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W. D. Macray.

John Dunn,

**JOHN DUNN  
ABERDEEN.**

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JOHN DUMM

THE ABSURDITY AND PERFDY OF ALL  
AUTHORITATIVE

116  
JOHN BROWN  
ABERDEE

# TOLERATION

OF

GROSS HERESY, BLASPHEMY, IDOLATRY, POPERY,  
IN BRITAIN.

IN TWO LETTERS TO A FRIEND.

IN WHICH

The Doctrine of the Westminster Confession of Faith relative to Toleration of a False Religion, and the power of the Civil Magistrate about Sacred Matters; and the Nature, Origin, Ends and Obligation of the National Covenant and Solemn League are candidly represented and defended.



BY JOHN BROWN, MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL IN  
HADDINGTON.



ALL RIGHT IS DERIVED FROM GOD-----AGREEABLE AND SUBORDINATE TO HIS LAW AS ITS SUPREME RULE-----AND PROMOTES HIS GLORY AS ITS CHIEF END.

—:~::~:—

GLASGOW:

PRINTED BY STEPHEN YOUNG, PRINCE'S STREET;  
AND SOLD BY THE BOOKSELLERS.

1803.

1950

1951



## TO THE PUBLIC.

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THE praises of this Letter-writer for devotion, for learning, and soundness of principle are in all the Churches. Although it were a just tribute to his memory from one, who received the finishing parts of his education for the Holy ministry under so great a master, to acknowledge the advantages which he reapt from his instructions and most impressive admonitions, yet he considers his fame so much above any praise which he could bestow, that he declines every attempt of this nature. His only object, could he enjoy the felicity of succeeding in it, is to recommend these Letters to the perusal of his Christian Friends, among either his former or present connections; and with this express design he hath taken the liberty of prefixing, by desire, these few pages to the present Edition.

He cannot help flattering the fond expectation, that by the blessing of God, these Letters might yet be the means of recovering many an honest mind to the truth, who, yielding too soon to the charms of novelty, have, without due investigation, he is afraid, adopted the fashionable opinions, respecting the power of the magistrate in religion, and the obligation of our public Covenants, which these pages so pointedly condemn. Were his testimony any additional inducement to a perusal, he would say, that in moving through the tumultuous scenes in the Associate Synod, in which it was either his fortune or misfortune to bear a part, he was more indebted to these Letters, for establishing his mind and repelling the very illiberal objections of Brethren, who had fallen out of conceit with their own principles, than any other human composition on the subject which had fallen in his way. Witness that tingling



interrogation put by our Author to gentlemen of this discription, in the 63 page of the copy of these Letters which now lies before me. \*

“ Sir have you in an honest and orderly manner renounced these Confessions of Faith as plainly and publicly as you solemnly avowed, if not also subscribed a stedfast adherence to the Westminster one at your ordination? Dare you one day call God angels and men to witness that you sincerely avow that Confession of Faith to be the Confession of your Faith, and that you sincerely believe the **WHOLE DOCTRINE** contained in it to be founded on the word of God, and will constantly adhere to and maintain the same all the days of your life;—and the next, slight, reproach, revile, and attempt to confute an important article of it? (2.) Have you suffered as much for a zealous maintenance of the intrinsic power of the Church, and of Christ’s sole headship over her, as his spiritual kingdom, as the compilers and cordial adherers to that Confession have done? If not, modesty as well as equity might have restrained your revilings.” &c.

Published about the time when Great Britain felt so indignant at the passing of the bill in Parliament, repealing certain penal statutes which the wisdom of our ancestors had enacted for preventing the growth of Popery in this Protestant country, it is extremely probable that this event was the immediate occasion of the publication of these Letters at that period. The mind of this judicious and holy man was much impressed with the injury which the Protestant Cause would suffer in the issue by such indulgences. The authoritative toleration of a false religion and an idolatrous worship, he considered to be contrary to the word of God, as well as hurtful to the true interests of a Protestant country;---contrary in a parti-

\* Page 75 of this Edition.

cular manner to our Confession of Faith and Covenants;—and subversive of the principles hitherto maintained by the Religious Association to which he belonged.—But there were other reasons for this publication. He knew with deep concern the sentiments of some of his Brethren, in favour of what is called liberty of conscience and toleration of religious opinion. He perceived too well the inconsistency of retaining such sentiments and acting an honest part, in prosecuting the ends of the Secession Testimony; and therefore as if premonished of the heavy calamities which a rage for these opinions would in the course of a few years produce in the Secession, he stands forth as a sagacious and faithful watchman, and sounds the alarm in these Letters, that all might be apprized of the danger. And who can cease from remarking with much surprise the very order and train of opinion, which Mr. Brown had investigated with such penetration, and condemned with such evidence from the word of God, in 1780, brought forward by the advocates for the New Light scheme on both sides of the Secession, and adopted as the basis of their association, about 20 years after?

In the first of these Letters our Author, in opposition to the tolerant system, asserts and proves this great Scriptural and Protestant Doctrine, “*that it belongs to the Christian magistrate to suppress gross heresy, blasphemy and idolatry,*” with such force of evidence, as at once to establish the doctrine, and to repel every objection which objectors could offer. In the second, the doctrine of vows and covenants is rescued from the misrepresentations of anti-covenanters; and the obligation particularly of the public Covenants of Britain and Ireland upon posterity, is maintained and established by arguments which adversaries will find a most arduous task to overthrow.

The abridged sketch of the history of the controversy, in the introduction to these Letters, presents some very profitable information to the intelligent reader. Restricting our observation to the Christian world, we find the Church of Rome, among her other usurpations during the gloomy ages of her reigning superstition, making the civil magistrate a mere tool to her corrupt and ambitious purposes. The Protestant Reformers, in opposition to these abuses, and in vindication of the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures respecting the Christian magistrate, restored to him, in their different Confessions, a distinguished power, both in the reformation and preservation of the true religion; and till of very late years, this has been a fixed principle of Protestant Presbyterians, in the different Churches where Presbytery hath been professed.

We commonly form our estimate of characters, from the principles and behaviour of those with whom they discover a fondness to associate; and perhaps the rule may be extended without impropriety to the principles and behaviour of Churches. What lover of truth then, and of the principles hitherto held upon the subject by Presbyterians, can behold without regret such a respectable body, of Presbyterians as the Seceders in Scotland, in their late efforts for renouncing all connection between Church and State, and consequent denial of any power to the civil magistrate in the matters of religion, so fondly patronizing opinions, adopted only by Seceders so formally condemned by them in their Act and Testimony;—many of whose principles they cannot but abhor, and an association with whom would be the finishing reproach of their character?

The ancient Donatists, a sect of Arian separatists, who appeared about the beginning of the 4th Century, seem to have been among the first who held out

these opinions to the Christian world. Feeling the weight of the arm of power for their schismatical practices, by way of reprimand, they stripped the magistrate of all power in religion;—maintaining that he had no more power about religious matters than any private person, and refusing him the right of suppressing the propagators of doctrines different from those professed by the Church, or the observers of a different form of worship. From them the German Anabaptists adopted the same views. Then the Socinians and remonstrant Arminians, whenever the magistrate ceased to patronize their cause. The English Independents during the time of the Long Parliament were the zealous supporters of the same opinions. In their rage for liberty of conscience, they formed the strongest opposition in the Westminster Assembly which the Presbyterians had to encounter. Through their influence that venerable body was much embarrassed in their proceedings; and by their means, certain passages of the Confession of Faith never obtained the ratification of the English Parliament. The English Dissenters of the present age are generally in the same views, especially the Socinians, the Arians, and the Quakers, who have most to dread from the Laws of the Land against their blasphemies. And who knows not that the high reputation of Mr. Locke as a Philosopher, as well as his political principles as a Republican, has given these opinions such an air of respectability, that many youth in the Universities have been thereby inclined to embrace them?

It was the felicity of Scotland to be long a stranger to those unscriptural notions. Mr. John Glas, Minister of the Parish of Tealing commencing a furious Independent, respecting the power of the civil magistrate, and the obligation of our Covenants on posterity, drew away a considerable number of dis-

ciples after him. His principles and conduct are formally condemned by Seceders in their Act and Testimony. From his time the writings of the infidel philosophers of France, against all establishments of religion, that Christianity itself might become a more easy prey to their intrigues, were so universally read, that multitudes not aware of the tendency of their principles, nor of the designs of these wicked men, have embraced with much warmth these dangerous opinions, rendered popular by the pompous title of "Principles of Religious Liberty."!!

It is therefore an occurrence none of the least marvellous in this age of wonders, that Seceders, the very basis of whose foundation, as a religious body, is a more pure administration of Presbytery, agreeably to the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Catechisms, and Covenants, should so completely forget themselves, as to embrace with such uncommon ardour, opinions so evidently subversive of their own principles;—as to revive a controversy, in which their forefathers combated with such zeal, and displayed such force of argument;—as to build up what these worthy Patriots destroyed, by espousing the opinions, and taking the very men by the hand whom they experienced to be such a dead weight upon them, in that Reformation which they struggled so hard to carry forward. Such a surrender of principle is doubtless a phenomenon of its kind; and promises but little to the cause of Reformation, from men, who by their vow at ordination had become pledged "to follow no divisive course from the Reformed and Covenanted Church of Scotland, either *by falling in with the defections of the times*, or giving themselves up to a detestable indifferency, or neutrality, in the fore-said Covenanted cause," but now have pressed a measure subversive of the very foundation upon which that Church is settled.

Much to the injury of truth, and I am sorry to add, to the discredit of the Seceſſion, a period of all others the moſt unfavourable in the annals of our country for ſuch a diſcuſſion, was choſen, for agitating the queſtion reſpecting the power of the civil magiſtrate in matters of religion. Never, perhaps, was a queſtion involving the fate of any part of revealed truth, treated with as little ceremony or concern to come at truth. The aſſumption, that there was ſomething wrong in the doctrine taught in our Confefſion, our Catechiſms, and Covenants reſpecting the power of the civil magiſtrate in matters of religion, was adopted at once\*. A freedom this which theſe gentlemen would have reckoned neither juſt nor honourable, had it been uſed only with their own character. Men *ſcrupled* at the power aſcribed to the magiſtrate in religious matters in our Confefſion, &c. ! No proof of error was adduced. No judicial reaſoning was inſtituted on the point. A cool and diſpaſſionate diſcuſſion, in order either to vindicate the doctrine hitherto maintained by Seceſſors, and to aſſure ſcruplers that their ſcruples were unfounded, or to correct the error if any error exiſted, was reſuſed. Aſſertion was ſuſtained as proof poſitive upon the matter. A deed of Synod in the year 17— making every thing in the Confefſion and Catechiſms, reſpecting the magiſtrates' power in religion, a matter of forbearance, and changing completely the queſtion in the Formula, reſpecting the obligation of our Covenants on poſterity, was

\* Under the name of Scruplers a conſiderable number of the members of court were already fixed in the new opinions reſpecting the magiſtrate's power in matters of religion and the obligation of our public Covenants. All theſe were of conſequence parties and prejudged, when the meaſure of a change was propoſed. Inſtead, however, of joining Mr Frazer in his petition or, remaining neutral till the court decide, theſe were the moſt zealous and active by ſpeaking and voting to carry the change. How could truth or an impartial deciſion be obtained here?

judged the smoothest method of dropping these articles out of our religious profession, and of completely shifting the foundation of the Secession Church. This overture, brought forward in April 1796, by a majority of a Committee, being judged by the leading faction of the Synod too strong a measure, the expedient of a preamble\* to the Formula was next adopted. By this preamble while the leaders affected to give way, the original object was still pursued. An ambiguity of language, since confessed to have been studied by the original framers, imposed upon the lovers of peace and the friends of our principles, and afforded an opportunity for dishonest men to persevere in their opinions and their measures, to the subversion of the doctrine of that Church, which they were understood at their ordination to have pledged themselves to support.

And is this the Scriptural method either of protecting truth, or of coming at it? The method for such a respectable body to do justice to their acknowledged principles, to do justice to themselves, justice to their people, justice to the present generation, to posterity or to the truth itself? By this precedent, men may arise who shall scruple at each of the articles of revealed religion in succession; and in the same manner a Synod may dispose of the question, and curtail the articles of their belief. If this be the *new* method of protecting truth, and of preserving the purity of a Church, the old one of discussion, and of trial of all things by the word of God, and holding fast that which is good, is vastly better.

But "the article of the power ascribed to the magistrate in our Confession, &c. about religious matters is of so little consequence, particularly to the

\* An explanation of the Formula upon these two points; but how discovered of double meaning and so ensnaring to the consciences of men in the matter of an oath.

Secession Church, that no candid or liberal man would hesitate to bear with a brother, whatever his views might "be about that."—So say the advocates for change. But let any man who reads these pages gravely consider, how much can be adduced from the Holy Scriptures in condemnation of the indulgence asked: Let him consider how much can be said in favour of all the power allowed to the magistrate by the principles of the Secession Church: Let him recollect the eminent advantages the Church of Christ would enjoy by the co-operation of the Christian magistrate in behalf of the true religion according to the powers assigned him in the word of God, and then say, if it be the trifling, insignificant article, many would suppose. For a Church voluntarily to divest herself of those aids from the ordinance of magistracy, which God hath assigned her in his word, and which his Providence hath given her an opportunity of asserting and confessing, is indeed a very high demand for any to make, and a still more serious concession for her to grant. In this point of view, the stand which my Brethren and I have been compelled, by the resolute proceedings of the ruling faction in the Synod to make, in maintenance of our principles, is neither the unreasonable nor unjustifiable, and unprecedented separation, which those who compelled us to it would suppose. It is a most serious matter to surrender any part of truth we became bound at ordination to maintain and defend; to acquiesce in measures that affect the constitution of the Secession Church in a most material point; to be accessory to the divesting her of that protection and help, which God in his wisdom and goodness hath assigned his Church; and how could these consequences have been avoided, had we gone along with the Synod in her measures?

But since the vote of Synod in September 1799,



retaining the preamble has led to a separation, and some considerably active in pressing measures now find their people have deserted their ministry, their next endeavour is to assure them that "after all there is *no difference!*" The Synod are the very same they ever were, and so are we, add they, if we had not left them.——That there are worthy ministers in connection with the Synod who are far from approving of the measures of the ruling faction, and who are the same in principle with our Confession, &c. and are endeavouring to persevere in maintaining their integrity in this respect is readily granted. These may say there is no change with them individually, although by their practice they virtually strengthen the hands of those who have changed, and must in certain cases, particularly at Licences and Ordinations, accede to the change or stay away. But let the Synod records bear witness. Let the many petitions and remonstrances from Sessions and Congregations bear witness. Let the speeches and behaviour of members witness. Nay let these Letters which so pointedly expose and condemn the very scheme which the Synod were for adopting witness: and then let every impartial mind judge of the candour, truth, and consistency, of attempting to persuade any plain private Christian that there is no difference. But to put the matter fairly to the proof. If the Associate Synod be the same ever she was, then there is no need of a preamble to the Formula. Dismiss the preamble, and give an unlimited approbation of the whole doctrine contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith. Let all who have been licenced and ordained by the preamble, declare their unlimited assent to the Formula without it, and upon all declaring their sorrow for what is past, and security for the future, I for one will be among the first to hasten to repair the breach. Let the

member of Synod who refuses this be ashamed to assert any longer there is no difference.

After all, the charge of bloody and of persecuting principles is still revived! allow the Christian Magistrate according to these Letters the prerogative of punishing or of suppressing gross heresy, blasphemy and idolatry, and how, say they, can you avoid the charge of compulsion in the matters of religion? And hence some men, in the indulgence at once of their bad humour, as well as of their most refined and masterly wit, have designed my brethren and me the "*Presbytery of compulsory measures!*" But it will be a most easy matter, for the friends of the doctrine taught in these pages, to dispute the palm for generosity, humanity and gentleness of behaviour toward their opponents, even with the warmest declaimers against persecution; with the most celebrated sons of modern moderation and charity. Witness the rigour with which the discipline of the Church of Christ was employed against all who opposed their late proceedings, by these very men of feeling, whose blood runs chill at the thoughts of persecution! Witness the efforts they made, to destroy our comfort, and turn us out of our Churches, by the ridiculous farce of preaching our Churches vacant, when we could no longer follow them in their measures!! Blessed be God, however, a most mortifying disappointment has frustrated all these violent proceedings. But had we been more at their mercy, what would have become of us? Become of us! From such zealous opposers of all persecution, we could not possibly have cause to dread any harm!

Nor does the charge supposed in this objection attach to any man or society of men who hold the doctrine of Revelation upon this head; but falls upon Him who hath invested his ordinance of magistracy with these powers. And the argument is the very

same, whether these were vested in the magistrat under the old, or under the new dispensation. As the truth of the charge against the Author of the Letters, no man, who knew him or his character will reproach him as a man of blood: and with regard to the bloody tendency of the doctrine he hath taught against authoritative toleration, let his writings speak for themselves.

\* "It requires no small share of *ignorance, impudence, and fraud* to insinuate that the many thousand of Protestant advocates for the magistrate's power restrain gross heresy, blasphemy or idolatry, plead for the FORCING of men to faith and holiness when they so harmoniously plead for the contrary. None ought to be forced into the faith and profession of the true religion as hath been repeatedly declared, but all proper methods taken to render their compliance judicious and voluntary." † "It is very improper to issue forth any law doubtful or obscure on which most of the subjects are not likely to be got peaceably to comply with. This ought especially to be attended to in the framing and imposing *laws and constitutions relative to religion* which ought to be a *reasonable and voluntary service*." ‡ "Even in punishing manifest crimes especially in matters of religion, all proper mildness ought to be exercised, *never proceeding to extremities* where there is any hope of Reformation or where, as in the case of heresy or blasphemy confession and repentance can make any kind of restitution," &c. &c. "Magistrates ought never to attempt FORCING men to believe with their hearts even the most fundamental truths of religion, or to practise any religious duty,—that being no mean appointed by God for convincing them of

the truth, or inducing them to a cordial performance of religious duties, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. But it would be highly absurd hence to infer, that magistrates *may not restrain* men from robbing Nations or Churches of these divine truths which God hath graciously intrusted to them and which are inex-pressibly profitable to them,—or to *restrain* them from propagating gross heresies, blasphemies, idolatries which undermine and exclude the true religion, provoke God or destroy Nations, and are the fruitful seeds of contention, confusion and every evil work. No magistrate can compel me to love my neighbour as myself, or can justly compel me to divide mine inheritance with him: but he may lawfully punish me for calumniating or robbing him. It is therefore extremely uncandid in the advocates for magistral tolerations of heresy, blasphemy, and idolatry, always to attempt blending or placing on an equal level, *true* and *false* religion, *mere neglect* of some positive duties of religion, and *stocking insults* upon, and *opposition* to the duties of religion,—*lesser* and *secret mistakes* in religion, and the *most damnable* heresies, blasphemies and idolatries openly and obstinately professed and practised, as if these were equally the objects of toleration restraint and punishment,—or to confound a *mere forbearance* to punish with an *authoritative licence* openly to profess and practise what is criminal respecting religion. The true religion ought never to need a toleration. It ought always to have an establishment, whereas a false one ought never to be established, magistrates having no power against the truth but for the truth. There are many *mere neglects* or *lesser mistakes* in religion against which it would not be proper for magistrates to enact civil laws, in their present state of imperfection," &c.

ro been very passive in the business." But let any person only read these Letters, and recollect the candour and steadfastness of the man, and he will easily perceive what a vile reflection upon his memory this would involve. Nor can it be pleasant either to his friends, or his connections to have such conjectures detailed, as would insinuate a dereliction of principle. His conduct while he lived was fair and unimpeachable; and now when he is gone, we are warranted, only to conclude that he would have continued the same steady advocate for our Confession, our Catechisms and Covenants, he had ever been.

Hear his sentiments and counsels addressed to Students in divinity and to his younger children in the immediate prospect and expectation of appearing before his God and his Judge.

" ADDRESS TO STUDENTS OF DIVINITY," &c.

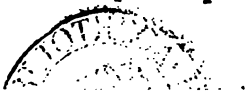
" You have stated yourselves public witnesses for Jesus Christ, who profess to adhere to, and propagate his *injured truths*,—and to commemorate with thankfulness the *remarkable mercies*, which he hath bestowed on our Church and Nation,—and to testify against and mourn over our own and our fathers' *fearful backslidings* from that Covenanted work of Reformation once attained in our land. See that you be judicious, upright, *constant and faithful* in your profession. *I now approach death heartily satisfied, with our excellent Westminster Confession of Faith, Catechisms and Form of Church Government, and cordially adhering to these Covenants, by which our fathers solemnly bound themselves and their posterity to profess the Doctrines and practise the duties therein contained.* I look upon the Secession, as indeed the cause of God but sadly mismanaged and dishonoured by myself and others.—Study to see every thing with your own eyes but never indulge an itch after NO-

**VELTIES!** Most of those which are now esteemed such, are nothing but **OLD ERRORS** *which were long ago justly refuted*, varnished over with some new expressions.—If I mistake not the Churches are entering into a fearful cloud of *apostacy and trouble!* But he that endureth to the end shall be saved. *Be ye faithful unto death* and Christ shall give you a crown of life. *But if any man draw back* God's soul shall have no pleasure in him"!!!

His advices to his children when dying conclude thus.

“ Adhere constantly, cordially and honestly to the Covenanted Principles of the Church of Scotland, and to that Testimony which hath been lifted up for them. I fear a generation is rising up which will endeavour *silently*,” (O how prophetic!) “ to let slip these matters, as if they were ashamed to hold them fast, or even to speak of them. May the Lord forbid that any of you should ever enter into this *confederacy* against Jesus Christ and his cause! This from a dying father and minister, and a witness for Christ.” (Signed) “ JOHN BROWN.”

After such solemn admonitions, and published to the world, must not that man be a fool, or something worse, who would employ the name of Mr. Brown of Haddington, to recommend the very evils which he saw coming upon the Secession Churches, and against which he hath given such faithful warnings both to his pupils and his children? The righteous are often taken away from the evil to come. But had he lived to witness the late proceedings of Synod respecting the magistrate's power in religion, and the obligation of our public Covenants on posterity, are we not warranted to say without any vaunt, that from the protestations he has made in the preceding quotations, a most unequivocal pledge is given to



what side of the question he would have chosen to have cast in his lot?

As to the subject of the 2d Letter, the obligation of our public Covenants on posterity, this doctrine must stand or fall, with what is maintained in the preceding one. The arguments adduced are clear and conclusive in its favour: and upon the obnoxious terms, "we shall endeavour the extirpation of Popery and Prelacy," used in the Solemn League and Covenant, the few things he has said are sufficient to take off all objection to them, with any unprejudiced mind. And whoever will be at the trouble of looking into the sermons, preached before the Parliament and Westminster Assembly, at the taking of the Solemn League and Covenant, and upon other public occasions, he will find all ground of objection to the terms, as involving the destruction of men's persons, completely removed. If then the language used admit of a favourable interpretation, and the conduct of the Covenanters correspond with that interpretation, how exceedingly uncandid, at this distant period, to dig up out of the ashes of the dead, where it had been so formally and with all due honour laid to rest, an objection which can have influence upon no mind, but such as are unacquainted with the replies, by which it has been long ago repelled?

It only remains for me to apologize for the length of this paper, and to add my most fervent desire, that these Letters be universally read, and read without prejudice; and that all who read them may receive the truth in the love of it, so as either to be recovered out of error or farther established in the present truth.

WILLIAM TAYLOR.

London, 19th Sept. 1803.

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# C O N T E N T S.

## LETTER I.

*On the Absurdity of all Authoritative Toleration of gross Heresy, Blasphemy or Idolatry.*

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*Objections in favour of Toleration of gross Heresy, Blasphemy, and Idolatry, Answered.*

1. God alone is the Lawgiver and Lord of men's conscience, 44
2. Every man has a natural right to judge for himself--He is to follow the dictates of his own conscience. Even the law of God is a rule to him as he understands it in his own conscience. To force him to do any thing contrary thereto, is to force him to sin; and to punish him for following its dictates is to punish him for doing his duty, 45
3. To allow magistrates such power---is to render Christians the *servants of men*, 50
4. To restrain men from what they think right in religion, and especially to punish them for it, is contrary to that Christian charity which *suffereth long and is kind*-- 50
5. Even under law, Moses tolerated men's divorcing of their wives for slight causes; much more does the gospel dispensation call for liberty to men, 51
6. Gamaliel's counsel, *Refrain from these men*---was certainly prudent, 52
7. Under the Gospel it is promised, that--there should be none to hurt or destroy in God's holy mountain, 53
8. Our Saviour commands his servants to let the *tares* grow with the wheat, 53
9. By rebuking his disciples, who would have commanded fire from heaven to consume these Samaritans who refused him *lodgings*---our benevolent Saviour plainly intimated, That under the gospel, magistrates ought to lay no restraint on heresy, &c. 54
10. Christ requires us not to judge others---to judge nothing before the time--- We ought to believe our own opinions in religion to be as probably erroneous as those of our opponents, &c. 55
11. Men ought to be *persuaded*, not forced into holiness,-- 56



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## L E T T E R I.

