 1:24 1:24 1:27 2:2 2:2 2:2 14:24-25

2 Corinthians

5:20 5:20-10:1 8:19 10:1 12:14

1 Thessalonians

2:7 2:7 2:11

Titus

1:3 1:13

Philemon

1:9 1:9-10 1:10

Hebrews

12:6 12:14

1 John

4:1 4:1 4:1 4:1

2 John

1:10 1:10 1:10 1:10

Jude

1:3

Revelation

2:2 2:2 2:14-15 2:14-16 2:20 3:11 11:3 11:7 12:11 21:8 21:8

Index of Latin Words and Phrases

Christus est summus Deus: [66](#)

cum grano salis: [66](#)

cum suffragiis creassent: [61](#)

in cumulo: [52](#)

in verbo principis: [22](#)

per suffragia creassent: [61](#)

summus Deus: [66](#) [66](#)

vinculum pacis: [108](#)

vinculum veritatis: [108](#)

Index of Pages of the Print Edition

iv v vi vii viii ix x xi xii xiii xiv xv xvi xvii xviii xix xx xxi xxii xxiii xxiv 26 27 28 29 30 31 32
33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63
64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94
95 96 97 98 99 100 101 102 103 104 105 106 107 108 109 110 111 112 113 114 115 116 117 118
119 120 121 122 123 124 125 126 127 128 129 130 131 132 133 134 135 136 137 138 139 140 141
142 143 144 145 146 147 148 149 150 151 152 153 154 155 156 157 158 159 160 161 162 163 164
165 166 167 168 169 170 171 172 173 174 175 176 177 178 179 180 181 182 183 184 185 186 187
188 189 190 191 192 193 194 195 196 197 198 199 200 201 202 203 204 205 206 207 208 209 210
211 212 213 214 215 216 217 218 219 220 221 222 223 224 225 226 227 228 229 230 231