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of gross Heresy, Blasphemy or Idolatry.*

S I R,

**H**OW God himself connected religion, and the civil welfare of nations, in his ancient laws, almost the whole of the Old Testament doth bear witness. That religion is the great basis of civil happiness, was the common, the avowed belief of every sensible Heathen: It was, for ought I know, the infamous monster Tiberius, who first pretended, *That the gods alone ought to regard or resent the injuries done them.* Before the happy Reformation, the Popish clergy had reduced civil rulers into mere tools for executing their pleasure in religious matters; and pretended that they *had no power of judging* in them. To free these rulers from such Antichristian claims, the Protestant reformers, every where, as their Confessions of Faith and other writings make evident, loudly maintained, That to magistrates themselves independent of clergymen, belongs a distinguished power in the *reformation and preservation* of religion. Not long after, Erastus, a German physician and his followers, to curry favour with their respective princes, pretended, That magistrates are the proper lords of the Christian Church, from whom her ministers and other rulers derive their whole power, and to whom they must be accountable. This notion, exceedingly flattering their ambition, was too greedily embraced by most of the

Protestant princes; nor do I know of one Protestant Church, which hath not suffered by means of it. Meanwhile, the German Anabaptists, having experienced the frowns, and sometimes the improper severities of magistrates, copied after the ancient Donatists in the like circumstances, and warmly contended, That magistrates have no more power about religious matters than any private person, and ought to punish none for different sentiments in doctrine or forms of worship. The Socinians and remonstrant Arminians, except when magistrates favoured themselves, and promoted their cause, zealously contended for the same notion, at least in the case of ministers and worship, which were not maintained at the public expence. Many, if not most of the English Independents in the last century were much of the same mind; and hence, by their influence, some passages in the Westminster Confession of Faith could never obtain a ratification by the English Parliament, or a place in their own *Savoy Confession*. Part of these passages, relative to the magistrate's power, are also dropt from the Confession of Faith agreed to by the Independents of New England in 1682. Most of the English Dissenters of this century seem to be much of the same mind; especially such as might otherwise have been exposed to danger on account of their open maintenance of Arian, Socinian, and Quakerish blasphemies—Locke and bishop Hoadly, and some others of the Episcopalian party, warmly espoused the same cause.

This notion never received much countenance in Scotland, till Mr. Glas of Tealing commenced a furious new-fashioned Independent. He mightily contended, That the Jewish nation was an ecclesiastical one, and their kings ecclesiastical rulers; ~~that Christian magistrates have no more power in~~

religious matters than private Christians, and ought not to employ their power in advancing the true religion, or in making laws with penalties in favour of it; or in restraining or punishing heretics or false teachers, nor ought they to give more encouragement to good Christians, than to other peaceable subjects;—that the example of the reforming kings of Judah in punishing idolatry and false worship, and in promoting the true religion, is not now to be imitated; and that our fathers' national covenanting against Popery and other wickedness, in favour of the true religion was *unwarrantable*, and is *not binding* upon us.—*Dr. Wisheart, Principal of the College of Edinburgh*, in his sermons contended, That magistrates have only a right to punish such crimes as strike immediately against the persons or property of men; but not to punish any thing which strikes immediately against the honour of God, as blasphemy or heresy; that all men ought to have civil liberty to think and speak as they please, providing they make no attack upon the welfare of civil society; that none ought to be hampered in their search after truth by any requirement of their subscriptions to *Formulas or Confessions of Faith*; that children in their education, ought never to be biased to a side by learning catechisms which maintain the peculiar principles of a party. These or the like notions have been adopted by not a few of the pretenders to modern illumination.

In her *public Standards*, the Church of Scotland hath renounced, and in her solemn covenants hath abjured both these extremes. In her *Old Confession of Faith*, which is expressly sworn to in the national covenant of 1581, &c. as in all points the *undoubted truth of God*, Art. xxiv, she asserts, that “the power and authority of magistrates is God’s *holy ordinance*, ordained for manifestation of his own glory, and for

the singular profit of mankind—they are the *lieutenants of God*, in whose fellions God himself doth sit and judge—to whom by God is given the sword to the praise and defence of good men, and to punish all open malefactors. To kings, princes, rulers and magistrates chiefly, and most principally, the conservation and purgation of religion appertains; so that not only are they appointed for civil policy, but also for maintenance of the true religion, and for suppression of all idolatry and superstition whatsoever.” This doctrine is further asserted and explained in her second book of discipline, Chap. i. x; The doctrine of her *Westminster Confession of Faith*, the **WHOLE** of which is solemnly espoused and engaged to, by every Presbyterian minister and elder in Scotland in his ordination vows, is that “for their publishing opinions or maintaining practices contrary to the light of nature and the known principles of Christianity, whether concerning faith, worship or conversation, or to the power of godliness, or such erroneous opinions or practices, as either, in their own nature, or in the manner of publishing and maintaining them, are destructive to the external peace, and order, which Christ hath established in the Church, they may be lawfully called to account, and proceeded against by—the power of the civil magistrate,” Chap. xx. 4.—that “God, the supreme Lord and King of all the world, hath ordained civil magistrates to be under him, over the people, for his own glory and the public good—they ought especially, (in managing their office) to maintain **ПІЕТУ**, justice and peace, according to the *wholesome* laws of each Commonwealth.—That the civil magistrate—**НА ГН** authority, and it is his duty to take order that unity and peace *be preserved* in the Church, and that the truth of **God be kept pure and entire**; that all blasphemies

and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented and reformed, and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered and observed. For the better effecting of which, he hath power to call Synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God," Chap. xxiii. 1, 2, 3.—"The duties required in the second commandment are—the disapproving, detesting, opposing all false worship, and according to each one's place and calling, removing it, and all monuments of idolatry;—The sins forbidden in the second commandment are, all devising, counselling, commanding, using, and any ways approving any religious worship not instituted by God himself, tolerating a false religion." Lar. Cat. Q. 108, 109. These declarations are an authentic explication of the power of the magistrate in *maintaining and preserving the true religion*, the defence of which is expressly sworn in their solemn covenants with God. If therefore, Sir, you discredit this doctrine, and plead the toleration of idolatry, blasphemy, heresy, and that magistrates ought to meddle with nothing in religion; be so honest, as openly to renounce your ordination vows and the Confession of Faith and Catechisms, as well as the national Covenant and Solemn League.

To illustrate the above doctrine of our excellent *Standards*, it is proper to observe,

1. God alone is the necessarily existent, and absolutely independent Creator and preserver, and therefore original and supreme proprietor and governor of all things in heaven or earth, Exod. iii. 4. Gen. i. Psal. civ. and xxiv. 1, 2. xxxiii. 6. lxxxiii. 18. xlvii. 2, 7, 9. Ezek. i. 11. Col. i. 16,—18. Dan. iv. 34, 35.

2. *All right, civil, natural, or spiritual, whether*



of conscience, or of persons, or of husbands, parents, masters, magistrates, ministers, or even of Christ as mediator, must therefore wholly originate from God alone, Psalm cxv. 16. Rom. xi. 36. Heb. ii. 10. Aëts. x. 25, 28. 2 Cor. v. 18. Pſal. lxxv. 7. Dan. ii. 21. iv. 32, 35. Mat. xxviii. 18. xi. 27. John v. 35. To suppose any real right or being whatsoever, or originating from him, is to give up with the necessary existence of God, and to plunge into the very depths of *Atheism*.

3. All right and authority of conscience, persons, husbands, parents, magistrates, ministers, or even of Christ as mediator, being wholly derived from God, ought, necessarily ought, wholly to be improved, or exercised in his name, in conformity and subordination to his law, as the supreme rule, and in order to promote his declarative glory as the chief end of it, Prov. xvi. 4. Rom. xi. 36. 1 Pet. iv. 11. 1 Cor. x. 31. John v. 30. viii. 29. vii. 18. Eph. iii. 21.

4. No right or authority derived from God can therefore be lawfully improved or exercised, in protecting, encouraging, allowing or commanding any thing which God himself, on account of his infinite perfection in holiness, justice, goodness and truth, cannot command;—or in discouraging, disallowing, or prohibiting any thing which God in his law requires. It is absurd to suppose it, that God can give men a power which he hath not himself; and shocking blasphemy to suppose him capable of giving men a right and authority to contemn or counteract his own law as their rule, or his own glory as their chief end, in every thing they do, 2 Tim. ii. 13. Hab. i. 12, 13. Exod. xv. 11. Deut. xxxii. 4. Zeph. iii. 5. James i. 13.

5. All the diversified forms of right and authority in conscience, husbands, parents, masters, magistrates, ministers, and even in Christ as mediator,

being derived from the *same God of infinite wisdom and order*, each of them may, and ought to be wholly exercised within its proper department, and in a manner answerable to its nature, and never in the way of invading the place or interrupting the exercise of any other right or authority. No right of conscience can be exercised to the interruption of the due exercise of marital, parental, magisterial, magistratical, ministerial, or Christ's mediatorial authority; nor, can any regular exercise of these powers interrupt the due exercise of the power of conscience, or of one another, 1 Cor. xiv. 33, 40. vii. 20, 24.

6. All these different forms of power and authority being derived from the *same God*, may have the same things for their object, but viewed in different respects. The same man may be subject to the power of his conscience as he is a rational creature,—subject to the power of parents as a child,—subject to the power of masters as a servant,—subject to the power of magistrates as a member of the Commonwealth,—subject to the power of Church-rulers as a member of an organized visible Church,—subject to the mediatorial power of Christ, as a member of his mystical body, or an agent for promoting the welfare of it.—The same good work of piety or virtue may, or ought to be required by conscience, by parents, masters, magistrates, ministers, and even by Christ as mediator, in different respects, as calculated to promote the welfare of the persons, families, nations, and Churches concerned,—in subordination to the glory of God as their respective proprietor and superior. The performance of the same good work may be encouraged by rewards from all these different powers, answerable to their respective forms.—The same vices of idolatry, blasphemy, calumny, treason, theft, murder, &c. as in different respects hurtful to persons, families, civil societies, and

Churches, may, and ought to be prohibited by all these different powers, and resented by each, as hurtful to itself, as subordinated to God,—in a manner answerable to its particular nature and department;—by conscience with stinging rebukes,—by parents with correction, disinheriting; or the like,—by masters with frowns, stripes, abridgment of wages, or the like,—by magistrates with public dishonour, fining, imprisonment, or death,—by Church-rulers with ecclesiastical rebuke, excommunication,—by Christ with temporal, spiritual or eternal judgment, Acts xxiv. 16. Josh. xxiv. 15. Psal. ci. Mat. v. vi. vii. &c.

7. All these powers of conscience, husbands, parents, masters, magistrates, Church-rulers, and of Christ as mediator, proceeding from an infinitely wise, powerful and good God, are each of them, in its own place, altogether sufficient to gain its own end.—Nevertheless, it mightily tends to the advantage of each, that all of them be rightly exercised at once, and to the hurt of all the rest, if any of them be not. If conscience act faithfully, this promotes the regular and comfortable exercise of the power of husbands, parents, masters, magistrates or ministers, &c. And it is to the advantage of conscience, if they regularly exercise their power, and especially if Christ exercise his, in a remarkable manner. It is much to the advantage of Church and State, if husbands, parents, and masters, faithfully exercise their power in their respective departments; and much to their hurt, if they do not. If the rulers in Church and State, faithfully discharge their trust, it will tend much to promote the welfare of families. The more faithfully ministers labour in winning souls to Christ, and teaching men to live soberly, righteously and godly in view of Christ's second coming, the more easy will the work of magistrates,

and the greater the happiness of the Commonwealth be.—The more faithfully magistrates act in curbing of crimes, and promoting obedience to God the King of nations, as a mean of securing his felicitating blessing to the Commonwealth, the more delightfully will Church-power be exercised, and the more abundantly it will tend to the welfare of the Church. Nay, though the mediatorial power of Christ be infinitely sufficient in its own place, to answer its own ends, yet the delightful exercise and success of it is not a little promoted by the faithful exercise of the powers of conscience, husbands, parents, masters, magistrates and Church-rulers, Acts xxiv. 16. 1 Tim. 5. Eph. iv.—vi. Col. iii. iv. 1 & 2 Tim. Titus i.—iii. 1 Pet. ii.—5. Psalm ii. 10,—12. Rev. ii. 15. xvii. 14, 16. xxi. 24. Isai. xlix. 23. lx. 3, 4, 10, 16.

8. Though the marital, parental, magisterial, magistratical, and ministerial powers be altogether distinct from, and independent of one another, and each of them has its own particular exercises pertaining to it alone;—yet the same person, in respect of different relations, may be at once superior or inferior to another person,—and so may be required to fulfil the particular duties of his station, by one who hath not any lawful right to perform them himself. Thus magistrates and ministers as such, may require husbands to perform their duties to their wives, parents to perform theirs to their children, or masters theirs to their servants, as a mean of promoting the welfare of the Commonwealth and of the Church, in obedience to God, and aiming at his glory. An uncrowned husband of a queen may command her, faithfully to exercise her magistratical power, as a mean of honour and happiness to his family; and she as queen may command him in every thing relating to the welfare of

the State, as her officer or subject. A parent may require his son, as such, faithfully to exercise his ministerial, magistral, or magisterial power as a mean of honour and happiness to his family. A son may command his father, who is his servant, in every thing pertaining to the service due from him, and even to order his family aright, in so far as it tends to promote that service. Ministers, as the ambassadors of Christ, have power to require magistrates, *as Church members*, faithfully to exercise their magistral power, so as may best promote the honour of Christ, and the welfare of his Church. And on the other hand, magistrates have power to require ministers *as their subjects*, faithfully to exercise their ministerial power, as a mean of rendering the nation pious and virtuous, in order to promote its happiness,—and all this in subordination to the law, and to promote the glory of God as the supreme governor of families, Churches, or nations.

9. Though the marital, parental, magisterial, magistral and ministerial powers, have, each of them, something for its peculiar and distinguishing object, in which no other power can interfere with it;—Thus it is always unlawful for husbands, parents, masters or ministers, *as such*, to assume the power of civil magistrates in levying taxes, adjudging criminals to death,—always unlawful for parents, masters, or magistrates, *as such*, to preach the gospel, dispense sacraments, or Church-censures;—yet if the exercise of some of these powers be fearfully neglected or abused, the other powers may be exercised, in order to rectify the disorders occasioned, further than would be proper if there were no such neglect, abuse, or disorder. Thus if husbands, parents, or masters, fearfully abuse their power, relative to wives, children, or servants, the rulers of Church or State, for the benefit of these societies,

may interfere more with their family-concerns, than would be proper in other circumstances. If Church-rulers be notoriously negligent or wicked, magistrates *as Church-members*, and to *promote the welfare of the State*, may do more in the reformation of the Church, than would be proper for them, if Church rulers were diligent and faithful. And, if through the indolence or wickedness of magistrates, the affairs of the nation be thrown into terrible confusion, ministers *as members of the Commonwealth*, and to *promote the welfare of the Church*, may do more in the reformation of affairs, than would be proper, if the magistrates were faithful, 2 Kings xi. 2 Chron. xxiii.

10. All governing authority empowers the possessors of it, to issue forth laws or commandments, binding on the subject of it. But these laws or commandments can extend their binding force no further, than the particular department belonging to that power, as by that, every particular form of authority, derived from God, is limited. The laws or commandments of parents, masters, magistrates, and Church-rulers, extend only to external things in the family, Commonwealth, or Church. These of conscience and of Christ extend also to that which is inward in the heart.—And as all human superiors are imperfect in knowledge themselves, and cannot enable their subjects perfectly to understand their whole duty, it is necessary that laws of families or nations, or constitutions of Churches require *nothing but what is plainly agreeable to the law of God*, and nothing in religion but what is *plainly required by the word of God*, that so nothing may be contrary to these laws but what is not only *really*, but *plainly* contrary to the word of God. And, the weaker the subjects are, the more condescension ought to be exercised towards them in this matter, Rom. xv. 1, 2.

11. As men cannot bow the hearts of their inferiors unto subjection, they ought always to issue forth their commandments in the most prudent, mild and gaining manner. It is very improper to issue forth any law doubtful or obscure, or which most of the subjects are not likely to be got peaceably to comply with. This ought especially to be attended to, in the framing and imposing of *laws and constitutions relative to religion*, which ought to be a *reasonable and voluntary* service.

12. As nothing, particularly in religion, ought to be contrary to any law of Church or State but what is plainly contrary to the law of God; and nothing ought to be held *ensurable* by the laws of the Church, or *punishable* by the laws of the State, but what is *plainly contrary* to these laws, and hath become *duly public*, in the providence of God, without requiring the party concerned to be his own accuser.—So on account of the *weakness or number* of the offenders, or the *disordered state* of the society, *many real scandals* in the Church must be forborne without censure, and *many real crimes* against the State forborne without punishment; notwithstanding, it would be extremely wicked, *authoritatively* to licence or tolerate them in either. If your children be very young, raving in a fever, delirious, or apt to fall into convulsive fits, it might be very prudent and dutiful for you to forbear severe chastisement of them for playing on the Lord's day; repeating some wicked expressions, they had heard from their fellow children, or the like. But would it be lawful in you to give them *parental licence* to profane the Sabbath or name of God, and promise them protection in so doing? You dare not pretend it. God himself wisely forbears the punishment of many things, which his law forbids.

13. As it is never errors or corruptions of the

heart, but wicked words and deeds, sufficiently and regularly manifested, which are to be corrected in families, punished in Commonwealths, or censured in Churches, Deut. xiii. 1,—14. xvii. 46. Heb. x. 28 1 Tim. v. 1.—So even in punishing manifest crimes, especially in matters of religion, all proper mildness ought to be exercised, never proceeding to extremities; where there is any hope of reformation, or where, as in the case of heresy or blasphemy, confession and repentance can make any kind of restitution, Mat. xviii. 15,—18. Among the Hebrews, not one appears to have been punished for idolatry, if he professed repentance and reformation. The princes of Israel first attempted to bring the Reubenites and Gadites, whom they supposed guilty of it, to repentance, Josh. xxii. Never in the reformation by Aza, Hezekiah, or Josiah, have we one instance of a penitent idolater slain. The idolaters condemned to death, Deut. xiii. xvii. are represented as *men of Babel*, presumptuous, and obstinate in their wickedness. The prophets of Baal whom Eiljah caused be put to death, 1 Kings xviii. 40. and Mattan the priest, who was slain by Jehoiada's orders, 2 Kings xi. 18. were no doubt of this sort; and probably also guilty of promoting the murder of the Lord's prophets and people. The man put to death for profanation of the Sabbath, appears to have acted presumptuously, Num. xv. 30—36. Aza and his subjects covenanted to put to death such as obstinately adhered to idolatry, 2 Chron. xv. 12, 13.

14. Magistrates ought never to attempt *forcing* men to believe with their hearts, even the most fundamental truths of religion, or to practise any religious duty,—that being no means appointed by God for convincing them of the truth, or inducing them to a cordial performance of religious duties, 2 Cor.



x. 4, 5. But it would be highly absurd, hence to infer, That magistrates *may not restrain* men from robbing nations or Churches of those divine truths, which God hath graciously entrusted to them, and which are inexpressibly profitable to them,—or *restrain* them from propagating gross heresies, blasphemies, idolatries, which undermine and exclude the true religion, provoke God to destroy nations, and are the fruitful seeds of contention, confusion, and every evil work. No magistrate can compel me to love my neighbour as myself, or can justly compel me to divide mine inheritance with him; but he may lawfully punish me for calumniating or robbing him.

It is, therefore, extremely uncandid in the advocates for magistratical tolerations of heresy, blasphemy, and idolatry, always to attempt blending or placing on an equal level, *true* and *false* religion,—*mere neglect* of some positive duties of religion, and *stocking insults* upon, and *opposition* to the duties of religion,—*lesser* and *secret mistakes* in religion, and the *most damnable* heresies, blasphemies and idolatries, openly and obstinately professed and practised, as if these were equally objects of toleration, restraint, or punishment,—or, to confound a *mere forbearance* to punish, with an *authoritative licence*, openly to profess and practise what is criminal respecting religion. The true religion ought never to need a toleration. It ought always to have an establishment. Whereas a false one ought never to be established, magistrates having no power against the truth but for the truth, There are *many mere neglects* or *lesser mistakes* in religion, against which it would not be proper for magistrates to enact civil laws, in this present state of imperfection. And, if there be no civil law against them, they cannot be punishable as crimes. “Where *no law is*, there can be no transgression.”—*Mere*

forbearance to punish, what is plainly contrary to law, is, in some cases necessary, and in imitation of God himself; and gives no positive encouragement to wickedness. Whereas a *positive* or *authoritative* toleration, proclaims to men, a liberty to sin, and promiseth them protection in so doing. If the provider for an army deliver to them fine flour mixed with some particles of bran, and a large quantity of arsenic, Is his delivery of the fine flour, or even of the mixture of bran, as criminal and punishable, as that of the mixture of arsenic? No man that is not mad will pretend it. For the fine flour he deserves the highest *encouragement*: for the bran he may be justly *forborne*; but for the arsenic he deserves to be *hanged*.

The toleration, which I mean to oppose, if plainly and candidly expressed, would run thus: "We, the King and Parliament of \_\_\_\_\_, as powers ordained of God,—ministers of God for good to men,—as the ordinance of God for the terror and punishment of evil doers, and the praise of them that do well,—as nursing fathers to the Church of Christ,—in order that all our subjects may come to the knowledge of the truth, and lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty—Do hereby, in the name and authority of The Most High God, from whom we have derived all that governing power, which we possess, that we, ruling in his fear, may exercise it wholly in obedience to his law, and to promote his declarative glory in the world—Grant to all and every one of you, our said subjects, an *authoritative toleration* or legal licence,—openly and obstinately to pervert, contradict, and revile the declarations of God contained in his word,—and in the most insolent and abusive manner to blaspheme his nature, perfections, purposes and works, particularly of the redemp-

" tion of mankind,—and to corrupt his worship,  
 " represent him in it, in the most absurd and abo-  
 " minable forms,—or rob him of it, giving it to de-  
 " vils, monsters of wickedness, brutes, stocks, or  
 " stones, in his stead,—and with all your might to  
 " exert yourselves in making your fellow subjects  
 " do the like.—And, we hereby do, *In the same*  
 " *name and authority* of God, the King of nations,  
 " promise you every kind and degree of civil pro-  
 " tection in all such behaviour, as you can profess,  
 " or pretend, your consciences do dictate or al-  
 " low,—providing always, that you commit your  
 " outrage only against God, your, and our maker  
 " and sovereign,—but do not disturb the external  
 " peace of the nation, in reviling the civil charac-  
 " ter, seizing or hurting the civil property, or any  
 " way abusing the body of any of your fellow fin-  
 " ners of mankind."—The correspondent warrant  
 of conscience which we mean to impugn, if hon-  
 estly expressed, would run thus: " I Conscience,  
 " as the *great deputy* of The Most High GOD,  
 " Lord, and Lawgiver of the world, implanted in  
 " every man's breast, for his temporal, spiritual,  
 " and eternal advantage, Do hereby, *In God's name*  
 " *and authority*, and in the exercise of my power  
 " which is wholly derived from him, and to be ex-  
 " ercised for his glory, in *trying all things by his*  
 " *law*, and *approving and holding fast that which is*  
 " *good*,—Warrant and authorize all and every one  
 " of you, sons and daughters of men, to devise, be-  
 " lieve, openly and obstinately to profess, and zeal-  
 " ously propagate every damnable heresy, and blas-  
 " phemous opinion, and to practise and propagate  
 " every absurd and abominable form of idolatry,  
 " which Satan, who deceiveth the world, and a  
 " heart deceitful above all things and desperately  
 " wicked, and given up of God to strong delusion,

“belief of lies, vile affections, and a reprobate sense, can make you think innocent or proper.— And, I do hereby, In the *same name and authority*,—Grant *you my sacred claim of right* to all manner of liberty and protection from the civil magistrate in so doing,—providing always, that you commit such injury and outrage only against God, your infinitely excellent, high, and gracious Protector and Superior, and do no civil injury to the body, character, or property of your fellow creatures.” Such is indeed the toleration which many praise or plead for; and this I proceed to impugn, by the following arguments.

I. Men’s pleadings for it do, all of them, necessarily proceed on their adopting such *atheistical principles* as the following,

1. Men’s natural or civil rights to their property, liberty, profits and honours, are not originally derived from God,—and ought to protect them in their most outrageous sinning against him.

2. Men’s consciences have a right and authority underived from, and independent of God, by which it can warrant them to think and speak of, or act towards God, as insolently and blasphemously as they please.

3. That, if the law of God be any rule to men; it is not so, in respect of any intrinsic meaning ascribed to it by him, but merely as it is understood by every man, particularly in that which relates to their behaviour towards God.

4. All men being ready to mistake, we ought always to believe that our opponents may have as just a view of the Scriptures as ourselves, and never to condemn them for that which they do not own to be blasphemy, idolatry, or heresy.

5. Magistrates’ right and authority to govern others, doth not originate in God as the Creator,

Preserver, and King of nations, but in magistrates themselves, or in their subjects; and so may be exercised as they please, particularly in requiring or allowing their subjects to belie, blaspheme, or rob God.

6. Magistrates may be moral governors deputies or lieutenants, under God, without having any power or authority relating to religion, or his honour.

7. Not the law of God natural or revealed, but the laws of nations ought to be the *supreme* standard of all civil government.

8. Not the declarative glory of God, as the Most High over all the earth, but the civil peace and prosperity of nations, ought to be the *chief end* of magistrates in all their acts of government.

9. Men's natural rights of conscience, or their civil rights, or the authority of magistrates, may or ought to empower, warrant, or protect them in gross heresy, blasphemy, idolatry, or other outrageous abuse and injury of God; but can by no means warrant or protect them in calumny, theft, murder, or any other injuries against men.

10. There is no real difference between moral good and evil, at least in things pertaining to God; and so true and false religion are equally calculated to promote the welfare of civil society, and the virtues which render men good, peaceable, useful, and honourable rulers or subjects,—and hence heretics, blasphemers, and idolaters may be *good subjects*.

11. The favour or indignation of God is of no importance to civil society; and therefore magistrates ought to use no means to procure his favour by the encouragement of true religion, or to avert his indignation by the restraint of gross heresy, blasphemy, or idolatry,—but only labour to procure the friendship of men, and prevent their injuring the *character, property, or bodies of their subjects*.

That all these propositions are *really atheistical*, is manifest. They all give up with the necessary existence, infinite excellency, and absolute supremacy of God, without any of which, he cannot be God at all.—That Locke, Hoadly, Blackburn, Voltaire, and others, advocates for *authoritative toleration* of false religion, found their pleadings on the above propositions, is no less evident to every judicious and unbiassed observer.—Nay, did not modesty forbid, I might defy all the world to plead for *such toleration*, without taking all, or some of the above or like atheistical propositions for granted.

II. The Scriptures plainly represent magistrates' granting of men an unrestrained freedom to profess and practise a false religion as extremely sinful and hurtful.

1. It is in the name of God to give a *liberty to the flesh*, of which *heresies* and *idolatry* are the manifest and damning works, Gal. v. 13, 19,—21. with Rom. viii, 7, 8.

2. It is not merely to *pity* and *spare*, but to *encourage* such as seek to draw away their subjects from God, contrary to Deut. xiii. 9, 10. Eph. xiv. 14. 2 Tim. iii. 4, 5, 13. 2 Pet. ii. 1. 2. 3.

3. In so doing, magistrates, as political shepherds, not only suffer the flock of God, the King of nations, under their charge, to *wander* or be *driven* from their fold and pasture, but encourage them in it,—contrary to Ezek. xxxiv. 5,—8. Acts xx. 30.

4. It marks a heavy judgment of God upon, and an anarchy in a Commonwealth, when every man is left without restraint, and doth that which is right in his own eyes, in matters of religion, Judges xvii. 6. Zech. xi. 9, 16. 2 Chron. xx. 33. Amos iv. 4, 5.

5. In granting *such liberty*, magistrates are not for Christ, by whom they rule, Prov. viii. 15, 16. but

against him, in encouraging and protecting the doctrines and works of the devil, which he came to destroy, John viii. 44. 1 Tim. iv. 2. Rev. xvi. 13, 14 with 1 John iii. 8. Zech. xiii. 2.

6. False religion eats out the true doctrine of Christ, and the true piety and virtue which proceed from the faith of it,—which are like joints and bands to connect and establish a nation, Isa. lix. lxxv. 2. Tim. ii. 16, 17. Gal. v. 10, 11, 12.

7. Heresies produce *divisions*, 1 Cor. xi. 18, 19 make men *wanton, filthy dreamers, despisers and revilers* of magistrates, Jude, ver. 4, 8. 2 Pet. ii. 10—17. they render times *perilous*, and make men *traitors beady, high minded, truce breakers, false accusers, fierce without natural affection, despisers of those that are good* 2 Tim. iii. 1—13. They produce *envy, strifes, evil surmisings*, and *perverse disputings*, 1 Tim. vi. 3, 4 Gal. v. 19, 20. They spoil Christ's vines, Song ii 15.

8. False religion deprives a nation of God's protecting hedge of favourable providence, and opens an inlet to the floods of destructive judgments, Exod. xxxii. 25. Ezek. xiii. 4, 5. and xxii. 30, 31.

9. Magistrates' indulgence of a false religion is represented as *a kicking at the true religion*, and *an honouring of the corrupters above God*, and brings a charge of the wickedness upon the tolerators of it. Hence Eli the judge of Israel is represented as *kicking at God's sacrifice, honouring his profane sons above God*, and *making himself fat with God's portion of the sacrifices*, because he did not effectually restrain his sons, 1 Sam. ii. 12—16, 23—25, 29. Eph. v. 7, 11. and Nehemiah contended with the rulers of Judah for suffering the worship of God to be neglected, and the Sabbath profaned, Neh. xiii. 10—18.

10. Such indulgence of false or corrupt religion is represented as tending to make men abhor the true

religion, and speak evil of it, 1 Sam. ii. 17. 2 Pet. ii. 1—3.

III. The Scriptures represent magistrates as having power to make civil laws relative to the external concerns of religion subordinated to the law of God, and answerable to their own department.

1. They have in charge the keeping of the whole law of God, Deut. xvii. 19. 1 Kings ii. 3. Josh. i. 7, 8. 2 Chron. xxiii. 11. Job xxix. 25. Rom. xiii. 1—4. It is never hinted, that they have no charge with respect to religion, but the contrary. God chose Moses the magistrate, not Aaron the High-priest to publish his laws relative to religion.—Abijah avers, that in maintaining the true worship of God, he had kept the charge of the Lord, which Jeroboam the introducer of a false religion had not, 2 Chron. xiii. 10. 11.

2. God promised to the Jews good magistrates, in order to root out abusive practices and monuments of false religion, Isaiah i. 25, 26. Now, if they had power to root these out, they had certainly power to make laws for that effect.

3. They ought to repeal wicked and persecuting laws, and free their subjects from being bound over to punishment by them for their faithful service of God, Psalm xciv. 20. Isa. x. 11. Mic. vi. 16. Hof. v. 11. If they can repeal wicked laws, they must have power to establish what is contrary to them, Dan. iii. and vi.

4. If magistrates can make laws encouraging the true religion and Church of Christ, by annexation of civil favours to the profession or practice of gospel-truth; they can also by law annex civil punishment to the contempt of, or rebellion against these laws; they being for the *terror and punishment of evil doers*, as well as for the *praise of them that do well*, Rom.



xiii. 3, 4. 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14. Dan. vi. 16. iii. 29. Ezra i. 1—5. vi. 3—12. vii. 23—27.

5. By enacting such laws they neither invade the office of ecclesiastical rulers, who have no power to connect civil rewards or punishments, with any thing religious,—nor do they transgress any law of God.—What then can hinder their having power to make them?

6. If all sorts of men, Church members and officers, as well as others, be subject to civil magistrates, they must have power, and ought to make civil laws calculated to promote their advantage, in all these stations, Rom. xiii. 1—4. 1 Pet. ii. 13 14. 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.

7. Unless magistrates have a power to make good laws relative to the external profession and practice of religion, clergymen, if generally corrupt, will have it in their power, by Synodical constitutions or otherwise, to devour and poison their subjects, with the seeds of confusion, profaneness, and every evil work, without any possibility of any legal restraint. For to allow magistrates to act without law, is to introduce tyranny and arbitrary government.

But, in magistrates' making laws respecting religion, it is necessary, that,

1. They, first in order, carefully acquaint themselves with the law of God, that they may form all their laws in agreeableness and subordination to it—they having no power against the truth, but to set it, Deut. xvii. 18—20. Josh. i. 7, 8. Psalm cxix 97—104. 2 Cor. xiii. 8.

2. They ought to consult with faithful ministers of the Church, either as met in Synods or otherwise as it may be expected, they know the laws of God relative to religion, Deut. xvii. 9—12. Mal. ii. 2 Chron. xv. 1—15. Thus, in making these laws *Church-rulers help magistrates with their direction.*

while magistrates help them with their *civil encouragements*, 2 Chron. xix. 10, 11. Ezek. xlii. 23, 24.

3. They ought to require the ministers, who are in their dominions, faithfully to instruct their subjects in the whole counsel of God, contained in his word, relative to those points of religion, about which they intend to make laws, that they may be thus prepared, *willingly* to receive and obey them.— Thus Jehoshaphat first sent *teachers*, and then *judges* throughtout his dominions, 2 Chron. xvii. xix.

4. In all matters of religion, great care ought to be taken to establish the laws, with and by, the consent of the subjects, or their representatives,— thus *strengthening* these laws, through their binding men who are *willing* to obey them;—and the rather as the principal end of such laws is lost, unless men willingly obey them, 2 Chron. xv. 9, 13. xx. 21. Jonah iii. 4, 7.

5. In these laws a special regard ought to be shewn to persons of a weak and tender conscience. Political shepherds ought never to over-drive their flock, but to carry the lambs in their bosom. And, that the very weakest of their subjects may be qualified to obey their laws, they ought never to establish any thing in religion, but what is *plainly* as well as *really* established by God in his law;—that so nothing may be contrary to their law, but what is plainly contrary to God's law, Ezek. xxiv. 4.

IV. Though the law of God allows not of magistrates' attempting to *force* men into the faith, profession or practice of the true religion, or of their punishing any thing relative to it, which is not an open and manifest violation of the law of God, and plainly destructive of the welfare of the Commonwealth;—yet it requires them to *restrain*, and even *seasonably* and *suitably* to *punish* blasphemy, idolatry,

and like grosser corruptions, and insults upon the true religion, when they become openly notorious and especially if obstinately continued in to the ju offence and hurt of others.

1. Such *restraint* and *punishment* are represented in Scripture as an eminent service done to God, Exod. xxxii. 4, 26, 29. 1 Sam. xv. 2, 3. xviii. 22. Rev. xvii. 14, 16. xix. 17—19. Song ii. 15. in which last text, the word rendered TAKE ordinarily signifies an external and forcible taking, compare 2 Sam. i. 10. Judges xii. 6. xvi. 3, 21. Psalm cxxxix. 5. Exod. iv. 4. Gen. xxv. 26. xxii. 13.

2. The end of God's appointment of magistrates is the GOOD of the subjects, Rom. xiv. 4. Not such corruptions in religion impair *that good* in preventing the spread and success of the gospel, which are so exceedingly calculated to render men virtuous and happy, even in this life, 1 Tim. iv. 8. 1 Pet. iii. 11, 12, 13. Tit. ii. 12. and in promoting the hurt of men's morals, safety, estate, peace or liberty, Rom. i. 21—32. xvi. 18. 2 Pet. ii. 1, 2, 3, 10, 12, 13, 16, 18, 19. Jude, ver. 4, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 18, 19. 2 Tim. iv. 3, 4. iii. 1—9, 13. ii. 16, 17. 1 Tim. iv. 2—5. vi. 3, 4.

3. Such restraint and punishment are represented in Scripture as a  *blessing*  to be prayed for, 1 Tim. i. 1, 2, 4. and as a  *blessing*  for which God ought to be thanked, Ezra vii. 25—28. Rev. xi. 15, 17.

4. It is promised, that such restraint and punishment should be produced by the effusion of the holy Ghost upon the Christian Church, Zech. xii. 10, 12, 14. with xiii. 1—6. and that they should tend to the advantage, even of some seducers, who should be brought to account the inflictors their  *real FRIENDS* , Zech. xiii. 4, 5, 6.

5. The Scripture represents EVIL as removed, and  *GOOD both moral and civil*  as obtained, by such re

straints and punishments, Deut. xvii. 2, 5, 7, 10. 1 Kings xviii. 40, 41. 2 Chron. xiv. 3, 4, 5. and wickedness and misery as overflowing a nation, when neglected, Eccl. viii. 11. Judg. xvii. 4, 5, 6, 12. 1 Sam. ii. 12—29, and iv. Ezek. xxii. 25, 26, 30, 31.

6. When the proper judges neglected such restraint and punishment, God raised up some in an extraordinary way, to execute it. Thus Elijah caused slay the prophets of Baal, 1 Kings xviii. 40. Jehu caused slay others of them, 2 Kings x. 5—25. The Jews, under the direction of Jehoiada, slew Mattan the priest of Baal, and Christ himself once and again drove the buyers and sellers out the temple, John ii. 13—19. Mat. xxi. 12. Why ought not magistrates, who are his vicegerents, as God, to imitate his conduct, Psal. lxxxii. 1, 6. 2 Chron. xix. 6. Rom. xiii. 1—4.

7. The Scripture affords many approved instances of such restraint or punishment of gross corruptions in religion, as by Jacob, Gen. xxxv. 24. by the judges in the time and country of Job, Job xxxi. 26—28. by Moses, Exod. xxxii. 4, 20, 22, 29. by the rulers of the ten tribes, Josh. xxii. 10—34. by Aza, 2 Chron. xv. 12, 13, 15. by Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. xix. 3—8. by Josiah, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 4, 33. 2 Kings xxiii. 5, 20. by Nehemiah, Neh. x. 20. by Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. iii. 29. by Artaxerxes, Ezra. vii. 26. and by the protestant destroyers of Antichrist, Rev. xvii. 16.

V. Beside their power, as men, to try all things by the law of God manifested to them, and their power of Christian discretion (if they are Christians) to judge by the word of God what is for their own spiritual and eternal advantage, magistrates, as such, have a power of POLITICALLY judging and determining, what and how, principles and practices

of the true religion are to be connected with political rewards or encouragements; or, what ought to be professed and practised by persons, as members of their political society, in order to promote the real welfare of it, in subordination to the glory of God, as King of nations.

1. If they may enact laws in the matters of God, as hath been proven; and may judge in what is fundamental in religion,—or in that which is contained in express words of Scripture,—or in matters of the second table of the moral law,—then they must have power to judge of that which is plainly deducible from the express words of Scripture, by necessary consequence,—and in those matters of the first table of the moral law, which as much belong to the law of nature, as any in the second;—have power politically to judge why, and how, such a religious profession and practice is to be encouraged by the civil authority; and how, and why, that which is notoriously opposite to the true religion, is to be discouraged.

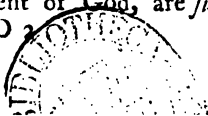
2. Without this *political* judging of them, magistrates could never determine, whether the decisions of ecclesiastical courts ought to be ratified by their civil authority or not, 1 Theff. v. 21. Acts xvii. 11. If in judging of those things, magistrates improve the Word, the Spirit, and the faithful ministers of God, for their counsellors, they bid fair to have a *divine sentence in their lips, and not to err in judgment*, Deut. xvii. 18—20. Psal. cxix. 97—105. Prov. xvi. 10. Isa. xxxii. 1. If, neglecting to consult these, magistrates give a corrupt sentence, they lie open to the judgment of God,—to the restraint and correction of the collective body of the subjects, or their representatives,—and also to ecclesiastical censure, if they be Church-members.

3. If magistrates be *nursing fathers* to the Chris-

tian Church, Isa. xlix. 23. they ought to prevent her being poisoned with corrupt food; and hence must have a power *politically* to judge what is corrupt, and what is not.

4. If the magistrate be the keeper of the peace of the kingdom, then, if a party in the Church, complaining of the gross errors of the other, should form a furious schism, he must have power *politically* to judge, who is in the right, or in the wrong, —who adhere to the truths established by law, and who do not;—and to shew favour accordingly, 1 Theff. v. 21.

5. If magistrates may restrain and punish evil doers, they may exercise this power over Church officers, if, in their Synods, they make blasphemous or idolatrous decrees, which tend to disturb the Commonwealth, and dishonour God, the King of nations, —and hence must *politically* judge of their conduct by the laws of God and the land.——No covenanted subjection to Church judicatures, as a member of the Church, can deprive them of this *political* judgment, any more than of their right of *cognition* and *discretion* as men and Christians. Magistrates' *political* judgment, how principles or practices are to be connected with civil encouragements or discouragements, is no infallible rule of Church courts' judging, how principles and practices ought to be connected with ecclesiastical encouragements or censures: nor are the decisions of ecclesiastical courts any infallible rule to direct magistrates. But the law of God is the *only infallible* and *supreme* rule to both. Nor is the decision of the one *subordinate* to that of the other; but both, as well as every man's right to judge for himself according to the law of God, what he is to believe and practise in order to his own peace and comfort, and his joyful answering in the final judgment of God, are *supreme* in



their respective departments, subordinated only to the judgment of God himself.——But, to argue the matter still more particularly,

1. If magistracy, conscience, and human rights, natural and civil, be all *derived from God*, as all but Atheists must allow, magistrates can have no more power, *authoritatively*, to tolerate sin, than God himself can command it. If God, by virtue of the infinite perfection of his nature, have no will, no power, *authoritatively* to proclaim liberty to commit sin, he cannot communicate any such power to the magistrate. Nor can the magistrate account to God for exceeding his power in licensing that which is infinitely injurious to him, more than the British king's Lion-keeper hath power, or could be accountable for loosing and hunting out the lions in the tower upon His Majesty. If conscience derive all its power from God, it can have no more power to enjoin any thing sinful, than Lord North hath to hire ruffians to assassinate his Sovereign. If all human rights be derived from God, the primary and supreme proprietor of all things, it is impossible they can *authorize* men to contrive or commit any thing sinful, or can *protect* them in it.

2. Men's state in this world is neither *separated* nor *separable* from, but closely connected with their eternal state. And magistracy is an *ordinance of God*, appointed by him for his own glory, and to promote the chief end of mankind in glorifying him, Rom. xiii. 2. Prov. xvi. 4. I Cor. x. 31. I Pet. iv. 11. Rom. xii. 36. But, how, Sir, do magistrates promote this end, if they give the same *degree of protection*, though perhaps, not of encouragement, to the soul-ruining and practice-corrupting delusions and abominations of Satan, as they do the eternally-saving religion of God and his Christ?——if they give the same countenance to them, who to the corrup-

tion of men's moral behaviour, and their eternal damnation,—defame Jehovah to them as *mere matter, a mere man, a mere creature, a worker of contradiction and nonsense*,—as they do to those, who faithfully proclaim his infinite excellencies, and glorious works of redemption, publish his truths, and promote the present and future holiness and happiness of mankind?—If God chiefly aim at the glorifying of himself, in the advancement of the kingdom of Christ; how can magistrates, who are appointed by him, as his vicegerents, for promoting his glory on earth, be allowed, far less obliged by him, to exert their power, as much for protecting or promoting the kingdom of the devil, as for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ? Indeed magistrates are not the deputies of Christ as mediator, but they are of God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and all their administrations are, by him, subjected to Christ, as “Head over all things to his Church,” Prov. viii. 15, 16. Mat. xxviii. 18. Eph. i. 22. Why then ought they not to concur with God, in advancing the kingdom of Christ, especially as this mightily promotes the temporal as well as the eternal welfare of their subjects, Prov. xiv. 34. Isa. i. 19. iii. 10. Psal. cxii. cxxvii. cxxviii.

3: Magistrates are expressly represented in Scripture, as *ministers of God for good to men*.—rulers deputed by, and under him, Rom. xiii. 4. But, how can they be *ministers, deputies, or vicegerents* of God, without having power to restrain, and if proper and seasonable, to punish, that which openly affronts and horridly insults him,—blasphemously gives him the lie, basely misrepresents him, or devotes the worship due to him, to his adversary the devil,—or any other crimes, which immediately strike against him?—If they be God's ministers, they must transact all their magistratical managements in his



name,—and how can God empower *his own ministers* as such, and acting in his name, to promote his highest dishonour, licensing, encouraging, and protecting gross heresy, blasphemy, and idolatry;—giving as much encouragement to the vilest delusions of Satan, as to the new Testament in Jesus' blood? How can they be ministers of God for good to men, without having power to restrain such as, like wolves and murderers, go about corrupting the principles and practices? and destroying the souls of his and their subjects? How can they be ministers of God, the Father of spirits, *for good, universal good* to men, who are not brutes but endowed with precious and immortal souls, which are more beneficial in Commonwealths, than their bodies, without having power to promote the cultivation and welfare of souls as a mean of promoting the happiness of that State? How can they be ministers of God *for good to men*, if they have power, only to punish those crimes which strike immediately against their bodies or external property, but no power to punish crimes, as they provoke God's wrath against the nation;—if they have power to restrain the petty thief, robber, or other less hurtful things,—but none to prevent the kindling of God's wrath against the nation, and the debauching of men's consciences and morals, by blasphemy, heresy, idolatry, &c. which may quickly do more real mischief to a nation, than ten thousand thieves or robbers could do?—After God hath expressly commanded to punish murderers as *destroyers of his image*, Gen. ix. 6.—have his ministers no power to punish murder, as a destruction of his rational creatures, or a sacrificing them to devils, Psal. cvi. 37? If murder ought to be punished as an injury and dishonour to God, why not also public blasphemy, idolatry, and heresy, obstinately continued in?

4. Magistrates are appointed of God for the *terror*

and punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well, Rom. xiii. 3, 4. 1 Pet. ii. 14. And are not, Sir, idolaters, blasphemers, profaners of the Sabbath, by teaching of damnable errors or practising of abominable idolatries on it, *evil doers* in God's account, as well as revilers of men, thieves, traitors, murderers, &c? Are not heresies and idolatries expressly declared by him, *damning works of the flesh,—evil deeds*, Gal. v. 14—21. 2 Thess. ii. 9—12. Rev. xiv. 9—11? Are not heretical teachers declared *evil workers*, Phil. iii. 2. Tit. i. 10, 11.—It must therefore necessarily follow, that magistrates are appointed by God, not to be licensers, protectors and encouragers, but to be terrors to, and punishers of them, as is *suitable and seasonable*.

5. The power, which magistrates have, as *ministers of God for good* to men, ought to be so exercised as most effectually conduceth to make all their subjects live a quiet and peaceable life in all GODLINESS and honesty, and make all men come to the saving knowledge of the truth, 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2, 4. But how, Sir, can their *authoritative* allowing or protecting of men in ungodliness, blasphemy, and idolatry, promote such an end? Hath not God himself testified, that heresies, as well as blasphemy and idolatry, *as a canker*, eat out the doctrine, which is according to godliness, and *increase unto more and more ungodliness*, and make men *worse and worse*, till they be monstrously wicked, 2 Tim. ii. 16, 17. iv. 3, 4. iii. 1—9, 13. 2 Thess. ii. 3—12. 1 Tim. iv. 1—3. vi. 3, 4. 2 Pet. ii. 1—3, 10—20. Rom. i. 21—32. If magistrates protect and encourage obstinate seducers in blaspheming God, reproaching his Son as a mere creature, or as an impostor, or in furiously rending his well compacted body the Church, or in corrupting the principles and morals,

and ruining the souls of neighbours, children, or servants, how can such as are truly serious and ardently zealous for God, fail to have their righteous souls vexed from day to day, with the damnable doctrines and filthy conversation of these wicked? Psa. cxix. 136, 139, 158. lxi. 9. 2 Pet. ii. 8.—To truly zealous saints, a *den of thieves*, is not a more grievous neighbour than a *Synagogue of Satan*.

6. All magistrates ruling over men, must be *just, ruling in the fear of the Lord*, 2 Sam. xxiii. 3. But how can they be *just*, if they dispose of *that protection or encouragement*, to that which dishonours and provokes God to the highest, saps the foundation of all true virtue, and nativcly produces the most ruinous practices,—*which is due* to that doctrine, worship, and practice, which is *according to godliness*, and promotes glory, honour, immortality, eternal life? How can they rule *in the fear of God*, if, in their magistratical administrations, they shew no regard to that religion, by which his declarative glory is advanced, but instead thereof, license, protect, and encourage, that which infinitely dishonours and offends him?

7. The fourth commandment, the obligation of which is certainly moral, and *perpetually binding* on magistrates, as well as on heads of families, commands them to cause the weekly Sabbath to be sanctified by all *within their gates*, i. e. all their subjects, Exod. xx. 10. Jer. xvii. 20,—25. And to this the approved example of Nehemiah corresponds, Neh. xiii. 15,—12. Now, if magistrates cannot answer to God, for encouraging or protecting their subjects in their *civil business*, which is of itself lawful and useful,—on the Sabbath,—how will they account to him, for protecting and encouraging men, in teaching *blasphemous errors*, or practicing *abominable idolatries*, on that day? How

can this commandment bind them to restrain what is in itself lawful and useful,—and yet bind them not to restrain, but *allow, encourage, and protect*, that which is in itself infinitely dishonourable to God, their superior, and ruinous to his and their subjects, in both temporal and eternal interests?—Or, dare you pretend, that the observance of the weekly Sabbath depends one whit less on Revelation, than the doctrine of the Trinity of persons in the Godhead doth?

8. If magistrates have power, on proper occasions, to appoint *religious fasts*, as means of turning away God's wrath, and of procuring or obtaining his blessings to their Commonwealth, as it is certain yourself, and perhaps every advocate for *authoritative toleration*, acknowledge, Jonah iii. 6,---10. 1 Sam. vii. 9, 6. 2 Chron. xx. 3,---15. Ezra viii. 21,---23. Neh. ix. 1. Jer. xxxvi. 6, 22. they cannot but have power to establish that religion, and only that religion which answers to those ends, and to restrain that damnable heresy, blasphemy, and idolatry, which provokes God's wrath against his subjects. To command their subjects to mourn over the grounds of his anger and supplicate his favour, while at the same time they encouraged and protected them in gross heresy, public blasphemy and idolatry, than which nothing can more provoke his indignation, would be fearful dissimulation with the Most High, Psalm lxxvi. 18. Ezek. xiv. 3,---8. If magistrates have power to appoint a Christian fast, and to punish the public contemners of it, or of their authority, in appointing it,---How can they but have power to establish the true Christian religion, and to punish, *if seasonable*, the public and insolent contemners and corrupters of it, and despisers of their authority in establishing it?—Dare you pretend, that the upright profession and practice of

the Christian religion is less calculated to promote the happiness of a nation in subordination to the honour of God, than an occasional fast? Or, that a Christian fast can be observed without entering into the very marrow of the doctrine of Revelation? —or that magistrates ought merely to require the day to be observed in fasting, leaving the manner and object of the worship, wholly to the choice of their subjects,—recommending the worship of devils, as much as that of Jehovah; and supposing the one as able and ready to avert calamities, and bestow necessary blessings, as the other. If you pretend, that God rewarded Ahab or the Ninevites for worshipping their idols, you must prove that God is so far from being highly displeas'd with idolatry, as himself often declares, Deut. xxxii. 16, 17, 21—26. Judges ii. 14. 2 Kings xvii. 10,—18. Psalm cvi. 19,—40. Jer. xviii. 7, 35. 1. 38, &c.—that he is ready to accept and reward the worship of idols, devils, bulls, dogs, cats, saints, leeks, onions, consecrated wafers, &c. if men be sincere in it. Rare doctrine this, for a Presbyterian clergyman, of this *enlightened age!*

9. If every parent or master ought for the welfare of his family, in subordination to the honour of the God of all families, to establish the true religion in it, Gen. xviii. 19. Josh. xxiv. 15. to remove idols out of it, Gen. xxxv. 2,—4. and to refuse seducing heretics a lodging in it, 2 John x. 11.—And if according to this injunction, and those approved examples, he ought to extrude a seducer, who had entered; or even a member of the family, who obstinately endeavoured to corrupt the rest, with damnable error, blasphemy, or idolatry,—in order to prevent the infection of the family, and hinder the destructive wrath of God from falling on them;—Why must not magistrates, who are

God's ministers for good, be allowed power and authority to establish and promote the true Christian religion, in their large political families, and to repress or exclude notorious murderers of souls, and kindlers of the wrath of God? The relation of a parent or master is no more *spiritual*, than that of a magistrate, makes no man either member or officer of Christ's mystical body, any more than magistracy doth.—And I dare defy all the 'Tolerants on earth, to point out one thing relative to religion, competent to masters and parents, as such, but magistrates may do what is similar; or to prove that the true knowledge, faith, profession and practice of revealed religion, is one whit less necessary and useful in Commonwealths than in families.

10. If the power of ecclesiastical rulers extends to all the *civil transactions* of Church-members,—all the *magistratical* and *military managements* of kings or emperors not excepted, in so far as they are regulated by the law of Christ, and are immediately connected with his honour and the good of his Church,—there is equal reason, that the power of magistrates should extend to religious matters, in so far as they are connected with the welfare of the State, in subordination to the honour of God, as King of nations. No reason can be assigned, why the vicegerents of God should, as such, act as atheists, regardless of religion, any more than the messengers of Christ. Nor, till it be proven, that God, the King of nations, is more inclined to damnable heresy, blasphemy, and idolatry, than Christ the Head of the Church, can it be possible to prove, that magistrates have one whit more power, *authoritatively* to license, encourage, or promise them protection, than Church-rulers have;—though as the Church is a *select holy society*, called out of the world which lieth in wickedness, founded on, and having

all her adult members instructed by the revelation of Christ, the same degree of forbearance to censure, in the Church, as to punish in the State, is by no means proper.

11. Unless true and false religion be equally calculated to render men *good subjects, or magistrates*, and to promote the peace and prosperity of Commonwealths, in subordination to the honour of God, as King of nations, they can never deserve or lawfully enjoy equal encouragement, protection or liberty.—But the true religion *exalteth a nation*, Prov. xiv. 34. renders it *quiet and prosperous*, 2 Chron. xiv. 1—7. it teacheth men to *deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly*, Tit. ii. 11, 12. The fruits produced by it, are *love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, against such there is no law*, Gal. v. 22, 23,—whereas, gross heresy, blasphemy and idolatry, debauch men's conscience, make it *seared with a hot iron*, 1 Tim. iv. 2. make their *affections vile*, and their mind and sense *reprobate*, Rom. i. 26, 28. they render men, filled with all deceivableness of unrighteousness,—believers and speakers of lies in hypocrisy, giving heed to the damnable doctrines of devils, proud doating about questions and strife of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railing, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, 2 Theff. ii. 10—12. 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2, 3. vi. 3, 4. They render times perilous, and men covetous, boasters, proud, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers, and extirpaters of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, hypocritical, dissemblers, villainous, corrupters of families, haters and resistors of sound doctrine, reprobate con-

cerning the faith, and waxing worse and worse;—who will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts, heap up to themselves teachers, having itching ears, and turn away their ears from the truth to fables, 2 Tim. iii. 1—8, 13. iv. 3, 4. They, as a canker, eat out the principles, profession and practice of piety and virtue, and increase unto more ungodliness, 2 Tim. ii. 16, 17.—They make men self-destroyers,—their pernicious ways much followed,—the way of truth reproached, and dispose them through covetousness with feigned words to make damnable merchandise of souls; they render men horridly unchaste, presumptuous, self-willed, despisers and revilers of magistrates and Church-rulers, beguilers of unstable souls, exercised in covetous practices, cursed children,—speakers of great swelling words of vanity, pretenders to liberty, but real slaves of corruption, 2 Pet. ii. 1—3, 10—19.—They render men ungodly, turners of the grace of God into lasciviousness,—filthy dreamers, who defile the flesh, despise dominions, and speak evil of dignities,—blasphemers and calumniators of those things which they know not,—who go in the unnatural and maliciously murderous way of Cain, run greedily after the error of Baalam for reward, and perish in the rebellious gainfaying of Kore,—and are luxurious, unprofitable,—raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame,—wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever :—men of ungodly deeds and hard speeches,—murmurers, complainers, walkers after their own lusts, whose mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration, because of advantage,—sensual and separating mockers, who walk after their ungodly lusts, Jude 4, 8, 10—13, 15, 16, 18, 19.—They render persons and societies full of abominations and filthy



ness of fornication,—a mystery of iniquity, and mother of harlots and abominations in the earth,—drunk with the blood of the saints and martyrs of Jesus,—fighters against Him, who is LORD of lords, and pretendedly conscientious murderers of his ministers and people, Rev. xvii. 3—6, 14. John xvi. 2. In fine, they introduce unnatural lusts of the flesh, and tend to fill men with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, envy, murder, debates, deceit, malignity, and make them whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful,—who, contrary to their own inward convictions, commit the most abominable crimes, and have pleasure in them that do the like, Rom. i. 21—23.——These, Sir, if God do know and speak truth, are the native fruits of heresy, blasphemy and idolatry,—these the GOOD SUBJECTS, who are infected with them,—if Providence permit them to reduce their principles to practice. How then is it for the safety of nations, or the honour of God, 28 King of nations, to have them *authoritatively* tolerated *in his name*?

12. Though God never, in Scripture, commands that any lesser mistakes in religion, or a simple neglect of religious duties should be punished; yet he commands magistrates, *suitably* and *seasonably*, to punish, even unto death, idolaters, particularly seducers to it, Deut. xiii. 2—15. xvii. 2—7. Exod. xxii. 20. blasphemers, Lev. xxiv. 15, 16. insolent profaners of the Sabbath, Num. xv. 30—36.——Where in all the New Testament, is there a single hint of the repeal of such laws, any more than of those concerning murder, Gen. ix. 6. Numb. xxxv. 30, 31?——Where is a single

hint, that Christ's incarnation,—his death for sin, and to save men, abolished these laws and procured for magistrates a right and power, in the name of God, to license, encourage and protect heretics, blasphemers, and idolaters, who openly and obstinately labour to offend God, and destroy and damn men?

13. God, in Scripture, frequently approves of magistrates' requiring their subjects to worship the true God, in a right manner,—and of their suppressing and punishing idolatry; as Abraham, Gen. xviii. 19. Jacob, Gen. xxxv. 2, 3, 4. the Judges in the land of Uz, Job xxxi. 26—28. Moses, Exod. xxxii. 20, 27. Joshua, Josh. xxiv. 14, 15. Aza, 2 Chron. xiv. 2—5 xv. 13. 16: Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. xvii. xix. Jehoiada, 2 Chron. xxiii. 16—19. Hezekiah, 2 Kings xviii. 4, 5. 2 Chron. xxix. —xxx. Manasseh, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 15, 16. Josiah, 2 Chron. xxxiv. xxxv. 2 Kings x. 24—30. and marks with infamy magistrates' allowing of their subjects to worship the true God in the high places, 1 Kings xv. 14. xxii. 43. 2 Kings xii. 3. xiv. 4. xv. 4, 35. 2 Chron. xxxiii. 17. The Scripture never hints, that those magistrates acted as Church officers or merely typical persons, in their reformation work. Nay,

14. Even Heathen magistrates, whom you cannot pretend to have been *ecclesiastical rulers*, have, with his approbation, made laws to promote the honour of the true God, and against the contemners of him; as Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra vii. 13—26. which God in mercy *put into his heart*, v. 27. Cyrus and Darius Persians, Ezra i. 1—5. vi. 1—14. Nebuchadnezzar the Chaldean, Dan. iii. 28, 29. and Darius the Mede, Dan. vi. 26.

15. God promised it, as a blessing to the gospel-

Church, that magistrates should exercise their power in favours of her revealed religion, and in opposition to false teachers, and their abominable delusions, Isa. xlix. 23. "Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and queens thy nursing mothers." Isa. lx. 3, 10, 16. "Kings shall come to the brightness of thy rising,—Kings shall minister unto thee,—Thou shalt suck the breast of kings." Psalm lxxii. 10, 11. "Kings shall bring presents—shall offer gifts;—all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him." Psalm ii. 8, 10--12. "I will give thee, O *Christ*, the heathen for thine inheritance. ————Be wise now therefore, ye kings, be instructed ye judges of the earth; serve the Lord with fear,—Kiss ye the Son," manifesting your cordial subjection to him. Zech. xiii. 2, 3. "I will cut off the names of idols out of the land, and I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to go out of the land.—When any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother shall say unto him, thou shalt not live, for thou speakest lies in the name of the Lord, and—shall thrust him through when he prophesieth." Rev. xvii. 16. "The ten horns shall hate the Whore, and eat her flesh, and burn her with fire," Rev. xxi. 24. "The kings of the earth shall bring their glory and honour unto the *gospel-Church*," Rev. xi. 15. "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his *Christ*."

16. Even the law of nature plainly requires, That magistrates maintain and promote the honour of that God, who gave them all their power and authority,—that God, who is the original and supreme proprietor and Sovereign of nations and societies, and the all-sufficient source of all their happiness;— —that they govern their subjects, not as they were dogs or swine, having nothing but

their bodies to care for, but as men endowed with rational and immortal souls;—that as righteousness exalteth a nation, and sin is the reproach of any people, they should exercise their whole power and authority, as is best calculated to make all their subjects behave most agreeably to the law, and declarative glory of God, and most usefully to each other. —It plainly teacheth, That if God graciously grant us a *supernatural revelation*, directive of our faith, profession and practice, we ought thankfully to receive, believe, profess and obey it;—that, if magistrates ought to restrain and punish gross immoralities, they ought to restrain that error or worship, which, being a manifestly damning work of the flesh, natively leads men into such immoralities;—and that, if heresy, blasphemy and idolatry hinder the progress of virtue, or the increase of good men, who are the principal support and blessings of a society, Isa. vi. 13. lxx. 8. Gen. xviii. 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32. they ought to be restrained.—If heresy, blasphemy and idolatry established or authoritatively tolerated, eminently and notoriously provoke God to punish nations with sword, famine, pestilence, poverty, decay of trade, desolation, captivity, or the like, as they have often done even among Heathens, Common sense requires, That every magistrate, from regard to the welfare of his subjects, ought to restrain them, as far as his circumstances can prudently permit,—instead of giving them as much liberty, encouragement or protection as he gives to the religion of Jesus Christ, which hath the promises of this life, and of that which is to come, 1 Tim. iv. 8. Titus iii. 8, 14. Proverbs xiv. 34.

17. If, Sir, as you pretend, magistrates ought to tolerate heresy, idolatry and blasphemy,—then, a power and office derived from God ought to be employed and executed in encouraging the most shock-

ing dishonours and outrage against him;--the authority of God, placed in, and exercised by magistrates, ought to be set in opposition to his own *immediate* authority, manifested in his word;--they as *ministers of God for good* to men, ought to license and encourage his enemies to deny, pervert, and revile his truths contained in his oracles, and confirmed by the blood of his Son, and to introduce the most accursed and damnable errors into their place, in his Church,---ought to give the devil and his agents as much countenance and assistance in driving men to hell, as they give to Jesus Christ and his faithful servants in leading them to heaven,---ought to give a company of wizards as much countenance and protection in worshipping the devil and his angels, as a society of precious saints worshipping the Lord and his Christ, in the beauty of holiness.--In short, *authoritative tolerations* of heresy, blasphemy or idolatry are solemn proclamations issued forth by the deputies of God, in his name, bearing that Satan and his emissaries have full liberty granted them to cast forth their floods of error, and every abomination that proceeds from it, for the dishonour of God, and the temporal and eternal destruction of men. Nor, for ought I know, have they ever neglected to improve their opportunity; as the issues of the tolerations granted by Cromwell, K. James VII. and Q. Anne, in part manifest.

How absurd then, after all the amazing deliverances from it, which God hath mercifully bestowed upon us,-----after all that our fathers have suffered from it,-----after all our public and solemn engagements to God, or to men, against it, and when the very accession of our Sovereign K. George and his family to the British throne, and their establishment depends on the nation's detestation of Popery, and when the tremendous destruction of its votaries.

draweth nigh, Rev. xiv. xvi. and xviii. 4—8.—for our rulers to grant any *authoritative toleration* of a pretended religion, that *tramples on our Bibles*, which God hath inspired, and requires us to search as the mean of our eternal salvation, 2 Tim. iii. 15—17. 2 Pet. i. 19—21. Isa. viii. 20. John v. 39. Acts xvii. 11. Col. iii. 16. and *blasphemeth* these oracles of God as *imperfect, obscure, destitute of any fixed meaning or conscience-binding authority* till they receive it from the Pope or his councils, and as infinitely dangerous to the temporal, spiritual and eternal interests of men, if perused without a pontifical licence, Dan. vii. 25, xi. 36. 2 Theff. ii. 4. 2 Tim. iv. 4.—a religion, which *overthrows the whole mediation of our Redeemer*, confining his mediatorial work to his manhood,—and making saints, angels, crosses, images, &c. mediators of satisfaction, intercession, or saving influence, along with Him,—and the Pope and his clergy infallible prophets, sin-expiating priests, and kingly dispensers of spiritual privileges, and formers of laws and offices in the Church, Dan. ii. 36—39. vii. 25. Rev. xvii. 14.—a *blasphemous religion*, which in the most daring manner, reproacheth and misrepresents God Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and what belongs to him, and ascribes his excellencies and prerogatives to creatures, Dan. vii. 25. xi. 36—38. 2 Theff. ii. 4. Rev. xiii. 1, 5, 6. xvii. 3.—a religion *wholly given to superstition*, mingling multitudes of heathenish or other human or devilish ceremonies, with every part of its worship, Dan. vii. 25. 2 Tim. iv. 4. with Mat. xxviii. 20. Deut. xii. 32.—a religion *full of abominable idolatries*, giving to multitudes of saints and angels, images, reliques and consecrated wafers, that worship and glory which is due to God alone, Dan. xi. 38, 39. 2 Theff. iv. 4. Rev. ix. 20, 21. xiii. 3, 4. xiv. 9—11.—a religion

pregnant with the *most shocking villanies*, pretended miracles, dispensing with, or commuting the most solemn engagements,—indulgence of equivocation and mental reservation in oaths,—and inculcating breach of faith with heretics, if for the advantage of the Romish Church,—and which, by holding multitudes of sins to be venial,—by the sale of pardons and indulgences,—by prohibiting clergymen and devotees to marry,—and by licensing of stews, promotes the most *horrible debauchery*, Dan. xi 36—39. 2 Theff. ii. 3, 7, 9—12. 1 Tim. iv. 1—3. 2 Tim. iii. 1—6, 8, 13. Rev. ix. 21. xi. 8. xiii. 13, 14. xvi. 13, 14. xvii. 2, 3, 5. xviii. 2.—a *bloody religion*, in the propagation and maintenance of which, about sixty millions of mankind, many of them saints, have been murdered, in the most cruel and inhuman forms, Dan. vii. 25. Rev. viii. 13. ix. 11, 21, xi. 2, 7. xiii. 2, 7. xvii. 6. xviii. 24. xvi. 2.—a religion, the cordial and persevering profession and practice of which, God hath declared *inevitably damning*, 1 Theff. ii. 3, 9—12. Rev. ix. 11. xvii. 11. xiv. 9—11. xix. 20. xx. 10.

OBJECT. I. “ God alone is the Lawgiver and Lord of men’s conscience.”

ANSW. 1. God is the only absolute, supreme and infallible Lawgiver; He alone hath power to constitute any thing a part of religion. But that no more hinders his magistratical viceregents to make *political laws* in favours of what he hath declared and instituted in religion, than Christ being Head of the Church can hinder her subordinate rulers to make ecclesiastical constitutions in favours of the truth, in his name, Psalm lxxxii. 1, 6. Rom. xiii. 1—6. 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14.

2. Neither magistrates nor ministers can make any law which of themselves, and as their deeds, bind men’s conscience. Their authority is not in-

fallibly exercised; it doth not reach to the inward actings of conscience. They cannot oblige conscience to these actings, or take any cognizance of them. They cannot free it from any guilt contracted by them, or reward it if it doth well, or punish or censure it if it doth amiss. Nor are their constitutions, but God's law, the standard by which it shall be judged at the last day.—But they make laws or constitutions, which, as originating from, subordinated to, and adopted and ratified by the law of God, bind men to obey for conscience sake, Rom. xiii. 1—4. Mat. xviii. 19.

3. God's being the only Lawgiver of men under the Old Testament as much as now, did not hinder Moses, David, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah, Nehemiah, Nebuchadnezzar the Chaldean, Darius the Mede, Cyrus, Darius, and Aartaxerxes, Persians, or the king of Nineveh to make civil laws in favours of the true religion.

4. If God alone be the Lawgiver and Lord of the conscience, it necessarily follows, that magistrates and conscience, 'who are his deputies, can have no power to warrant, license or protect, any thing forbidden by his law, 2 Cor. xiii. 8, 10.

OBJECT. II. "Every man hath a natural right to judge for himself, what he ought to do or forbear, especially in religion. He is to be fully persuaded in his own mind, and to follow the dictates of his own conscience. Even the law of God is a rule to him, as he understands it in his own conscience. To force any man to do any thing contrary to his conscience, is to force him to sin, for whatsoever is not of faith is sin; and to punish him for following the dictates of his conscience is to punish him for doing his duty."

ANSW. 1. Already you have made men's con-



science the supreme governor of their actions, exalting it above The Most High GOD.

2. Every man hath a natural right derived from God, to judge all things by the law of God, and hold fast that which is good, 1 Theff. v. 21. He hath a right to judge by the law of God what is necessary to be professed and practised, in order to the peace of his conscience, and his fellowship with, and receiving of favours from God. But that no more hinders magistrates *politically* to judge what profession and practice are proper for men, as members of such a particular Commonwealth,—or what relative to religion is to be connected with civil encouragements or discouragements;—than it hinders Church-rulers, *ecclesiastically* to judge and define what profession or practice is necessary, in order to comfortable fellowship with such a particular Church.

3. Men's conscience is no Lawgiver at all, but a witness of their conduct, and a judge, which enquires into the meaning of God's law, and directs accordingly,—and which compares their qualities, profession, and practice with the law of God, and if faithful, approves or disapproves accordingly.

4. The law of God, not men's conscience, is their *supreme and only infallible rule*, which binds even conscience itself, Mark xii. 30. 1 John. v. 3: and whatever men do contrary to it, is sinful, let their conscience approve it as much as they will, 1 John iii. 4. Lev. v. 17, 18. Acts xxvi. 9, 10. 1 Tim. i. 13—16. Whatever proceeds not from the persuasion of a good conscience, founded on the word of God, is sin. It is a sin for men's conscience to err in dictating any thing not perfectly agreeable to the law of God.—How absurd to pretend that this sin can render another sin duty, or a duty sinful in itself!

If men's conscience, in itself, or in its direct-persuading or instigating influence be sustained, & immediate rule of their conduct, without resort to the word of God, then either their conscience must be *infallible* in its dictates, which it certainly is not, in either saints or sinners, in this 1. Rom. vii. 14, 23. Prov. xxviii. 26. Jer. 9. Rom. viii. 7, 8. Tit. i. 15. or, if it be *fallible*, God must have established for men a *fallible sacrificial rule* of truth and holiness,—and so be the *source* of confusion in religion, since different consciences dictate different things in it.—To make men's conscience their rule in religion, would make *God* the author and commander of wickedness,—by *obeying* conscience, requiring the transgression of his own law would make him not only acquit from crime—but approve as duty, the most damnable errors, *idolatry*, blasphemies, detestable abominations, and *barbarities*, if but dictated by the consciences of *Jews, Mahometans, Papists, &c.* in their religion.—It would make him the author of men's ruin, were procured by a way which seemed right in *their own eyes*, Prov. xvii. 25.—It would render it *absolutely* impossible to convince men of the sinfulness of any thing they had done according to the dictates of their conscience, be it ever so contrary to the law of God. It would render it improper for men to repent of or mourn over any blasphemy, *murder* of saints, or the like, which their deluded conscience had dictated to them, or to ask, receive, or praise God for the pardoning of it, contrary to *Num. i. 13—16.* with Acts xxvi. 9—11. Gal. 3. 14. Phil. iii. 6. It would open a wide gap for men's doing whatever they pleased, without being chargeable by, at least any man, for it.—If it should be executed for the most horrid blasphemy or abominable idolatry, high treason, or any

other deed dictated by their conscience, they would die martyrs for righteousness sake.—And men ought to believe whatever their conscience dictated to them concerning their state, experience or duty, however contrary to the testimony of God, contained in his word,—contrary to Psalm xxxi. 22. & cxvi. 11. xlii. 5, 11. Rev. iii. 17.

6. To pretend that the law of God, not in itself, but as understood by men's conscience, is their rule, is absurd. It, in the Popish manner, represents the law of God as destitute of sense and authority in itself, and as deriving it from a creature. It, in the Quakerish manner, makes the *light within* the rule of men's conduct. It exalts every man to an equality with, or rather superiority above God, having power to give regulating sense and authority to his word, according as an erroneous and defiled conscience pleaseth. It abolisheth every real standard of religion, every man's particular apprehensions of the meaning of God's word being his binding rule. The same word of God becomes the standard of *Calvinism, Popery, Socinianism, &c.* as different men understand it. It saps the foundation of all mutual trust and confidence among men; and opens a wide inlet for all manner of villany and dissimulation. According to it, men's promises, oaths, vows, and covenants,—their sworn and subscribed Creeds, Articles, Confessions, Formulas, &c. bind them, not according to the common meaning of the words,—but according to the meaning which their conscience, however seared, biased, or deluded, puts upon them. In fine, it plunges men into the depths of Atheism, according to which every man believes and acts what is right in his own eyes.

7. If men's private judgment of their own acts hindered the magistrate's supreme *political* judgment, no laws could be made in matters of religion or any

thing else; as some would be readily of a different mind, even in the fundamentals of religion and virtue.—While some believed that Christ was not true God or true man, or that idols might be worshipped, others would believe that oaths might be lawfully violated, heretical princes assassinated, or women and goods used in common.

8. If other men's private judgment be allowed to be their supreme rule and reason of conduct, it will necessarily follow, that magistrates' private judgment must be the rule of their conduct; and that they ought to make and execute such laws as they believe in their own heart to be proper, be they as arbitrary and tyrannical as they will.

9. It is not with men's conscience, and its judgment in religion, any more than in matters of common honesty, that magistratical authority intermeddles, but with their external words and deeds. It only restrains and punisheth such of those as are *manifestly contrary to the laws of God and the land, and as they are hurtful to the Common-wealth, and the public honour of God as King of nations.*

10. If all proper means of conviction be used with men, who obstinately persist in gross heresy, blasphemy, and idolatry without effect; their mistake doth not arise from a conscience regulating duty, but from one stiffened against duty. And it is perhaps sometimes as difficult to convince a hardened thief, robber, or adulterer of his mistake, as it is to convince a hardened heretic. Men are punishable, not for what their conscience, as the deputy of God, dictates, but for what they would not have done, if they had any proper conscience of duty.

11. If men slothfully and especially wilfully refuse to use the means of enlightening their conscience by the word of God, they but add to their

crimes both before God and men, by pretending conscience.

12. Men's conscience being as much a director in their conduct towards men, as in their conduct towards God, its influence must have as much force to keep them from accountableness to men, for their theft, murder, calumny, as for their gross heresy, blasphemy and idolatry.

OBJECT. III. "To allow magistrates such power of judging, and of making and executing laws about religious matters, is to render Christians the *servants of men*, contrary to 1 Cor. vii. 23."

ANSW. 1. If so, Christ himself rendered his redeemed favourites *servants of men* under the Old Testament.

2. If so, Church-rulers being men, as well as magistrates, their restraints and censures, appointed by Christ himself, must as much render Christians *servants of men*,—Nay to comply with the religious orders of families, would make them *servants of men*.

3. Servilely to comply with the vain fancies, humours, sinful lusts or laws of men, particularly in religion, is to be the *servants* of men in the sense of this text: but to comply with scriptural restraints, censures, or punishments of wickedness, is to act as *servants of Christ*, and his Father and Spirit.

OBJECT. IV. "To restrain men from what they think right in religion, and especially to punish them for it, is contrary to that Christian charity, which *suffereth long, and is kind,—envieth not,—thinketh no evil, beareth all things, believeth all things, and hopeth all things*, 1 Cor. xiii. 4—7. contrary to that meekness, mercy and peaceableness exemplified in Christ, and required in Christians, Rom. xv. 1. Gal. vi. 1, 2. Eph. iv. 32. 2 Tim. ii. 15. James iii. 15."

ANSW. 1. Christian charity rejoiceth *not in iniquity*, but rejoiceth *in the truth*. It requires that nothing should be done out of malice or envy, or rashly on bare surmises, or without due examination of facts and circumstances, but not that rulers, either of Church or State, should overlook every scandal or crime contrary to the law of God. Even the undue delay of censure or punishment encourageth men in wickedness, much more would the total overlooking of it, Eccl. viii. 11.

2. The texts quoted in the objection, are directed to Christians and Church-rulers. Is therefore all their holy zeal and activity in restraining and censuring the corrupters of the Church, according to Christ's command, Rev. ii. Rom. xvi. 17. Gal. v. 10. Tit. iii. 10. 1 Tim. i. 20.—contrary to Christian charity, meekness, or mercifulness? Had Moses quite abandoned his unparalleled meekness, when he so zealously punished the Hebrew idolaters, Num. xxxii. 3. with Exod. xxxii. 26—29? Was Jesus Christ destitute of all meekness and mercy, when he appointed the restraints and penalties under the Old Testament; and at least the tremendous censure of excommunication under the New? Was he destitute of all charity, meekness and mercy, in never giving us a hint that these laws are now repealed, as having been cruel and tyrannical? Was he destitute of all charity, meekness and mercy, when the zeal of his Father's house did eat him up, —when he repeatedly drove the buyers and sellers from the temple? John ii. 13—19. Mat. xxi. 12.

OBJECT. V. "Even under the law, Moses tolerated men's divorcing of their wives for slight causes: Much more doth the gospel dispensation call for liberty to men."

ANSW. 1. It is blasphemous to pretend, that the gospel-dispensation allows any more liberty to sin,

than the legal did. Must the grace of God be turned into lasciviousness? Jude, ver. 4. Gal. v. 13.

2. To prevent worse consequences, Moses directed a deliberate and solemn manner of divorce, which tended to render divorces less frequent or irregular, but never warranted divorce for slight causes.

3. Perhaps you cannot prove, that the perpetual continuance of marriage relation flows as necessarily from the nature of God, as gross heresy, blasphemy, and idolatry are contrary to it; God therefore might sovereignly dispense with the one, though not with the other.

4. This objection is rather calculated to prove that magistrates should license or tolerate murder, adultery, theft, and other sins against the second table of the moral law, than that they should tolerate heresy, blasphemy, and idolatry, which pertain to the first table.

**OBJECT. VI.** "Gamaliel's counsel, "Refrain from these men, and let them alone; for if this work be of men it will come to nought, but if it be of God ye cannot overthrow it," was certainly prudent; and Gallio's conduct, who cared for no disputes relative to religion, Acts v. 38, 39, & xviii. 15, 17."

**ANSW.** 1. Prove that Gamaliel's speech was inspired as a rule to us, in all religious disputes, or that magistrates or others ought to be mere sceptics in religion.

2. That which Gamaliel pled to be let alone, was evidently good, calculated to promote the welfare of both Church and State; and so ought to have had the utmost encouragement from him and his fellow rulers.

3. Prove, if you can, that the Holy Ghost approves Gallio's carelessness; or that magistrates like him

ought to allow parties at the bar to beat one another.

OBJECT. VII. "Under the gospel it is promised, That men should beat their swords into plow-shares, and their spears into pruning hooks; and that there should be none to hurt or destroy in God's holy mountain, Isa. ii. 4. Micah iv. 3."

ANSW. 1. These texts import, that quarrelsome dispositions, and injurious slaughter of men should be remarkably restrained, by the gospel; but not that magistrates should no more *bear the sword*, or be *terrors* to, and *punishers* of evil doers, Rom. xiii. 1—6. 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14;—they no more import, that magistrates should not restrain or *seasonably* or *suitably* punish blasphemy and idolatry, than that they should not restrain theft or murder.

2. The restraint or punishment we plead for, being God's institution, cannot hurt but profit men, making many fear, and avoid such horrible wickedness, Deut. xvii. 10; nay, sometimes do much good to the restrained and punished persons, Zech. xiii. 6.

3. If heretics, blasphemers and idolaters be as mischievous persons, as above described from the oracles of God, the restraint of them is a necessary mean to secure the peace of nations and Churches. If such scorers be cast out, contention, strife and reproach are repressed, Prov. xxii. 10.

OBJECT. VIII. "Our Saviour commands his servants to let the *tares* grow with the wheat, Mat. xiii. 29, 30."

ANSW. 1 He rather represents, that till the last judgment the righteous should never be fully separated from the wicked.

2. If it were a command, it is given to Church-rulers rather than to magistrates, and so might, with more apparent propriety, be pled in favours of



ecclesiastical toleration of heretics, idolaters, blasphemers.

3. If these *tares* mean only hypocrites, who have a visible appearance of holiness or innocency, we plead, that neither magistrates nor ministers ought to attempt plucking them up. If they mean all the *children of the devil*, as ver. 38. your objection ought honestly to plead, that no crimes of theft, murder, &c. manifesting them to be such, ought to be restrained or punished.

OBJECT. IX. "By rebuking his disciples, who would have commanded fire from heaven to consume those Samaritans who refused him lodging in his way to Jerusalem; and by his declaring, That he came *not to destroy men's lives, but to save them*, Luke ix. 5:—56. our benevolent Saviour plainly intimated, That under the gospel, magistrates ought to lay no restraint on heresy, blasphemy or idolatry."

ANSW. 1. As the Samaritans did not live under magistrates or laws, which established the true religion, it is not pled, that even their gross heresy, blasphemy, or idolatry, however notorious and obstinate, could have been regularly punishable by men,

2. They were in this matter guilty of no heresy, blasphemy or idolatry,—or of attempting to seduce or disturb Christ or his disciples,—but merely of not giving lodging to a mean-like Jew, of whose Messiahship they had but little, if any information or proof.

3. Though the Samaritans had been guilty of gross heresy, blasphemy and idolatry, publicly and obstinately professed and practised, contrary to the civil laws of the country, and been regularly punishable,—Christ's disciples being no magistrates in that place, had no right to call them to account.

4. The disciples never sought to have the con-

tempt shown to themselves and their Master punished by the civil law, but by the *miraculous vengeance of God*. Without any warrant from God, and to gratify their own proud, passionate, and revengeful temper, they would have required him to work a miracle for the destruction of these poor ignorant Samaritans.——So, if you will drag in this text, it ought to be to prove, That neither God nor ministers ought to restrain heretics, blasphemers, or idolaters.

5. While Christ was in his debased state, obeying and suffering for the salvation of mankind, it would have been extremely improper for God, visibly to punish every slight put upon him. But his coming to *save men* with an everlasting salvation, can no more infer, that he came to protect criminals from just punishment by men, than that he came to save obstinate unbelievers from hell. He came to *save men's lives*, by saving them from their sins, not by protecting and warranting them in a public and obstinate commission of them. There is no hint in Scripture, that he, who was manifested to destroy the works of the devil, came to procure men a liberty of conscience, or a magistratical license or protection in public and gross heresy, blasphemy, and idolatry, more than in theft, murder, adultery. It would be highly blasphemous to suppose it.

OBJECT. X. "Christ requires us not to judge others,—to judge nothing before the time, Mat. vii. 1. 1 Cor. iv. 5. We ought to believe our own opinions in religion to be as probably erroneous, as those of our opponents; and if they do not acknowledge themselves heretics, blasphemers, or idolaters, we ought never to hold them such, or plead for their being restrained as such."

ANSW. 1. We must never rashly or uncharitably judge others, or judge their hearts and intentions,

which God alone knoweth. But that will no more infer, that magistrates ought to give no judgment about religious matters, than that magistrates and ministers should judge of nothing at all respecting either God or men, but encourage every person to live as his inclinations direct him.

2. Is there indeed no certainty in religion? If men ought to be *complete sceptics* in it; why not as well *downright atheists*?

3. If men's own acknowledgements be sustained as the standard of our judgment concerning them, what rare work must ensue! None ought to be held blasphemers, heretics, or idolaters, till they have become penitent convicts. None ought to be held thieves murderers, calumniators, &c. till they acknowledge themselves such. All impenitent criminals must thus escape every degree of infamy, restraint or punishment.

OBJEC. XI. "Men ought to be *persuaded*, not *forced* into faith and holiness. It is in vain to attempt rooting out corruptions, especially in religion, out of men's outward behaviour unless they be first rooted out of their hearts."

ANSW. 1. It requires no small share of *ignorance*, *impudence* and *fraud*, to insinuate that the many thousands of Protestant advocates for the magistrate's power to restrain gross heresy, blasphemy or idolatry, plead for the FORCING of men to faith and holiness, when they so harmoniously plead for the contrary.

2. None ought to be forced into the faith and profession of the true religion, as hath been repeatedly declared, but all proper methods, taken to render their compliance judicious and voluntary. Yet that will not infer, that no man ought to be restrained from, or even *suitably* and *seasonably* punished for, open and gross heresy, blasphemy or idolatry.

which, while they publicly oppose, insult, and undermine the true religion,—produce terrible immoralities and disorders in Churches and nations, and draw upon them the ruinous vengeance of God;—and far less will it infer, that magistrates, as vicegerents of God, ought, in his name and authority, to *license* a false religion, and promise men protection and encouragement in it. No magistrate hath power to force me to esteem, love, delight in, sympathize with, maintain, or even commend my neighbour. But he hath power to refuse me a warrant to calumniate, rob or murder him, and even to restrain or punish me for so doing. It would be absurd to attempt forcing of the British Jacobites, to believe and solemnly profess, that K. George, not the Pretender, is rightful Sovereign of this kingdom. But would it therefore be absurd, to restrain and punish them; for publicly and insolently reviling him as an usurper,—or seducing their fellow-subjects to dethrone him,—or for taking arms against him, or paying his just revenues to the Pretender?

3. It is certain, that Christ, who hath power over the hearts of all men, curbed the external corruptions of the Jewish buyers and sellers in the temple, without first casting the corruptions out of their heart. And pray would you have all thieves, robbers, murderers, &c. to have full liberty in their courses, till their wickedness can be got rooted out of their heart?

OBJECTION XII. “Such is the reasonableness and the glory of divine truths, that if they be but freely, clearly and distinctly preached, their native lustre will render them victorious over every error and corruption in religion, however boldly published, or craftily varnished. What a singular advantage hath it been to Britain, that Deists have had full freedom to make their attacks upon the Christian religion,

and so to occasion so many glorious defences of it?"

ANSW. 1. Did not God under the Old Testament, know the conquering power of his truth as well as you do? Did not Christ know it when he drove the buyers and sellers from the temple.

2. Did the inexpressibly amiable and edifying conduct of Jesus Christ, the way, the truth and the life, render him the universal, the fixed DARLING of the Jewish nation, among whom he went about doing good? You dare not pretend it. And yet it is certain that examples do more affect than instructions.

3. You must not only, with Pelagians, deny original sin, but effectually disprove it, before your objection can have any sense in it.—While men are so blinded by Satan and their own lusts; and so full of enmity against God, they cannot but be much more disposed to receive and practise error, than to discern, embrace, and practise gospel-truths, however clearly and faithfully preached, 1 Cor. ii. 14. Rom. viii. 7, 8. 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. Isa. liii. 1. vi. 9, 10.

4. The common experience of every one, who attempts to instruct children and servants in the truths of God; even when they are young, and their minds most unbiassed, irrefragably demonstrates, that almost any thing is more readily embraced than the plain truths of the gospel; and that earnest prayers, serious admonitions, external encouragements, and Christian nurture, have all enough, and too often more than enough of work, to make men learn them.

5. If professed Christians, by encouraging others in gross error and wickedness, provoke God to give up themselves to strong delusions, that they may believe lies, will the native lustre of divine truths then enlighten and captivate them? Far,—very far

from it, 2 Theff. ii. 10—12. 2 Tim. iii. 13. iv. 3, 4.

6. If we do evil in licensing, encouraging, or protecting the free propagation of gross errors, that good refutations may be thereby occasioned, our damnation is just, Rom. iii. 8.

7. Few of those boasted *glorious defenders of Christianity* are real and thorough friends to the gospel of Christ, but often proceed upon the Arminian, and sometimes the Socinian scheme, the last of which is as bad, if not worse, than Heathenism itself.— And, it is certain, that TENS, if not HUNDREDS, have been seduced by deistical publications, for every ONE, that has been converted from Deism by almost all these defences of the Christian religion.

OBJECT. XIII. “Christ hath appointed for his Church, rulers of her own, who govern her in every duty of religion.”

ANSW. 1. This can no more prove, that magistrates ought to make and execute no laws respecting the duties required by the first table of the moral law, than it will prove that they ought to make no laws respecting duties of the second table,—since Church-rulers are as much authorized by God to govern, in the one as in the other. Let magistrates and Church-rulers be allowed to govern their distinct departments in their different manner, in the very same things, and nothing but harmony, order and advantage will ensue.

2. Magistrates as well as Church-rulers, are divinely denominated, *Rulers, Watchmen, Shepherds*,—and therefore ought *politically* to direct, govern and feed their subjects as members of the Commonwealth, by making and executing wholesome laws relative to both tables of God's law;—while ministers *ecclesiastically* feed them, as *members of the visible Church*, by preaching the gospel, administering the

sacraments, and exercising Church government and discipline, 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2, 4. Rom. xiii. 1—6. 2 Chron. xiii. 10, 11. & xvii. xix. Neh. xiii. 10—17. Ezek. xxxiv. 9, 10.

OBJECT. XIV. "The Church hath *sufficient* power in herself to obtain every end necessary to her own welfare. That cannot be an ordinance of Jesus Christ, which needs any *foreign* assistance to gain its proper end."

ANSW. 1. The Church hath as sufficient power to gain her ends, with respect to the duties of the second table, as to gain her ends in what respects the first table. Will it therefore follow, that magistrates ought to make no laws respecting murder, unchastity, theft, calumny, &c.?

2. Public transgressions of the first table of the moral law injure the State, as well as they do the Church. The State, which also hath a power in itself sufficient to gain all its ends, necessary to promote its own welfare, ought therefore to restrain or punish such transgressions as *crimes* injurious to itself, while the Church restrains and censures them as *scandals* defiling and hurtful to herself.

3. If soundness in the faith, purity in worship, holiness in practice, and beautiful order in the Church, be an excellent mean of promoting the happiness of that nation, where the Church hath her residence, magistrates ought to promote those things, out of a regard to the prosperity of their State, in subordination to the honour of God.

4. However complete the intrinsic power of the Church be, it is manifest, that it can be exercised to more advantage, if parents, masters, and magistrates regularly exert their power in promoting the true religion, in their different departments.—It is no less certain, that after the Church hath done her utmost, by conference, injunction and censure, some

turbulent heretics or blasphemers may do as much, if not more, hurt to her than before, unless magistrates restrain or punish them.

OBJECT. XV. "For almost three hundred years after Christ, the truths of the gospel gloriously prevailed against errors and corruptions, without any care of magistrates to restrain or punish the erroneous."

ANSW. 1: It was proper, that the Christian religion should be spread in the world, not only without the countenance of the civil magistrate, but also in opposition to his severe laws and bloody persecutions, that it might the more abundantly appear to be of God.

2. In that period, it prevailed notwithstanding the most furious opposition, and the cruel persecution and murder of millions of its adherents, as well as without magistratical assistance. Will you therefore plead, that peace and freedom in preaching the gospel ought to be hated and avoided, and furious persecution coveted and prayed for?

3. In that period, the miraculous powers, which attested the doctrines of Christ did more than balance the want of magistratical helpfulness to the truth, Heb. ii. 4.

4. In that period, the hardships to which Christians were exposed, deterred such naughty persons from entering the Church, as might have plagued her with their blasphemies and heresies.

5. And nevertheless, even then blasphemers and heretics did no small hurt to the Church.

6. If God had not reckoned the magistratical countenance a real blessing to his Church, he had never promised it, as in the texts above quoted.

OBJECT. XVI. "It is horrid cruelty and unchristian persecution to restrain or punish men for believing, teaching, and worshipping, according to the dictates of their own conscience, as charity obligeth



us to believe is the case with heretics, blasphemers and idolaters.—It is *altogether diabolical very worst part of Popery*, and that which *peculiarly supports the whole Antichristian scheme*.—“I ought to follow the dictates even of an erring conscience.”

ANSW. 1. Where is your proof, from either Scripture or reason, that an erring conscience binds men to believe, teach or practise, gross heresy, blasphemy or idolatry, any more than their promise or vows to do evil, bind to performance?—than it can bind them to theft, murder, adultery, calumny, or the like?—If we have an erring conscience, our immediate duty is to get rid of that error, by the illumination of God’s word, as being sinful in itself, especially if procured through sin or wickedness; it will hinder our right performance of duty, but can never make sin lawful. If, you can believe, that an erring conscience, can do the almighty power of God, in making heresy, blasphemy, or idolatry innocent things, you can quickly believe, that a Romish priest can outdo the Maker, in making a god, and then eating him, the mystery of transubstantiation.

2. Even when conscience is perfectly clear, pure and unbiaſſed, it is wholly subordinated and subjected to the authority of God’s law.—How the entrance of sinful error into it, exalts it above his law, and make such a god of it, as can stamp wicked dictates into incontroulable laws, in opposition to the mandates of Jehovah himself.—I will not only prove, that Adam and Eve became gods by the entrance of sin, but go far to justify Popes and devils in the whole of their conduct.

3. If the devil, who deceiveth the world, get to men’s conscience by his strong delusions, if God allotted him that as a quiet city of refuge, if

which no means ought to be used to dislodge him, and from which he may use the whole man unrestrained in his service,—in sacrificing children to Moloch, murdering saints, blaspheming God, &c.?

4. Where is your proof, that I ought to believe, that the man, who hath access to the Bible, acts according to the dictates of his conscience in gross heresy, blasphemy or idolatry, any more than that he acts according to them, in murder, treason, theft, unchastity, &c.? Men have laboured and suffered as much, in courses of the latter kind, as in those of the former, and died as impenitently at last.

5. If pretence of conscience, and more than pretence in favours of sin we can never be certain of, be a sufficient ground for magistrates' licensing, encouraging and protecting men in contradicting and blaspheming God, or robbing him of his worship, to bestow it on devils,—or in robbing his Church of his oracles or ordinances,—in murdering the souls of men, and sowing the seeds of confusion and every evil work,——Why ought it not to warrant their licensing, encouraging and protecting them in high treason, calumny, theft, robbery, murder?—It is hoped, you, who are so generous in allowing men, if they can but pretend conscience for it, to abuse and rob Jehovah, will be as ready to allow them equal freedom, if they can but pretend conscience, in abusing and injuring yourself. If God's giving up men to *strong delusions*, that they may believe lies warrant magistrates to encourage or protect them, in spreading gross heresy, or in open blasphemy and idolatry, Why ought not his giving them up to *vile affections*,—to their own hearts' lusts, equally to warrant their encouraging and protecting of them in open whoredom, bestiality, incest, robbery, &c.? Men can as little conquer their lusts and cleanse their

hearts, as they can rectify the errors of their conscience.

6. It is infallibly certain, that God himself, under the Old Testament appointed magistrates to restrain and punish men for blasphemy and idolatry, let their conscience dictate them as strongly as it pleased,—Had men in these early ages no conscience to govern them? Or did God then, like the old-fashioned Protestants, not understand human liberty and the rights of men's conscience?—Did he indeed then so far mistake his way, as to appoint what is so *cruel* and *diabolical*; what is the very *worst part of Popery*, and the *principal support of that abominable system*? Or hath God, or the nature of sin, cruelty and tyranny, been changed? How shocking the thought!

OBJECT. XVII. “As men's natural and civil rights nowise depend upon their being orthodox Christians, magistrates ought to protect them in these privileges, be their opinions and worship what they will; nay, to give them legal security for their protection of them, in these opinions and worship, that they may not be exposed to the caprices of particular magistrates.”

ANSW. 1. The Christian liberty, which Christ purchased, is not a liberty to commit sin, but a spiritual freedom from it, Gal. v. 1, 13. Luke i. 74, 75. Heb. xii. 28, 29. Christ came not to save men's lives from restraint or punishment required by his own law, in order that they, by spreading gross heresy, blasphemy, and idolatry, might ruin nations and damn men's souls.

2. You might have forborne to demand *legal* or *authoritative* licenses for men to blaspheme God, worship devils in his stead, &c. till you had proven Satan to be the absolute proprietor and governor of this world, and the primary granter of all civil

and natural rights to men;—or proven, that God, who is infinitely holy, just and good, hath, or can, give men natural or civil rights protecting them in public blasphemy, idolatry, or the like, any more than rights protecting them in incest, robbery, murder; or that magistrates, as his ministers ought, in his name and authority, to grant men such rights.

3. If God hath so frequently turned men out of their civil property and life for their idolatry and blasphemy, Isa. x. xiv. xxxvii. xlvi. xlvi. Jer. xlviii. li. Ezek. xxxv.—how absurd to require magistrates, who are *his ministers for good* to men, to execute their office, which is *his ordinance*, Rom. xiii. 1—

6. in encouraging and protecting men, in openly and insolently contradicting, blaspheming, rebelling against, and robbing him?—Ought the Sheriff and Justices of peace in Britian, as the *king's ministers for good* to the nation, to have executed their office in protecting the arch-rebels in 1715, and 1745, in the undisturbed enjoyment of all their civil rights, or to have given them new legal securities, in order to enable them, more boldly and successfully to carry on their treacherous and murderous rebellion against his Majesty? Or ought they, by proclamation, to warrant all the subjects in their respective counties to revile, rob, and take arms against our king and Parliament, and promise them protection in so doing, but always prohibiting them to injure their fellow subjects?

OBJECT. XVIII. “Magistrates ought not to rule their subjects by the Bible, but by the civil laws of the nation, according to which they are admitted to their power, by their subjects, from whom all their power originates.”

ANSW. 1. That magistrates' power originates from their subjects is a notion *plainly atheistical*. It originates in God himself, Rom. xiii. 1, 2. Rom. x. 36. Psalm. lxxv. 7. Dan. ii. 21.

2. If magistrates must regulate their government by no other law than that which they or their subjects have established for themselves or one another; they must act as atheists independent of God, in the execution of an office wholly derived from him, and for every act of which they must be accountable to him. If the useful laws of one nation, may be adopted into the civil law of another, Why may not the will of God, the supreme governor of nations, declared in his laws of nature and revelation, be also adopted into it? Are God's laws more dishonourable or dangerous,——more unfit to be adopted into our civil law, than those of our sinful neighbours? Is the Scotch law the worse, that many of God's statutes, prescribed in his word: have been adopted into it,—nay, that all the leading doctrines of Christianity contained in our two Confessions of Faith and Catechisms have been adopted into it, and the Confessions themselves expressly ingrossed into acts of Parliament?——Indeed, if nations adopt nothing of the manifested will of God, into their civil law, it will contain nothing but useless trifles. Will these be fit for directing the administrations of *ministers of God for good* to men, or for securing, and promoting the important welfare of any nation under heaven?

3. If all civil authority to make laws, resident, either in subjects or magistrates, be necessarily derived from God, as *Former and King of nations*;—*Y.* magistrates be *ordained of God*, to be *ministers of God for good* to men, to be *for terror and punishment*, and *revengers of evil doers*, and a *praise of them that do well*, and to be *obeyed for conscience sake*,——*for the Lord's sake*, Rom. xiii. 1—6. 1 Pet. ii. 13. 14. Common sense loudly demands. That neither their will nor that of their subjects, but the manifested will of God, their independent and infinitely high

Superior, should be the *supreme rule and standard* of all their administrations; and that no civil law should or can bind either magistrates or their subjects, but in so far as it is agreeable and subordinated to the laws of God.

OBJECT. XIX. "Magistracy being an office, not founded in revelation, but in the law of nature, the whole execution of it ought to be regulated by that law of nature, not by the will of God revealed in Scripture."

ANSW. 1. I thank you for so quickly overturning your preceding objection, and adopting the *divine law* of nature, instead of *your civil law*, as the supreme standard of magistratical administration.

2. According to your objection, parents, masters, children and servants, must regulate their performance of relative duties, merely, by the law of nature, without taking the smallest assistance from the directions of the Holy Ghost in Scripture. No parents or masters must instruct their children or servants in the knowledge of the doctrines, promises, laws, worship, or virtue required in the Bible, as these relations *depend no more on Revelation than magistracy doth*. I defy you to prove they do. In performing the duty of our natural or civil relations, we must act as *mere deists*, ignorant of, or pouring contempt on the inspired oracles of the Great God, our Saviour.—What hurt have the laws of revelation done to such relative duties, that they must be thus infamously excluded from being any part of a rule of them?

3. No man can truly obey the law of nature, without heartily embracing and cheerfully improving whatever revelations God is pleased to bestow on him,—as such revelations proceed from the same divine authority as the law of nature; and must be a noted means of promoting true and proper obedi-

ence to it,——To exclude divine revelation, when granted, from regulating our performance of relative duties, must therefore not only amount to an *heathenish* contempt of the Scriptures, but to an *atheistical* contempt of the law of nature, which necessarily requires us to adopt divine Revelation for our supreme rule, whenever it is graciously granted to us.

OBJECT. XX. "Many of the above-mentioned instances of magistrates' care about religion, and their restraint and punishment of idolaters, blasphemers, and false prophets, related merely to the Jewish Theocracy which was *typical*, and therefore not now to be copied."

ANSW. 1. Many of the above-mentioned instances, particularly those respecting Heathens, or contained in the promises to the gospel Church, have not the least appearance of being typical. Nay, I defy you to prove that the instances of Jewish rulers were *merely* typical.

2. These typical magistrates of the Jewish nation also exercised laws relative to murder, theft, unchastity, treason, and other matters of the second table of the moral law. Ought therefore no magistrates now to do so? The laws respecting duties of the second table pertained as much to the Jewish Theocracy, as those relating to the first. Must therefore the Christian magistrate, for fear of copying the Jewish Theocracy, meddle with no morality at all?

3. Must every thing that was once typical, be now, under the gospel, excluded from regulating authority? Must all the excellent patterns of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Moses, Aaron, Samuel, David, and other Hebrew saints be rejected as typical and useless?——Must all the laws directing to elect men, *fearing God, and hating covetousness*, to be magistrates, or

directing them to judge justly, impartially and prudently, and to punish murderers, adulterers, thieves, robbers, &c. be discarded as typical? Must the weekly Sabbath, public fasts and thanksgivings be laid aside as typical,—a mere sign between God and the Israelites? Must the ten commandments and all the explications of them in the Old Testament be discarded, as published in a typical manner, and to a typical people, and used as the principal part of their rule of government in the Jewish Theocracy?

4. As the Jewish Church was a REAL Church, and not MERELY TYPICAL, so their State was a REAL Commonwealth or kingdom, and not MERELY TYPICAL. Whatever therefore pertained to it, *as a real Commonwealth*, is imitable in any other.

5. The Jewish Church and State were as REALLY DISTINCT, as the Church and State are now; though I do not say precisely in the same manner.

(1.) They differed in respect of REGULATING LAWS. The ceremonial law directed the Jewish Church. The judicial directed the affairs of their State.

(2.) They differed in their respective acts. The Jews worshipped God, offered sacrifices, and received sacraments, not as members of that State, but as members of that Church. They punished evil doers by fines, imprisonment, banishment, burning, stoning, and hanging; and fought with enemies, &c. not as a Church; but as a State.

(3.) They differed in respect of CONTROVERSIES. To the Church pertained the *matters of the Lord*, and a judging of leprosies, and between statutes and judgments. To the State belonged the *matters of the king*, and to judge between blood and blood, 2 Chron. xix. 10, 11. Deut. xvii. 8.

(4.) They differed in respect of OFFICERS. The priests were the only stated officers in the Church,



and prophets a kind of occasional ones. Elders, Judges and Kings were governors in the State. The priests might not take the civil sword out of the hand of the magistrates; nor the magistrates offer sacrifices, burn incense, or otherwise execute the priest's office.

(5.) They differed in respect of CONTINUANCE. When the Jewish civil power was taken away by the Romans, the constitution of their Church remained, in the days of our Saviour's debasement. And even now the Jews pretend to be a Church, but not to be a State.

(6.) They differed in respect of VARIATION. The constitution of their Church remained much the same under Moses, Joshua, the Judges, the Kings, and after the captivity. But the form of the State underwent great alterations.

(7.) They differed in respect of MEMBERS. Profelytes of the covenant were complete members of the Jewish Church; but had not the same dignities or marriages allowed them in the State, as the natural Israelites. Nor had the profelytes of the gate any Church privileges, though they had some civil ones.

(8.) They were governed by different COURTS. The Church had her courts of the Synagogue, and her ecclesiastical Sanhedrin.—The State had her courts of the gate, &c. and her civil Sanhedrin;—though often some Levites were judges in both, as our ruling elders in the Church, may, at the same time, be civil judges, Exod. xxiv. 1. Deut. xvii. 8—12. 1 Chron. xxxiii. 4. & xxvi. 30, 32. 2 Chron. xix. 8, 10, 11. Jer. xxvi. 8—11, 16. xviii. 18. with Deut. xvii. 10, 11, 12. Ezek. vii. 26. 2 Kings vi. 32. Zech. vii. 1—3. Psal. cvii. 32. Ezek. xiii. 9. Mat. ii. 4. xvi. 21. xxi. 23. xxvi. 57, 59. xxvii. 1, 12. Luke xxii. 66. Acts iv. 5. Some Jewish Rab-

bins expressly distinguish between their judges and their Church elders in the same places.

(9.) They differed in their CENSURE of offenders. In the Church, offenders were suspended from sacred fellowship, by a *casting out of the Synagogue*, or a *cutting off from God's people or congregation*. John ix. 22. & xii. 42. Exod. xii. 15, 19. Num. xix. 13, 20. Lev. xxii. 3. with Gen. iv. 14.—Lev. vii. 20, 21. with v. 2.—1 Cor. v. 6, 7, 8, 13. with Exod. xii. 15, 19. Gen. xvii. 14. with Acts iii. 23. Psal. i. 5. Gen. xxv. 17. In the State, they were cut off by death or outlawry.

(10.) Profane and scandalous persons were excluded from the Jewish temple-service and passover, while they retained their civil rights in the State, Ezek. xliv. 7, 9. Deut. xxiii. 18. Jer. vii. 9—11. Ezek. xxiii. 38, 39. 2 Chron. xxiii. 19. with 1 Cor. v. 11. Psal. cxviii. 19, 20. & xv. 1—5. & xxiv. 3, 4. & l. 16—20. Ezek. xxvi. 22, 26. Ezra x. 8, 16, 17. & vi. 21. \*

6. There was no such difference between the Jewish magistracy, especially after their rejection of the Theocracy, under Samuel, 1 Sam. viii. 5, 7, 19. & xii. 12, 17, 19. and the magistracy in Christian countries, as it is often pretended.

(1.) The Jewish magistracy was an *ordinance of God*, Exod. xviii. Num. xi. Deut. i. xvii. & xvi. 18, 19. Magistracy is still an ordinance of God, to be submitted to for the Lord's sake, Rom. xiii. 1—6. 1 Pet. ii. 14.

(2.) Notwithstanding God's appointment of particular persons to be their kings, the Hebrew nation had the power of electing and admitting them to their office, 1 Sam. x. xi. xvi. 2 Sam. ii. 4. & v. 3. 1 Chron. xii. Our magistrates are *powers ordained*

\* See Gillespy's *Aaron's Rod blossoming*, Part I. Leusden's *Philologus Hebraeo mixtus*, P. 338, 339.

of God, Rom. xiii. 1—6. and yet an ordinance of men, 1 Pet. ii. 13.

(3.) God himself was the supreme governour of the Hebrew nation, Deut. xii. 32. Hof. xiii. 10. God is still *King of nations, Most High, King of the whole earth*, Jer. x. 7. Psalm lxxxiii. 18. xlvii. 7.

(4.) The Israelites were God's peculiar kingdom, 1 Sam. xii. 12. Hof. xiii. 10. Nations which generally profess the Christian religion, are the *kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ*, Rev. xi. 15.

(5.) The Jewish magistrates were deputies and vicegerents of God the Sovereign King, 1 Chron. xxix. 23. 2 Chron. ix 6, 7. Psalm lxxxii. 1, 6. Magistrates are still *powers ordained of God, ministers of God for good*, to whom we must be subject for conscience sake,—for the Lord's sake, Rom. xiii. 1—6. 1 Pet. ii. 13. By Christ kings still reign, and princes decree justice, even all the judges of the earth, Prov. viii. 15, 16. with Eph. i. 22.

(6.) The manifested will of God was the proper statute book of the Jewish civil law, Deut. xvii. The will of God manifested in the law of nature or revelation is the supreme standard of all civil laws in the world, in which every human constitution ought to be founded, and by which the whole binding force of it is circumscribed, Acts iv. 19. & v. 29. Psalm ii. 10—12. and hence human laws become an *ordinance of God*, Rom. xiii. 2.

(7.) The judicial laws of the Hebrew nation, regulated that which pertained to their kings, judges, warriors, fields, houses, injuries, crimes, punishments, mortgages, marriages, &c. Exod. xxi—xxiii. Deut. xviii. xx. Lev. xviii. xx. Num. xxxvi.—xxxviii. &c. Our civil laws regulate the same things.

(8.) Among the Jews, notorious disobedience to the declared will of God was held rebellion against Him, the King of the nation, and to be condignly

punished, as it tended to the good of the State, Heb. ii. 2. and x. 28. Notorious disobedience to the manifested will of God ought to be still held as rebellion against Him, as king of nations, and to be condignly punished, as tends to the welfare of the State,—magistrates being still set up by God to be *terrors, revengers, and punishers of evil doers*, and bound *not to bear the sword in vain*, Rom. xiii. 1—5. 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14. Nor hath it been yet proven, That our magistrates, who have the Scriptures, ought to pay less real regard to them in the stating of crimes, than the Jewish rulers did.

(9.) The Jewish magistrates were appointed to promote the welfare of the Church, in order to promote the welfare of the State, in subordination to the honour of God, the King of the nation. Magistrates are still bound to do the same, as they have opportunity, Isa. xlix. 23. & lx. 3, 10, 16. Rev. xvii. 16. & xxi. 24, 26. Rom. xiii. 1—6. 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14. 1 Tim. ii. 1—4.

(10.) The Jewish Church and State, as hath been just now proven, were really distinct from, and independent of each other, having different laws, officers, courts, privileges, penalties, &c. The Christian Church and the civil State of Christians are no less distinct and independent of each other.

(11.) Nevertheless, the purity of the Jewish Church, contributed much to the welfare of their State, and the right management of their State to the prosperity of their Church; and bad management in the one always tended to the hurt of the other, Deut. xxviii.—xxxii. Lev. xxvi. Judges i.—xiii. 1 Sam. ii.—to 2 Chron. xxxvi. Isa. i.—to Mal. iv. Isa. i. 19, 20. & iii. 10, 11. And still righteousness exalteth a nation, and sin is the reproach and ruin of any people, Prov. xiv. 34.

(12.) God never commanded the Jewish magi-

strates to *force* their true religion upon their Heathen neighbours, Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, or Syrians, whom they conquered, or to put them to death for their idolatry. Nor hath He ever commanded magistrates, who have embraced the true Christian religion to *FORCE* men by fire or sword, or any like punishments, to embrace and profess it,—or to inflict the same punishments upon blasphemers or idolaters in unenlightenend countries, which they may do upon such as obstinately rebel against and apostatize from the truth, amidst plentiful means of conviction and establishment in it.

(13.) Never did God, that I know of, require the Jewish magistrates to punish any of their subjects for *lesser faults*, however open or manifest, or to punish them for the *simple neglect* of duties *strictly religious*,—or to annex sentences of outlawry and of death to ecclesiastical *cutting off* by excommunication from the Church. Nor can I find, that he hath enjoined any such thing upon the Christian magistrate.

(14.) Among the Jews, some things partaking of both a civil and religious nature, did, in these different respects, fall under the government of both Church and State. Even circumcision itself was a national badge as well as a religious seal of God's covenant.——Among Christians, public fasts and thanksgivings, calling of Synods, &c. do, in different respects, fall under the power of both Church and State.——Pretend therefore no more, that there is a *total difference* between the case of our magistrates, and that of the Jewish, recorded in Scripture.

OBJECT. XXI. "To allow magistrates a power of judging, making and executing laws, about religion, and of punishing men for erroneous opinions, or for disturbing the peace and order of the Church,

as in our Confession of Faith and Second Book of Discipline, altogether confounds the kingdoms of Christ with the kingdoms of this world, contrary to John xviii. 36."

ANSW. 1. Sir, Have you in an honest and orderly manner, renounced these Confessions of Faith, as plainly and publicly as you solemnly avowed, if not also, subscribed a stedfast adherence to the Westminster one, at your ordination? Dare you, one day, call God, angels and men to witness, that you sincerely avow that Confession of Faith to be the Confession of your Faith, and that you sincerely believe the WHOLE DOCTRINE contained in it, to be founded on the word of God, and will constantly adhere to and maintain the same all the days of your life;—and the next, slight, reproach, revile and attempt to confute an important article of it \*?

2. Have you suffered as much for a zealous maintenance of the intrinsic power of the Church, and of Christ's sole headship over her as his spiritual kingdom, as the compilers and cordial adherers to that Confession have done? If not, modesty, as well as equity, might have restrained your revilings.

3. Suppose that, contrary to my judgment, I should allow, that magistrates *as such* have not that power relative to religious matters mentioned in our Confessions, and solemnly avowed in our Covenants, yet, being Christians, they are bound *as such* to execute their civil offices in that manner which most effectually promotes the honour and kingdom of Christ,—even as parents or masters, who are Christians, are bound to exercise their power in their families, as may best maintain and propagate the

\* See the wickedness of such conduct excellently exposed in Walker's Vindication of the Discipline and Constitutions of the Church of Scotland.

knowledge, faith, and obedience of the gospel. Every other character or office, which a Christian hath must be subordinated to his character as a Christian 1 Pet. iv. 11. Col. iii. 17. Eph. v. 21—33. vi. 1—9. Col. iii. 18—25. iv. 1. 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2, 3. Tit. ii. 1—10. iii. 2. 1 Pet. ii. 11—20. & iii. 1—7 Rom. xiii.

4. If to prevent confounding of the kingdom of Christ with the kingdoms of this world, magistrates who are heads of large political families, must be excluded from all that care about religion, which is allotted them in our Confession of Faith, Heads of families, must, for the same reason, be excluded from establishing the gospel-worship of God in their houses, and from instructing their children or servants in the truths of divine revelation, at least from requiring them to attend such instructions and worship. You pretend there is a difference; But Sir, I insist on your stating it precisely, and proving from Scripture and reason, that headship over families is a more spiritual relation than headship over multitudes of families; or, that magistrates cannot without sin, do what is similar to every thing which parents and masters, as such, are commanded to do.

5. If, to prevent confounding of the Church with the State, magistrates must exercise no care about religion,—must punish no publicly obstinate heretic, blasphemous, idolater, profaner of the Sabbath, or reviler of the oracles and ordinances of Christ, *as a criminal against the welfare of the State*—Church-courts must censure, *as scandals* against the welfare of the Church, no theft, murder, robbery, treason, unlawful war, perversion of civil judgment, or the like; as these pertain to the kingdoms of this world.

6. Though the powers of civil and ecclesiastical

government be CO-ORDINATE, each standing on its proper basis, and the right exercise of Church-power contributing mightily to the welfare of the State, —and of civil power to the advancement of the Church,—yet they are not COLLAGERAL, inseparable from, or dependent upon each other, but are altogether distinct from, and different, in many respects\*.

1. Civil and ecclesiastical power differ in their FOUNDATION. Magistracy is founded on God's universal dominion over all nations; and hence the law of nature is the *immediate supreme rule* of its administrations, and the Scriptures become the rule of them only as introduced by the law of nature, requiring magistrates as well as others to believe and obey whatever revelation, duly attested, God is pleased to grant them,—or, by magistrates' subjecting their consciences, as followers of Christ, to the Scriptures as their only rule to direct them how to glorify God and enjoy him for ever. But ecclesiastical power is founded in the œconomical or mediatorial headship of Jesus Christ over his Church, as his spiritual kingdom; and hence the immediate standard for regulating the exercise of it, is that Revelation, which God hath given to, and by him, in his word;—and the laws of nature have a regulating force in the Church by virtue of the general precepts of Scripture, as 1 Cor. xiv. 26, 40. vi. 12. vi. 14. Phil. iv. 8. Mat. vii. 12.

2. Civil and ecclesiastical power differ in their IMMEDIATE OBJECT. Magistratical power immediately relates only to *things external*, pertaining to the outward man. Even, when exercised about sacred things, it hath that which is *external* for its immedi-

\* See this point excellently handled in the Hundred and Eleven Propositions of the Assembly, 1645. republished by Alison; Edinburgh.



*ate object.* It removes external hinderances of spiritual exercises, and provides external opportunities and accommodations for the performance of them. If magistrates call a Synod, they do not properly call it as a *court of Christ*, or as *ministers of Christ*, but as a meeting of subjects, whose joint deliberations are calculated to promote the honour of God the King of nations, and the happiness of their country, by the right government of the Church. If a magistrate command persons to compare before a Church-court to be judged, or to bear witness, he commands them not as spiritual members of Christ's mystical body, but as his own and Jehovah's subjects, to take their trial or attest the truth before proper arbitrators of their cause, that God may be honoured, and through keeping of order in the Church, the welfare of the city or nation may be advanced and confirmed. If he punish insolent contemners of the authority and censures of the Church, he punisheth them not as *scandalous persons*, but as *criminals*, insulters of that true religion which the civil law hath established, and contemners of those judicatories which it hath authorized, and to which themselves have solemnly engaged all due subjection,—and thus, as treacherous disturbers of the good order and peace of his kingdom, and trampers on the laws of the Most High Sovereign of the nation.——But Church power hath that which is *spiritual* for its only proper object. It properly deals with men's *consciences and heart*, and with their outward man, only in order to affect those, in the way of conviction, reformation, comfort, &c. It considers the persons with whom it deals, not as *mere men*, or as *members of a civil society*, but as members of the *spiritual and mystical body of Christ*, in the visible form of it.

3. Civil and ecclesiastical power differ in their **FORM**. Though magistrates be the *ministers of God*

for good to men, their power over their subjects is of a **LORDLY** nature. They are *lordly* fathers, who, by making and enforcing civil laws, can *compel* the disobedient.—In this view, if they establish any thing pertaining to the Church, they establish it as a mean of honouring God their Superior, in the advancement of the welfare of the Commonwealth. If they punish faults, they consider them as *crimes*, injurious to the happiness of the State, dishonouring God its supreme Governor, and provoking his wrath against it, and they punish those crimes only on the outward man, by fining, imprisonment, death, &c.—But Church power is altogether **MINISTERIAL**, distributing to men, reproofs, admonitions, and other ordinances, according to the inspired prescriptions of Christ, Mat. xvi. 19. & xviii. 18. 1 Cor. iv. 1, 2. Christ being her alone Lord, Church-rulers have no power to make any *laws properly so called*, Isa. xxxiii. 22. James iv. 12. In dealing with offenders, they consider faults, even oppression tyranny, sinful wars and leagues, perversion of judgment, bribery or the like in magistrates, who are members, not *as crimes* but merely *as scandals*, defiling and ruining men's souls, plaguing the Church, and dishonouring and provoking Christ and his Father in him, against it. They have *no compulsory power*,—can punish no man either in his person or his external property,—can use no weapons but such as are *spiritual*, mighty through God; administering Church censures, not as punishments, but as spiritual privileges, and divinely instituted means of bringing offenders to a thorough repentance of their sins, to the eternal salvation of their souls.—And this whole power must be used, only in the name of Jesus Christ, as Head of his Church, 2 Cor. i. 24. x. 4, 5, 8. xiii. 8, 10. ii. 6—  
10. 1 Cor. v. 4.

4. Civil and ecclesiastical power differ in their **PROPER END.** The *formal end of magistratical power* is to advance the glory of God, the King of nations, in promoting the welfare of the Commonwealth;—and the establishment of the true religion, and care to promote the prosperity and propagation of the Church, are used as eminent means of gaining that end. Or, the good of the Church may also be considered as an *accessory end* of civil administration, as the better civil justice be executed, open out-breakings restrained, and virtue encouraged by the magistrate, the fewer will probably be the scandals, and the greater the purity and prosperity of the Church. Nay, though the advancement of the Church's welfare be not the formal end of magistracy, yet as Christ is made Head over all things to his Church, every magistrate, who professeth the Christian religion, ought to pursue the formal end of his office, as subordinated to his *Christian end* of promoting the glory of God in the welfare of the Church and eternal salvation of men.——But the formal *end* of all Church-power is the glorifying of God in Christ, by promoting the spiritual conviction, conversion and edification of men's souls; and the welfare of nations is but an *accessory* or *subordinate* end, at which Church-rulers, as subjects in the State, ought always to aim;—as the better they prosecute and obtain the end of their office, the fewer will be the crimes, the better both subjects and magistrates, and the more numerous and valuable the blessings of God on the nation.

5. Civil and ecclesiastical power differ in their **PROPER EFFECTS.** The *proper effect* of magistratical power, rightly exercised, is the good of the Commonwealth, in their commodious enjoyment of civil privileges, in a manner mightily calculated to *promote the honour of God, as the Most High over*

all the earth;—and the purity, peace and prosperity of the Church, arising from the right administration of justice, discouragement of evil doers, and praise of them that do well, is but an *accessory effect*. But the *proper effect* of Church power rightly exercised, is the conversion of men to Jesus Christ, fellowship with him, and growth in grace and good works, to the praise of his glory; and the advantage accruing to cities or nations, by the virtuous lives and fervent prayers of Church members, is but an *accessory effect* of it.

6. Civil and ecclesiastical power differ in their **SUBJECTS** of residence. No ecclesiastical power can reside in a heathen, a woman, or a child; and no power of jurisdiction in a single person;—as civil power often may, or doth. Nor can one ecclesiastical officer delegate his power to another.

7. They differ in their **FORMAL CONSIDERATION OF THE PERSONS UPON WHOM THEY ARE EXERCISED**. A magistrate's power extends over all powers resident in his territory, be their moral character what it will, Jews, Heathens, &c. Rom. xiii. 1. But Church-power extends only to the professed members of Christ's mystical body, the Church, 1 Cor. v. 12, 13.

8. Civil and ecclesiastical power differ in respect of their **DIVIDED EXERCISE**. The one may, and ought to be exercised, whether the other be so or not.—The *end of Church-censure* being to gain sinners to repentance and salvation scandalous persons appearing penitent, ought to be seasonably absolved from it, and restored to communion with the Church in sealing ordinances. But the *end of civil punishment* being the satisfaction of the law, and the deterring of others from the like faults, criminals, however penitent and fully restored to Church-fellowship, may, as the nature of their crime demands, be pun-

ished, even unto death. And suppose a Church-member should have satisfied the demands of the civil law for a crime, he ought to be prosecuted and censured for it as a scandal, by the ecclesiastical courts, till he appear duly penitent. Not only ought Church-rulers to censure scandalous persons, when magistrates take no notice of their faults, but even to censure magistrates, who are Church-members, for what wickedness they commit under colour of countenance from the civil law. And where magistrates punish, and Church-rulers censure the same persons for the same faults, the processs ought to be kept entirely distinct from, and independent of each other;—though, to prevent unnecessary swearing, the proof taken in one court may sometimes be produced and judged of, also in the other.

· OBJECT. XXII. “Magistrates not being proper judges of the doctrines of Revelation, cannot be capable to judge concerning religious matters, and particularly to determine who are heretics, blasphemers, or idolaters.”

· ANSW. 1. That they have a right to judge in these matters hath been already established.

2. God, who knows all things, admits private Christians to be capable of judging what is heresy, blasphemy and idolatry, and who are heretics, blasphemers and idolaters, and hence commands them to keep themselves from these sins, and to avoid such seducers, and debar them from their houses, Rom. xvi. 17. 2 Tim. iii. 5. 1 Cor. v. 11. 1 John iv. 1—3. & v. 24. 2 John 9—11. Now what hinders Christian magistrates to have as much good sense and as much capacity of judging in these matters, as common Christians.

3. The gross errors, blasphemies and idolatries which magistrates ought to restrain, and *suitably* and *seasonably* punish, are so plainly condemned by the

word of God, which magistrates ought carefully to search, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, that any unbiassed person of common capacity may easily discern them.

4. The advice of faithful ministers; and the common consent of Christian Churches, may assist magistrates in discerning from the word of God, what is gross or damnable heresy, blasphemy, idolatry.

OBJEC T. XXIII. "If magistrates, as such, have a power of judging in religious matters, then Heathen magistrates must also be allowed to make laws concerning religion and the Church, while in the mean time they cannot be censured by the Church, if they do amiss."

ANSW. 1. What could you gain, if I should plead, that it is magistrates' Christianity requiring them to execute their office in subordination to it, that is the immediate origin of their power about the matters of religion, even as it is parents' Christianity that warrants them to receive baptism for their infants? But

2. Heathen magistrates, with God's direction and approbation, have made laws respecting religion, Ezra vii. 13—28. vi. 1—14. i. 1—3. Dan. iii. 29. vi. 26. Jonah iii. Dare you condemn the Almighty?

3. Heathen magistrates have the same power as Christian magistrates, but are less capable to use it aright; even as heathen parents and masters have the same power over their children and servants as Christians, but are less qualified to discern and perform their duty.

4. Neither Heathen nor Christian magistrates have any power at all against the truth, but for the truth, —any power for the destruction of the Church, but for her edification, 2 Cor. xiii. 8, 10.

5. Heathen magistrates therefore, ought carefully to improve what assistance they have by the light of

nature and works of creation and providence, any Revelation from God, to which they hact, —always taking heed to make no law such as they certainly know to be agreeable law of God.——It is not to be expected civil laws can forbid every fault and require thing good in externals; but they ought never courage sin, or discourage duty.

OBJECT. XXIV. "To allow magistrates a cr of judging about the matters of religion will them Church-rulers."

ANSW. 1. No more than it made Nebuchazar, Darius, Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxe the king of Nineveh Church-rulers.

2. No more than Church-rulers taking crance of murder, adultery, incest, theft, robbery even of the conduct of Christian magistrates r to administration of justice, wars, alliances will make them magistrates.

3. How often must you be told, that Cl rulers judge, how such profession or pr ought to stand connected with ecclesiastic: encouragements, discouragements or censure magistrates judge, how such profession or pr ought to be connected with civil encouragement discoragements. Church-rulers warn against censure men's public faults, *only as scandals*, difful and hurtful to the Church. Magistrates of, and punish them *only as crimes*, hurtful prosperity of the State. In Church-courts, r are considered as the *matters of the Lord*, In courts, they are considered as the *matters of th* 2 Chron. xix. 8—11. Ministers as the deput Christ, require magistrates to execute their for the honour of Christ, and welfare of his Cl and censure them, if Church-members, if th not. Magistrates as vicegerents of God, the

of nations, require ministers faithfully to execute their office, particularly as stated by the laws of the land, in order to promote virtue and happiness among the subjects, and draw the blessing of God upon them; and they punish them *as unfruitful subjects*, if they notoriously transgress, 1 Kings ii. 26. Magistrates have NO ECCLESIASTICAL POWER at all. They have no power to restrain or hinder the free and full exercise of Church power. But, by giving full opportunity, encouragement and excitement to Church officers, they have power to provide that Church power be freely and faithfully exercised in their dominions. They have no power to transact any thing ecclesiastical, as in admission of members into the Church, or to the seals of God's covenant; —no power to choose or ordain Church officers; —no power to preach the gospel, dispense the sacrament, inflict censures, or absolve from them. —They have no power to prescribe or enact any ecclesiastical laws; but they have power to adopt such lawful and expedient constitutions, as have been made by the Church-courts, into their civil code, by a legal ratification,—and power to enact such *political laws* as are necessary for the more advantageous execution of these ecclesiastical constitutions. They have no power to frame a religion for their subjects, or ratify a false religion already received or framed, or to establish any thing in religion, which is not founded in the word of God; but they have a power to adopt the law of God, and the religion prescribed by it, as a part of their civil law, in order to promote the glory of God in the welfare of the nation.——The more public Church-courts be, and the more extensive his influence upon his subjects, and the welfare of the nation,—the more right hath the civil magistrate to exercise his *political power* about them. The Church having an in-



trinsic right and power from Christ to call Synods for government, whenever her circumstances require it, the magistrate hath no power to deprive her of this right. But while the Church calls them as courts of Christ, constituted of Church-rulers appointed by him to act in his name, the magistrate may call them as courts established by the civil law, and necessary to promote the peace, order and piety, and so the prosperity of his subjects,—as courts, which consist of his principal subjects, and to which place and protection must be given in his dominions. The magistrate hath no power of deputing to Synods such members as he pleaseth, Acts xv. 2 Chron. viii. 18. or, to hinder or recal those whom the Church hath deputed, unless the safety of the State plainly require it. But he may compel members, and parties who have cause before the court, to attend, if the case of the Church require it, as a mean of repressing a malicious and turbulent faction, who have, or may hurt the State. It is not necessary, that either the magistrate, or his Commissioner, attend ecclesiastical Synods;—though to secure their protection, curb unruly troublers of the court, and to witness the propriety of their procedure, he may attend.——If he attend, He hath a power to judge for himself, how matters are ecclesiastically transacted,—a power *politically* to provide, That the members meddle with no political affairs, which do not belong to them as a court of Christ;—and to take care, that members, and others present, observe that due decency, in reasoning, voting, submitting, or hearing, which the nature of the court requires. If any cause be partly civil and partly ecclesiastical, he is to judge the civil part himself, and leave the ecclesiastical to the Church court.——Even in ecclesiastical causes, he may give his advice, nay, he may propose and requize Synods to examine and de-

side concerning points of doctrine or practice, if necessary for the satisfaction of his own conscience, or the instruction and edification of his subjects, in order to promote the welfare of the State, in subordination to the glory of God. But he hath no power to hinder others to propose their difficulties or grievances before the Synod for satisfaction or redress, unless the cause be partly of a political nature, a Synodical decision of which, at that time, endangers the State. — He hath no power to preside in the Synod, or to give his decisive vote in any of their transactions. But, as a man and Christian, he hath right to a *judgment of discretion*, Whether their decisions be according to the law of God or not,—and as a magistrate, he hath a power of *political judgment*, by which he doth not properly judge, Whether these decisions be true or false, good or bad in themselves, but Whether, and How far, they ought to be ratified, and as it were adopted into the laws of the State, and connected with civil rewards, forbearance, or punishments. Thus, the power of the magistrate, *in nothing* interferes with the power of the Synod. Nothing is done by the one, as a magistrate, that the other can do, as a court of Christ. And as the decisions of Synods are *supreme in the ecclesiastic order*, from which there is no appeal but to Jesus Christ;—By remonstrating as a Church-member, and commanding them as their King, the magistrate may cause the Synod re-consider its own deeds, but he cannot reverse them himself;—so the magistrate's deed concerning the civil ratification of Church-deeds is *supreme in its kind*, from which there is no appeal but to God himself. The Synod may require him as a Church-member; and, as subjects, they may remonstrate, and supplicate his re-consideration of his own deed, but they cannot reverse it themselves.

OBJECT. XXV. "To allow magistrates to judge in matters of religion for others, and to restrain and punish corruptions in it, is to render them lords of men's faith and conscience,—a power which even the inspired apostles disclaimed. For if magistrates impose any religion at all upon their subjects, it must be what their own conscience dictates; and then what shall become of the private rights of conscience, among their subjects?"

ANSW. 1. Did then God, who of old commanded magistrates to judge about matters of religion, and to restrain and punish blasphemers, idolaters, seducers, profaners of the Sabbath, Deut. xiii. 9, 10. & xvii. 5—7. Lev. xxiv. 11—14. Song ii. 15. Num. xv. 32—36. command them to lord it over men's conscience? If it was not so then, it cannot be so now, as conscience, tyranny and murder, are the same in every age.

2. The objection strikes with equal force, against all ecclesiastical establishment of the true religion and against all creeds and Confessions of Faith, and against all ecclesiastical judging and censuring of men for heresy, blasphemy, or idolatry, contrary to Rev. ii. 20. Tit. iii. 10. Gal. v. 10, 11. as against magistrates' judging about establishing religion or punishing the public insulters of it.

3. Magistrates act in this matter as *his minister*. and vicegerents, by virtue of his commandment who is the alone Lord of conscience, and restrain or punish nothing, but what men, under any proper influence of faith and conscience, would abstain from, as forbidden by the Lord of conscience, who is to be their future judge, and hath appointed magistrates, as his substitutes to avenge the open injuries done to him in this world, Rom. xiii. 4. And, if men persist in sins plainly forbidden in his law, he

holds them as sinners against, and condemned by their conscience, Tit. iii. 10, 11.

4. The absurdity of men's consciences being sustained as a standard, as well as the proper method of magistrates' making laws relative to religion, have been already manifested. Magistrates' consciences have no more just claim to God-head than those of their meanest subjects. Not, therefore, magistrates' pretences to conscience, but plain and evident marks of the authority of God manifested in, and from the Scriptures, must determine their subjects to receive a religion in obedience to their authority, as subordinated to the authority of God, the Most High, Superior of both.

OBJECT. XXVI. "In Rom. xiii. where the power of magistrates is more fully described than any where else in the New Testament, only the commands of the second table of the moral law are subjoined, to mark that it only extends to the concerns of men one with another."

ANSW. 1. Who authorized the objector to put asunder the two Testaments and the two tables which God hath joined? Or, to separate the first part of that chapter from the last, which certainly relates to religion, any more than from verse 9th.

2. The magistrate's character, *minister of God for good, terror to, and revenger of evil doers*, and his duty to love his neighbours as himself there hinted, cannot admit of his having no care about religion and the first table of the moral law.

3. To oblige men carefully to search the whole Scriptures, God hath seldom, if ever, manifested his whole will, relative to any thing, in one passage.

OBJECT. XXVII. "If we allow magistrates any power at-all about religious matters, we must plunge ourselves into inextricable difficulties, as the precise

limits of civil and ecclesiastical power can never be fixed,—and every small mistake in religious opinions, or neglect of religious duties, must bring men to the gibet, as these draw down the wrath of God on nations, as well as blasphemy and idolatry do.”

ANSW. 1. There is no more difficulty in limiting the power of magistrates about either religion or virtue, than in fixing precise limits to the power of Church-rulers relative to those matters. Do you fix precise limits to Church-power according to the word of God, and I shall next moment fix as precise limits for the power of the magistrate. If you limit the exercise of Church power to duties required, and sins forbidden in the first table of the moral law,—you naturally leave the care of the duties required in the second table to the magistrate. But then, whether a Church of Christ, having no care or power about morality toward men,—or a deputed kingdom of God without any care or power about any thing relating to the honour of God, be most absurd and devilish, I know not. If you aver, That the power of Church-rulers extends to the external obedience or disobedience of Church-members to both tables of God’s law, not as *civil*, but as *spiritual* conduct, tending to the spiritual advantage or hurt of the Church, and therefore connected with the spiritual encouragements or frowns of Christ’s visible Church; and that they meddle not with sins against the second table as *crimes* against mens’ person or property, but as *scandals* against the spiritual edification of the Church, and the glory of Jesus Christ therein concerned;——I immediately reply, That precisely in like manner, the power of magistrates extends to the external obedience or disobedience of *civil* subjects as such, to both tables of God’s law, not as it is of a spiritual nature, but as it affects the *civil* welfare or hurt of the nation, or honour of God. **AR.**

the King of it, and so ought to stand connected with civil encouragements or discouragements. If you pretend, that it will be still hard to shew, how far magistrates may, in that view, proceed in matters of the first table, particularly with respect to offending clergymen. I answer, that it is not one whit harder, than to shew how far Church-courts may proceed in matters of the second table, particularly with respect to offensive magistratical administrations.

2. Your pretence, that if magistrates punish any faults in religion, they must punish all known faults in the same form and degree, is but a deceitful insult on the Most High, who, in his word, appointed the capital punishment of idolaters and blasphemers, and yet never warranted the punishment of many faults relative to religion, in like manner; nay, for ought I see, hath not required magistrates at all to punish any thing but the most atrocious faults in it. If you insult Christ, who hath not commanded any faults, but atrocious ones obstinately continued in, to be censured with excommunication, and hath never commanded many lesser neglects and infirmities of Church-members to be censured at all,—It is an insult on common sense. Would you, or any man in his wits, either censure or punish men *as severely* for a simple neglect of a religious duty, as for an open and blasphemous insulting of religion? Would you censure or punish the stealing of a single straw as severely as the stealing of a man or woman? Would you censure or punish a prick with a pin, as severely as the cutting of a man's throat, or the ripping up of a woman with child.

OBJECT. XXVIII. "Either every error in doctrine, and mistake in worship, must be punished by the magistrate, or only that which is more glaring and notorious. If it is only the latter, How are the

limits of what is punishable, and what is not, and the degree of punishment proper for each, to be precisely fixed."

ANSW. 1. If every species of duty must be neglected, and the contrary sin allowed, where it is difficult to fix the precise boundaries of sin or duty, —or where it is difficult to fix the precise degrees of encouragement to be given to such obedience, or of censure or punishment due to such sin, men must be left to live like absolute atheists, in both Church and State, every man doing that which is right in his own eyes.

2. Unless you prove that every insult of, and outrage against God and his religion ought to pass unpunished, and even be licensed and authorized, yourself must be equally embarrassed in fixing what is punishable and what is not, and what must be the form and degree of punishment annexed to each punishable fault.

3. Nay, unless you prove, that all deeds, however horrid, ought to be tolerated in both Church and State, How are you to fix precisely, what deeds are censurable or punishable, and what not; —and what form and degree of censure or punishment is proper for each, in every particular form and circumstance. A man may as really, and for ought men can prove against him, as justly pretend conscience for his wicked deeds of treason, murder, robbery, &c. as for his damnable heresies, blasphemies, and idolatrous worship. Wicked deeds, if God be true, are the native fruits of gross errors and idolatrous worship. A conscience, which under the clear light of Scripture revelation, approves the whole system of Popery or Socinianism, may as reasonably dictate the murder of saints, dethronement of lawful Sovereigns, community of women and goods, &c. Let once the plea of conscience, be

admitted in the case of treason, theft, robbery, murder, and the like, and I will undertake, it shall be as commonly pled, as in the case of gross heresy, blasphemy and idolatry; and it will be as impossible for judges to disprove it in the one case, as in the other. Nothing therefore, will truly answer your tolerant scheme, but that every man be allowed to profess, worship, and act as he pleaseth.

4. Let therefore magistrates, as well as Church-rulers, in their punishing and censuring work, make God's word their rule; and if they do not perceive from it clearly the proper degrees of punishment and censure, let them rather err on the charitable side, than in approaches to severity.

**OBJECT. XXIX.** "But, how are heretics, blasphemers, and idolaters to be got judged in order to punishment? They must be judged only by their Peers, by persons of the same station as themselves, quite impartial, and no wise attached to the contrary sentiments or practices."

**ANSW. 1.** But, how can you prove from Scripture or reason, that such criminals must be judged only by their Peers;—or that there is a nation under heaven, in which criminals are judged by such Peers, as you mention?

2. Allowing that our juries consist of the proper Peers of the criminals, yet they judge not concerning the relevancy of the crime, or the form or degree of punishments, but of the proof of the fact,—which, in the case of heresy, blasphemy, or idolatry, is ordinarily no more difficult, than in the case of adultery, incest, theft, murder, &c.

3. Nothing can be more absurd, than to pretend, that men's detestation of heresy, blasphemy, and idolatry, disqualifies them from judging heretics, blasphemers, and idolaters. What! Doth men's abhorrence of theft, murder, adultery, disqualify



them to judge of, and punish those crimes? Is God's infinite holiness and equity, disqualify him from judging of sinners?

OBJECTION. XXX. "If heretics, blasphemers, and idolaters, be punishable, orthodox magistrates, who happen to become governors of heretical, blasphemous and idolatrous nations, must kill the most of their subjects."

ANSW. 1. We hold none punishable, especially in any severe manner, till they appear openly obdurate in it, notwithstanding sufficient means of conviction, which these subjects are not supposed have had; and so are not punishable at all by magistrates.

2. Nothing, and particularly the infliction of punishment, ought to be done, merely, because it is lawful, till it also become expedient, 1 Cor. vi. & x. 23. Eccl. iii. 1, 11. Now it would be highly inexpedient to proceed to extremities against the greater part of a society. Nay, in the case supposed, they would prove a barbarously sinful means prejudicing men against the gospel of Christ.

3. Great difference ought to be made between such as were never reformed from a false religion and those who obstinately apostatize from the true religion to a false one;—between such as live in a nation generally corrupted with a false religion, and those who live in a nation generally enlightened and reformed by the gospel of Christ;—and between such as are only seduced, and those who exert themselves to seduce others. Much more forbearance due to the former than to the latter; for

4. However peremptorily the Jews were commanded by God to punish even unto death, the obstinate false prophets, idolaters and blasphemers of their own Church or nation, they were never required to punish their idolatrous tributaries in th

conquered countries of Syria, Philistia, Edom, Ammon, or Moab. And mean-while, were never allowed, and never did grant them any *legal establishment* or *authoritative toleration*, of their idolatry.

5. Even God himself, for the ends of his glory, exerciseth much forbearance towards heretics, blasphemers and idolaters, but never grants them any *legal establishment* or *authoritative toleration*, securing them of protection in their wickedness. Let magistrates, who are *his ministers for good* to men, go and do so likewise.

OBJECT. XXXI. "The Christian law of doing to others that which we would have them do to us, demands, That we should allow every man to think, profess, and act in religion as he pleaseth. If we think men heretics, blasphemers or idolaters, our proper method is to manifest the utmost kindness and familiarity to them, that we may gain them to the truth. Every other method is no less dangerous than uncharitable. If orthodox Christian magistrates restrain and punish the spreading of Heathen, Mahometan, and Popish errors or worship,—Heathen, Mahometan and Popish princes will be thereby, tempted to restrain and punish the spread of gospel-truth in their dominions, and can plead the very same right for their conduct."

ANSW. 1. Strange! Did not God know the meaning of his own law of equity and kindness between man and man, and the true method of securing or propagating his own religion, when he made or encouraged the laws against seducers, idolaters, and blasphemers above mentioned;—when he commanded his people to avoid false teachers, and not so much as to lodge them in their houses.

2. With all your pretended benevolence, Would you familiarly lodge in your family a notorious pick-pocket or an harlot, along with your own children,

in order to gain them to the ways of piety and virtue? You would not. Why then, in direct contradiction to the command of God, do you plead for familiarity with robbers of God, defilers, or murderers of souls!

3. The Christian law of kindness and equity requires me to do all that for the real welfare of my neighbour, in subordination to the glory of God, which I could lawfully wish him, in like circumstances, to do for me? But, must I do evil that good may come, rendering my damnation just? Must I procure my just liberty to believe and serve God according to his own appointment, by granting my neighbour an unjust, an authoritative licence to insult and blaspheme God, and worship the devil in his stead? Because I wish my neighbour to be helpful to me, in honouring God, and in labouring to render myself and others happy in time and eternity, Must I assist and encourage them in horribly dishonouring God, and destroying themselves and others. None but an atheist, who believes no real difference between moral good and evil, can pretend it.

4. When and where have faithful adherents to gospel-truth, got much liberty and safety by means of their friends encouraging and protecting gross heresy, blasphemy and idolatry? Since Protestants became so kind to Papists in their dominions, Have not the Popish powers, in return, cruelly murdered, banished, or oppressed their Protestant subjects, in Hungary, Poland, Germany, France, &c. till they have left few of them remaining? While Britions were lavishly expending their blood and treasure in support of the Popish house of Austria about 1709 and 1741, She returned our kindness in the most villanous destruction of about 230 Congregations of our Protestant brethren in Silesia and Hungary.

5. Ought Elijah to have spared, nay protected

and encouraged the prophets of Baal, as a mean of securing for himself the protection of Ahab and Jezebel, or, because she was disposed to avenge their death? Must thieves and robbers be benevolently used, protected and suffered to pass unpunished, for fear of provoking their associates to revenge the just severities used towards them? Let magistrates do their duty, and leave events to God.

6. Till you honestly profess yourself an atheist, who believes no *intrinsic difference between moral good and evil*, never pretend that magistrates, who have their whole power from God, have any power against the truth, or have a right to exercise that power derived from God for the good of mankind, to his dishonour and to the hurt of mankind. Astonishing! Because a power originating from God may be rightfully exercised in promoting his declarative glory, the spread or protection of his gospel, and the happiness of mankind,——May it, must it, therefore, in the hand of other magistrates, be rightfully exercised in promoting blasphemy and robbery of God, and worshipping of devils?——Because it may be rightfully exercised in punishing obstinate and notorious heretics, blasphemers and idolaters,——May it, must it, therefore be rightfully exercised in persecuting and murdering the faithful preachers and professors of Gospel-truths, and worshippers of the true God?——Because magistrates in Britain have a right to punish thieves and murderers, must these in France have as good a right to use Alms-givers and skilful and diligent Physicians in the same manner?——Because that which tends to the highest honour of God, and temporal and eternal happiness of mankind ought to be authoritatively tolerated, nay established, every where,——may,——must, that which tends to his highest dishonour, and the most dreadful temporal and eternal ruin of mankind, be every

where, in like manner, tolerated or established?— Because in a dearth, benevolent persons may be tolerated, nay highly encouraged in freely distributing wholesome provisions to the poor and needy, may, or must, malicious murderers be therefore tolerated and encouraged in distributing their poisoned morsels, especially if abundantly sweetened among the unwary infants or others?

7. The restraint or *suitable* and *seasonable* punishment of that which is contrary to God's law, being commanded by himself, can never have any tendency to introduce corruptions in religion, or persecution for an adherence to gospel-truth. And if some will abuse their power, that must not hinder others, either in Church or State, to use theirs aright.

OBJECT. XXXII. "If infidelity and difference in religion do not make void magistrates' right to govern nations, much less can heresy, idolatry, or blasphemy, invalidate subjects' right to protection, or of admission to all the privileges of other subjects."

ANSW. 1. In almost every case, the restraint or punishment of superiors is more difficult than that of inferiors.

2. If the professors of the true religion be the minority in number and power, both Scripture and reason demand their subjection to their common-rulers, in all their lawful commands, till they become manifest tyrants, and Providence afford a proper opportunity of shaking off their yoke. But, if the professors of the true religion be the majority in a nation or society, both Scripture and reason forbid their setting up a magistrate of a false religion, or a wicked practice,—and allow that, if after his advancement, he apostatize, and obstinately attempt to promote a false religion, or notoriously wicked practice, he may be deposed and even punished, as far as the

general welfare of the society, in subordination to the glory of God, can admit, Pſal. xv. 4.

3. Do you pretend to be wifer than God himſelf? Without any apprehended inconſiſtency, he commanded the Jews, not *authoritatively to tolerate*, protect, and encourage, but to puniſh blaſphemers, profaners of the Sabbath, idolaters, and falſe prophets, Lev. xxiv. 15, 16. Num. xv. 35, 36. Deut. xiv. xvii. Zech. xiii. 2—6. and yet commanded them when they were the ſmall minority in the Chaldean empire, to ſerve the Heathen king of Babylon, Jer. xxviii. 17. & xxix. 7.

OBJECT. XXXIII. “Unlimited tolerations in the ſtate ought not to be granted. In Proteſtant countries, Papiſts ought not to be tolerated, as they are ſubject to the foreign power of the Pope, as their Head, and cannot be ſuppoſed faithful ſubjects to, or to keep faith with ſuch as they pretend to be heretics. Atheiſts ought not to be tolerated, as they cannot be bound by any oath. Such as are againſt tolerating others ought not to be tolerated, as they will kindle ſtrife. And in Churches, there ought to be no toleration at all.”

ANSW. 1. Then it ſeems, Chriſt and his Father muſt be excluded from all ſhare in the toleration you plead for, on account of their intolerant diſpoſition, unleſs they be infinitely altered from what they were in antient times.

2. You have already given up all your care for procuring the favour of the Popiſh powers to your Proteſtant brethren abroad, by means of tolerating Papiſts.

3. Never pretend zeal againſt atheiſm. till you be able to maintain your *tolerant* ſcheme, upon other than the atheiſtical principles mentioned near the beginning of this miſſive; and to which you have had repeated recourſe in your objections,—and till

you allow men's rights or pretences of conscience to warrant them to defame, abuse, rob, and murder yourself, as you allow with respect to God.

4. Your present objection is partly founded in atheism. Papists are excluded from toleration, not at all as notorious blasphemers and idolaters, but merely as not very like to prove faithful subjects to Protestant magistrates. Atheists are excluded, not as daring blasphemers or intentionally malicious murderers of Jehovah, but merely because they cannot give proper security for their good behaviour to magistrates and fellow subjects. Thus no more regard is shewed to God the *King of nations*, than might be expected among a nation of Atheists, and the interests of men are altogether, I might say, infinitely, preferred to his.

5. How are you to fix the *precise limits*, Who are to be accounted under foreign heads;—who are to be accounted Papists and Atheists;—or who are to be held to give sufficient security by oath,——Whether profane swearers, Quakers, Socinians, notorious violators of baptismal engagements, solemn subscribers of, and engagers to Creeds and Confessions of Faith which they believe not, &c.—If, contrary to the light of nature and revelation, men zealously propagate the doctrines of devils and do worship them in idols, and follow the pernicious practices above-mentioned, as the native consequences of error and idolatry, Are not they plainly subject to another Head, even the God of this world, who is not much more friendly to magistrates and nations, than the Romish Pope? If men have conscience, villainously to wrest the Scripture to prove that Christ was originally a *mere man*, a *mere creature*, and is now a *made God*; What more security can we have by their oath, than if they were professed Atheists?

6. None who plead for the *authoritative toleration*

of heretics, blasphemers and idolaters by the State, can with any self-consistent candor, disallow of all toleration in the Church.—God the King of nations, hates these abominations as much as Christ, the Head of the Church. Church-rulers have no other infallible rule to direct them in their decisions, than magistrates have. They are as unfit to judge of more refined errors, as magistrates are to judge of gross errors, blasphemies, idolatries. They have as little allowance from Christ to lord over men's consciences, or to impose their own opinions for articles of faith or rules of duty, as magistrates have from God. It is as difficult to fix precisely, What is *censurable*, and what not, and the *proper degree of censure* answerable to every scandal, in every circumstance, as to fix precisely, *what* and *how* crimes ought to be punished by the magistrate. Unrighteous censures for an adherence to truth and duty, are as *real* and *more severe persecution* than unrighteous punishments. Articles and Confessions of Faith imposed by ecclesiastical authority, as much cramp Christian liberty, as if they were established by the State. Clergymen have as often abused their power about religion, as ever Statesmen did. Their constitutions and counsels have done as much hurt to it, as these of magistrates ever did; If it be difficult to get gross heretics, blasphemers and idolaters judged, restrained or punished by the State, it will be found as hard to get ALL errors and ALL practical mistakes censured by the Church. Nay, for once that magistrates have erred in punishing heretics, blasphemers and idolaters, I believe clergymen have erred, ten, if not an hundred times, in their censures. And, seldom have ever magistrates persecuted men for righteousness sake, but when they were instigated to it by some clergymen.

OBJECT. XXXIV. "No carnal influence of ma-  
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magistrate relative to religion is consistent with the spiritual nature of the kingdom of Christ, which is not of this world, John xviii. 36. The apostles used no carnal weapons of warfare in promoting it, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

Answer. 1. Why do you not state precisely, what you mean by the *spiritual nature* of Christ's kingdom, and its not being *of this world*? Is it *so spiritual*, that the members and subordinate rulers in it, are not at the same time members in a civil State, and interested in the welfare or hurt of it? Is it *so spiritual*, that it hath no manner of connexion or fellowship with the kingdom of God over the nations in which it resides, and neither gives nor receives from it, any more helpfulness, than from the kingdom of Belial? Is it *so spiritual*, that the power of it cannot touch any part of men's conduct toward one another, or even the magistratical administrations of its members? Is it *so spiritual*, as to exclude the Most High, King of nations, and his deputed vicegerents, from all regard to the honour of God and his religion, and the welfare of the State as connected therewith, leaving them no more concern therewith, than if nations were herds of swine? The question under consideration is not concerning the nature of Christ's kingdom, of which the civil magistrate is not a ruler of any kind, as hath been already manifested, but, Whether all care about the Church and her religion, as tending to promote the welfare of nations ought to be excluded from *God's kingdom as the Sovereign of nations*, and he and his vicegerents obliged to manage that department, as if there were no God in the earth.

2. Had Christ no *spiritual kingdom* in the days of Moses, and the prophets, when God required magistrates to take care about religion, and to restrain and punish the public atrocious insults of it? Had

he no *spiritual kingdom*, not of this world, when he repeatedly drove the buyers and sellers out of the temple?

3. That the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom rendered it perfectly consistent with the full exercise of the magistral power in the Roman empire, or any other State, which is what he meant in his answer to Pilate, we readily grant; but the inspired promises, which have been repeatedly quoted, Isa. xlix. 23. & lx. 3, 10, 16. Psal. ii. 8, 10, 11, 12. & lxxii. 10, 11. Rev. xi. 15. & xvii. 16. & xxi. 24. sufficiently prove, that the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom doth not exclude magistrates' helpfulness to the truth, in authorizing the profession and practice of it by their civil laws, and in restraining the open and insolent blasphemers of it?

4. Though the weapons of ministers' warfare, in propagating the gospel be not carnal, What is that to the case of magistrates? And as the spiritual weapons of Church-officers reach as much to sins against the second table of the moral law as to those against the first, they no more exclude the use of the magistrates' carnal weapons against the atrocious sins against the first table, than with respect to those against the second, 2 Cor. x. 6. 1 Cor. v. 2—5.

5. Magistral influence cannot set up Christ's kingdom in men's heart, or oblige men's conscience to obey his laws in an acceptable manner; but it can remove many external hindrances, and afford many external opportunities, of his own setting up, by means of his word and Spirit. It can restrain burning of Bibles or abusing and murdering of preachers and hearers of the gospel. It can spread the Scriptures, and protect preachers of the truths contained in them; and by command, example, and otherwise, encourage the subjects to search the Scriptures, and to hear, learn, profess, and practise the plain

doctrines of the gospel. Is thus endeavouring to make their subjects attend on, receive, and observe the doctrines of the gospel, all *appearance of force* should be carefully avoided, as that is apt to provoke a dislike, rather than to promote a cheerful embracement of them. But force may be used to restrain, or *duty and seasonably* punish the insolent opposers and revilers of the true religion, which is established. And, on no account, ought such plagues of nations, as well as of Churches, to receive any *authoritative licence* to commit such wickedness.

OBJECT. XXXV. "The annexing of temporal encouragements to the profession and practice of the Christian religion or external discouragements to the profession or practice of such opinions and worship as are contrary to it,—tends to render men hypocrites, and their religion merely carnal, in obedience to civil authority, and influenced by mere carnal motives. It makes men trample on and *despise* their conscience, and so *sap the foundation of all true piety and virtue.*"

ANSW. 1. God, who well knows the true nature of religious worship and obedience, and highly regards the candor and purity of conscience, excited the Israelites to it, partly by external encouragements, restraints and terrors, Deut. iv.—viii. xxvii.—xxxii. Lev. xviii.—xx. xxvi. and by each of his prophets, Isa. i.—to Mal. iv. And even under the gospel, godliness hath the *promises of this life*, as well as of that which is to come, 1 Tim. iv. 8. 1 Pet. iii. 13.——Did you mean to blaspheme his conduct as absolutely devilish?

2. With God's approbation, David, Nehemiah, and others, by familiar intimacy, and by preferring them to posts of honour, encouraged such as appeared eminent in the profession and practice of revealed religion; and they excluded such as appear-

ed notoriously wicked, Pſal. cxix. 63. & ci. 6, 7. Neh. vii. 2. & xiii. 28. Nay, David before-hand publicly intimated his reſolution to prefer only pious and faithful men.———And why not, when ſuch are faireſt to be eminently uſeful officers in the State?

3. Why may not men, even by external advantages be encouraged to an external attendance upon goſpel ordinances, which, by the bleſſing of God and the working of his Spirit, may iſſue in rendering them eminently uſeful ſubjects, and in their eternal ſalvation, even as children may be hired to that reading of their Bible and learning of their Catechiſm, which may iſſue in their converſion and everlaſting life?

4. Regard to the command of parents, maſters, magiſtrates, and miniſters, all at once, in our religious profeſſion and practice, is no way inconſiſtent with, but may be delightfully ſubordinated to a ſupreme regard to the authority of God in them.

5. Do you really think, that thoſe, who believe neither a God, nor a heaven, nor a hell, ought under pretence of civil right, to be as readily admitted to places of power and truſt, in civil governments as the moſt pious?———Nay, are not even a profeſſion and practice of the Chriſtian religion much more profitable in a nation, than open blaſphemy, impiety and idolatry, which we have heard from God's own word, exceedingly corrupt men's morals, and pull down the wrath of God on the ſociety.

6. If ſuch things only be reſtrained and puniſhed, as are plainly contrary to the law of God, and a right conſcience, and never puniſhed, till after ſufficient means of conviction have been afforded and trampled on, how can that make men diſemble with or ſin againſt their conſcience, any more than the

punishment of theft, murder, incest, or the like, can do it?

OBJECT. XXXVI. "The abolishment of all civil establishments of revealed religion, would have a remarkable tendency to render men truly pious, truly sincere, in their faith, profession and worship; and to render them excellent subjects, candid peaceable, and affectionate lovers of one another. It would effectually root out Popery and every thing similar."

ANSW. 1. Just as remarkable a tendency, as the leaving of children to themselves hath to render them truly virtuous, and a distinguished honour to their parents, Prov. xxix. 15. 1 Sam. iii. 13.—as remarkable a tendency as the abolishment of all ecclesiastical establishments of it would have to render men perfect saints.

2. It is plain, that God, when he fixed a civil establishment of revealed religion, and when he represented, as above, heresy, blasphemy, and idolatry, as rendering men monsters of all manner of wickedness, instead of *good subjects*, neighbours, or Christians, thought otherwise. Are you wiser than He?

3. Never, that I know of, was there a nation or numerous society on earth, in which there was less of a religious establishment, good or bad, than among the Ismaelians of Irak and Syria, and the Gias of Africa. What were the noted virtues which flourished among them? Murders, assassinations which cannot be read or heard, without horror. Under the protection of an extensive toleration how did England, about an hundred and thirty years ago, swarm with Sectarian errors, blasphemies, confusions? And, what hath either the peace of the State, or the orthodoxy and holiness of our Church gained by our last Scotch toleration? Repeated at

tempts in 1715 and 1745, to unhinge our civil establishment and dethrone our lawful Sovereigns in favour of Popish pretenders, are the noted advantages, which have accrued to our State, and an alarming increase of infidelity, profaneness, and Popery, to our Church. Instead of scarce six hundred Papists, which was once all that could be reckoned in Scotland, their number now, may amount to about thirty thousand. In about a dozen of parishes in the North, they have above twenty congregations, several of them pretty large, and a College and an Academy for training up priests. How quickly these, with the Scotch Colleges abroad, may furnish converters for the whole nation, God only knows. In the parish of South Uist, there are 2300 Papists and 300 Protestants; in Barra 1250 Papists and 50 Protestants; in Ardnamurchan 1950 Papists, and 17 Protestants; in Kirkmichael and its neighbouring parish 1520 Papists; in Kilmanivaig 1600; and in Glenelg 1340.

OBJECT. XXXVII. "All civil laws establishing revealed religion must necessarily land magistrates in *persecuting* their subjects; for, if these civil laws be contemned and violated, the breakers must be punished."

ANSW. 1. For this reason no superior, parent, master, minister, or magistrate, must make any appointment relative to religious matters, because, if it be disregarded, punishment or censure must be inflicted, and that will amount to persecution in the sense of the objection.——No duty must ever be attempted, lest some perplexing consequence should attend it.

2. Tho' *evil doers* ordinarily reckon restraints of iniquity *persecution*; the Scripture allows nothing to be *persecution* but unjust severities exercised against the profession or practice of gospel-truth;—at least a

gainst innocence or virtue. Punishment of men for what is plainly contrary to the word of God is no persecution for conscience sake, but a proper correction of them for trampling on and murdering their conscience.

3. If by the blessing of God, parents can do much to advance religion in their families, without any furious or hurtful beating of their children,—and ministers do much to promote it in their congregations, without proceeding, perhaps once in their life, to the higher excommunication; and if both may do much to render their children and people useful members of the Commonwealth, without having power to fine, imprison or kill them, why may not magistrates by their appointments, encouragements and example, much promote the profession and practice of revealed religion, without proceeding, unless very rarely, to any disgraceable severities?—The point we attempted directly to establish is, that *magistrates ought never to grant an authoritative toleration to gross heresy, blasphemy, idolatry*; you therefore act uncandidly in perpetually halting in the affair of punishments; even capital ones, just as your tolerant friends the ancient Remonstrants perpetually halted in the doctrine of reprobation, in order to render the sovereignty of God's grace odious to the people.

4. If magistrates take heed never to punish on the head of religious matters, but when the crimes are plainly relevant and manifest, plainly contrary to the laws of God, as well as to those of the land; and that the punishment be *SUITABLE AND REASONABLE*, circumstantially calculated to promote the real welfare of the Commonwealth, why should they be charged with persecution, for prudently supporting their most important laws, and yet held innocent, if not virtuous, in supporting their comparatively in-

significant laws, relative to fishing, fowling, hunting, or the like?

OBJECT. XXXVIII. "Let things be reduced to practice. What could be done, just now, in Britain, without an *authoritative toleration* of the dissenting parties in religion."

ANSW. 1. No difficulty of the performance of duties can be a sufficient reason for the neglect of them. No difficulty of rectifying what is in disorder, can be a proof that it is not duty to attempt it. Because I find it so hard work to keep my heart with all diligence, and often know not how to get its sinful disorders rectified, it will not follow, that to obtain inward quietness, I should, in God's name, give an authoritative toleration to my several lusts, except perhaps the grosser ones of malice, whoredom, drunkenness.

2. The rules of rectifying what pertains to religion in Britain, is plain. Let magistrates and subjects impartially and earnestly search the oracles of God, depending on the illuminating influence of his Spirit.—Let every thing not contained in the Scripture be thrown out of both civil and ecclesiastical establishments of religion, and every thing plainly appointed therein for the gospel-Church, be authorized. Let the whole administration of government in Church and State, and subjection to it, be regulated by the law of God.—Let every prudent and winning method be taken to promote an universally cheerful compliance.—If any continue to dissent, let *every degree and form of tender forbearance* be exercised towards them, which the express laws of God will permit, especially, if by a circumspect life, they manifest themselves persons of a truly tender conscience, with respect to what they apprehend.—If all will not concur in these measures, let particular persons, in their several stations, act as becometh



the gospel of Christ, obeying God rather than man, and doing all that he hath commanded, without turning aside to the right-hand or the left. And if need be, let them take up their cross, and patiently follow Christ, counting nothing too dear unto them, if they may uprightly finish their course with joy. — Upon trial, it would be found as easy for magistrates to rectify the disorders in their department, relative to religion, as it would be for Church-rulers in Britain, to rectify what pertains to theirs, in which, you just now pled, that there never should be any toleration at all.

OBJECT. XXXIX. “The great Dr. OWEN zealously pled for authoritative toleration, and that magistrates ought not to interfere with religious matters.”

ANSW. I. We call no man master. One is our master even Christ. Dr. Owen’s authority would be too light to balance that of many thousands of Protestant divines. But let us hear his judgment, for ought I know his FINAL JUDGMENT, in his Sermon before the English Parliament, OCTOBER 13th, 1652 — “The civil powers—shall be disposed of, into an useful subserviency to the interest, power, and kingdom of Jesus Christ; hence they are said to be *his kingdoms*, Rev. xi. 15\*. Judges and Rulers as SUCH must *kiss the Son* and own his sceptre and advance his ways. Some think, if you were well settled, you ought not, *as rulers of the nations*, to put forth your power for the interest of Christ. *The good Lord keep your hearts* from that apprehension †. It is the duty of magistrates to *seek the good, peace,* and prosperity of the people committed to their charge, and to prevent and remove EVERY THING, that will bring confusion, destruction and desolation.

upon them, Esther x. 3. Pſal. ci. Magiſtrates are the *minſters of God for good*—UNIVERSAL GOOD of them, to whom they are given, Rom. xiii. 4. and are to watch and apply themſelves to *this very thing*, ver. 6.—It is incumbent on them to act, even as *kings and men in authority*, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in *all godlineſs* and honeſty,—and all may come to the *knowledge of the truth*, 1 Tim. ii. 1—4.—They are to feed the people committed to their charge, with all their might, unto *universal peace and welfare*.—The things oppoſite to the good of any nation and people, are of two ſorts;

(1.) Such as are really, directly, and immediately oppoſed to that ſtate wherein they cloſe together, and find proſperity,—ſeditious, tumults, diſorders, —violent or fraudulent breaking in upon the privileges and enjoyments of ſingular perſons *without any conſideration of him who ruleth all things*.—Such evils as theſe, nations and rulers, *ſuppoſed to be atheiſts*, would, with all their ſtrength, labour to prevent.—

(2.) Such as are *morally* and *meritoriouſly* oppoſed to their good and welfare, in that they will *certainly pluck down the judgments and wrath of God* upon that nation, where they are practiſed and allowed, Rom. i. Shall he be thought a magiſtrate to *bear out the name, authority, and preſence of God* to men, that, ſo he and his people have preſent peace like a herd of ſwine, cares not though ſuch things as will certainly devour their ſtrength, and then utterly conſume them, do paſs current.—Seeing they that rule over men muſt be juſt, *ruling in the fear of the Lord*, the ſole reaſon why they ſheathe the ſword of juſtice in the bowels of thieves, murderers, adulterers, is not, *becauſe their outward peace is actually diſturbed* by them.—but *principally becauſe he*, in whoſe ſtead they ſtand and miniſter, *is provoked by ſuch wickedneſs to deſtroy*

both the one and the other. And, if there be the *same reason* concerning other things, they also call for the *same procedure*.——To gather up now what hath been spoken; Considering the gospel's right to be propagated with all its concernments in every nation under heaven, and the  *blessings, peace, prosperity, and protection*, wherewith it is attended, when and where received, and the *certain destruction* which accompanies the *rejection and contempt* of it. ——Considering the duty, that by God's appointment is incumbent on them that rule over men, That *in the fear of the Lord* they ought to seek the good, peace, and prosperity of them that are committed to their charge, and to prevent, obviate, remove, and revenge that which tends to their hurt, perturbation, destruction, immediate from heaven, or from the hand of men; and in their whole administration to take care, that the *worshippers of God in Christ* may lead a quiet and peaceable life *in all godliness and honesty*. Let any one, who hath the least sense of the account, which he must—make to the great King and Judge of the world,—of the authority and power wherewith he was intrusted, determine, Whether it be not incumbent on him, *by all the protection* he can afford; *by all the privileges* he can indulge; *by all the support* he can grant; *by all that encouragement* he is required or allowed to give to any person whatsoever,—to further the propagation of the gospel, which upon the matter, is the only thing of concernment, as well unto this life, as unto that which is to come.——And, if *any thing be allowed* in a nation, which, *in God's esteem*, may amount to a contempt and despising thereof, men may be taught by sad experience, what will be the issue of such ALLOWANCE\* Although the institu-

\* P. 58, 59.

tions and examples of the Old Testament, of the duty of magistrates in the things about the worship of God, are not, in their *whole* latitude and extent, to be drawn into rules—obligatory to all magistrates, now under—the gospel,—yet doubtless, there is something moral in these institutions.—Subduct from these administrations, what was proper to the Church and nation of the Jews, and what remains upon the general account of a Church and nation, must be everlastingly binding; and this amounts *thus far at least*, That Judges, Rulers and Magistrates, which are promised under the New Testament, to be given in mercy, and to be of *singular usefulness*, as the *Judges were under the Old*, are to take care, That the gospel-Church, may, in its concerns as *such be supported and promoted* and the *truth propagated*, wherewith they are intrusted.—Know, that ERROR and FALSEHOOD have *no right or title*, either from God or men, *unto any privilege, protection, advantage, liberty, or any good thing*, you are intrusted withal. To dispose that unto a LIE, which is the *right of, and due to TRUTH*, is to *deal treacherously with Him*, by whom you are employed \*. Know that in things of practice so OF PERSUASION, that are *impious and wicked*, either in themselves or natural consequences, the *plea of conscience* is an *aggravation of the crime*. If men's *conscience be seared*, and themselves given up to a *reprobate mind*, to do those things, that are not convenient, there is no doubt but they ought to suffer such things as are assigned and appointed by God to such practices † ” A truly golden speech, and which nothing, but the deepest conviction of its truth, could have drawn from an Independent, in his then circumstances.

Upon the whole, Sir, I readily grant, that a mul-

\* P. 62, 63.

† P. 64.

itude of cavils may be started against the magistrates' power about religious matters mentioned in excellent Standards, as may be against every divinity, truth, the most fundamental not excepted; and the proper application of it to practice may be in some circumstances, not a little difficult. But cavils however specious; nor difficulty of up- performance of duty, but demonstrative argu- ments its sinfulness will warrant my renouncing a principle which I have so solemnly espoused in ordination and covenants with God; and far less to ad- vance That men's conscience and magistrates ought, in the name of God, to warrant, encourage, and pro- tect men in gross heresy, blasphemy, and idolatry, the which they cannot warrant, encourage, or protect the doing any civil injury to men. Perhaps, Tindal alone hath raised as many shrewd objections against the divine authority of our Bible, as have, or be, raised against that power of magistrates mentioned in our Standards; and yet Wo, wo, wo for me to my soul, if, on that account, I renounce it, as an imposture of Satan.

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## L E T T E R II.

*On the PERFIDY of all AUTHORITY TOWARDS  
MAGISTRATES of gross Heresy, Blasphemy or Idolatry  
IN BRITAIN.*

S I R,

**T**O exhibit the contrariety of an *authoritative* *denunciation* of gross heresy, blasphemy, and idolatry, to many, if not all the Burges's Oaths, in this country, and to the established oaths of allegi-

to His Majesty, or even to his own Coronation Oath, to maintain the true Protestant religion, as by law established in his dominions, and to our solemn vows in Baptism and the Lord's Supper, I leave to some siter hand, and shall only represent it as a violation of these public covenants with God, which our fathers framed, as their strongest human securities against gross heresy, blasphemy, idolatry, Popery, and every thing similar.

Being treacherously and cruelly opposed in their reformation of religion, by their two Popish Queens, the Protestant lords and others in Scotland, entered into five several bonds, A. D. 1557, 1559, 1560, 1563, in which they solemnly engaged to assist and protect each other, in promoting the free exercise of the Protestant religion. It was only the smaller part of the Protestants in our land, which entered into these bonds,—nor doth it appear, they were intended as general obligations.—But, when the Papists abroad were labouring, with all their might, to extirpate the Protestant religion; and the Pope was found to have granted dispensations for qualifying his votaries, to undermine it in our land,—the *National Covenant* was formed and sworn in 1581— in order to frustrate their attempts, and secure the reformation attained. In it the abominations of Popery were expressly and particularly abjured; and and it was understood as adhered to and renewed in every religious bond that followed. After God had marvellously frustrated the attempts of the Spaniards and other Papists against Britain, our fathers, in thankfulness to Him and to secure themselves against the Popish confederates abroad and their friends at home,—with much unanimity and joy renewed their *National Covenant*, A. D. 1590, along with the subscription of a General bond for preservation of the Protestant religion, and the King's

Majesty. In 1596, apprehensions of danger from the Popish lords, and the treacherous regard shewed them by K. James, and especially a very extraordinary effusion of the Holy Ghost on the General Assembly, issued in much solemn mourning for sin, and renovation of their covenant with God. After forty years of fearful perfidious apostacy, and much sinful veering towards the abjured abominations of Popery, they, awakened by K. Charles and Archbishop Laud's imposition of an almost Popish *Liturgy* and *Book of Canons*,—Searched out, and lamented, their perfidy to God, as the cause of their manifold miseries; and solemnly renewed their covenant with Him, as a mean of obtaining his gracious assistance, and securing their Protestant religion and liberties. Affrighted by the Papists' massacring of about two hundred thousand Protestants in Ireland, instigated by their distresses in England, and encouraged by the remarkable countenance of God's Spirit and Providence to the Scotch covenanters, most of the English and Irish Protestants in 1643 and 1644. along with them, entered into a Solemn League and Covenant with God, and with one another, in which they expressly abjured Popery, and Prelacy as a branch of it.—K. Charles had scarce granted a peace, a kind of establishment of their religion to the murderous Papists in Ireland; and Duke Hamilton's attempts to restore him to his throne without giving any security for religion or liberty miscarried in England, when the Scots, and not a few of the Irish renewed their Covenant, with a solemn acknowledgment of sins and engagement to duties.—To manifest the fearful perfidy of all *authoritative toleration* of gross heresy, blasphemy, idolatry, Popery, and every other form of encouragement to, or reception of them, the *solemn*, the *religious* nature of

these covenants, and their *extensive* and *perpetual obligation* must be considered.

God alone hath a supreme and unlimited authority and right to regulate his own, and the conduct of all his creatures, Psal. lxxxiii. 18. Dan. iv. 35. James iv. 12. But the very constitution of a rational creature, implies a power derived from him to govern itself, even as men's standing in the relation of parents, masters, magistrates, or Church-rulers, necessarily implies their power to govern others,—*in subordination to him*. By virtue of their divinely originated authority over others, parents, masters, and other rulers make laws, or binding rules, for directing the external behaviour of those who are committed to their charge. And by their authority derived from God to *rule their own Spirit*, and to *govern and keep in subjection their whole body*, Prov. xvi. 32. James iii. 2. 1 Cor. ix. 27. all men are empowered to make for themselves laws of self-engagement, in promises, oaths, vows and covenants, which extend to their purposes and inclinations as well as to their external acts. And, as all the authority, which men have over themselves or others, is derived from that supreme and independent authority, which is in God himself, and is communicated to them, by an act of his will, and is implied in his giving them such a nature and station, it is plain, that no human laws of authority, or self-engagement, can have any obligation or binding force, but what are regulated by and subordinated to the divine laws of nature or revelation, 2 Cor. xiii. 8. and that, if such laws and engagements be lawful, God, not only doth, but must necessarily ratify them, his law requiring the fulfilment of them, under pain of his highest displeasure, Rom. xiii. 1—6. Mat. v. 33.

As no *deputed authority* derived from God, can increase that supreme, that infinite authority, which



he hath in himself; so no human command or engagement can increase that infinite obligation to duty, which his law hath *in itself*. But, if lawful, they have in them a *real obligation, distinct*, though neither *separated* nor *separable*, from the obligation of God's law. To pretend with Bellarmine and other Papists, that our promises or vows do not bind us *in moral duties* commanded by the law of God, is manifestly absurd. It necessarily infers, that all human commands of superiors as well as human promises, oaths, vows, and covenants, are in themselves destitute of *all binding force*, except in so far as they relate to such trifling things, as the law of God doth not require of men in such particular circumstances; and thus saps the foundation of all relative order and mutual trust and confidence among mankind. Commands of superiors must be *mere declarations* of the will of God in his law, and promises, oaths, vows and covenants must be nothing but *mere acknowledgments*, that God's law requires such things from us,—in so far as relating to moral duties. It represents the authority which God hath in himself, and with which he hath invested men, as his deputies, as so inconsistent and mutually destructive of each other, that men cannot be bound to the same thing by both. It represents the law of God as necessarily destructive of the being of an ordinance appointed by itself, to promote the more exact observance of itself,—in so far as that ordinance binds to a conscientious and diligent obedience to it. It is contrary to the common sense of mankind in every age, who have all along considered men's promises, oaths and covenants, as *binding* them to pay their *just debts*, perform their *just duties* of allegiance or the like, and to declare the truth and nothing but the truth in witness bearing, &c. It is contrary to Scripture, which represents promises, promissory

oaths, vows, and covenants, as things which are to be performed, paid, or fulfilled, and which may possibly be transgressed and broken, Mat. v. 33. Deut. xxviii. 21, 22, 23. Eccl. v. 4. Plal. xxii. 25. & l. 14. & lxi. 8. & lxvi. 13. & lxxvi. 11. & cxvi. 13—18. & cxix. 106. Isa. xix. 21. Judges xi. 35. Isa. xxiv. 5. Jer. xxxiv. 18.—which represents an oath as a strong and decisive confirmation, putting an end to all doubt or strife, Heb. vi. 16—18.—and which in one of the plainest and least figurative chapters of it, repeatedly represents a vow, as constituted by our *binding ourselves, binding our own souls with a bond*, and represents a vow as a *bond or obligation*, Heb. 155AR, a *very fast and strait binding bond or obligation*,—as *our own bond*, that stands upon or against us, Num. xxx. 2—12.—*Self-binding, self-engagements*, is so much the *essential form* of vows, and of all covenants, promises, or promissory oaths, whether of God or man, that they cannot exist at all, or even be conceived of without it, any more than a man without a soul, or an angel without understanding and will. To represent vowing as a *placing of ourselves more directly under the law of God*, or any command of it; or, as a *placing of ourselves in some new relation to the law*, is but an attempt to render unintelligible that which the Holy Ghost hath, in the above-mentioned chapter, laboured to make plain, if it doth not also import, that we can place ourselves *more directly* under the moral law than God hath or can place us, or, more directly than Christ was placed.—To pretend, that men's commands or engagements derive their whole obligation from the *law of God's requiring us to obey the one*,—and *pay, or fulfil or perform the other*, is no less absurd.—These divine commands, requiring us to obey, pay, perform or fulfil human laws and engagements, *plainly suppose an intrinsic obligation, in these*

laws and engagements, and powerfully enforce. But no law of God can require me to OBLIGE a man law, or fulfil an engagement which hath obligation in itself, any more than the laws of Britain can oblige me to PAY a Bill, or FULFIL a Bill consisting of nothing but mere cyphers.

The *intrinsic obligation* of promises, oaths, vows and covenants which constitutes their very essence or essential form, is totally and manifestly distinct from the obligation of the law of God in many respects.

1. In his law, God, by the declaration of his will as our supreme Ruler, binds us, Deut. xii. 32. Our promises, vows, covenants, and promissory oaths, we, as his deputy-governors over ourselves, by a declaration of our will, *bind ourselves with a bond, bind our souls with our own bond, our own vow*, Num. xxx. 2. Psalm lxi. 13. 15. & cxix. 106. &c.

2. The obligation of our promises, oaths and covenants is always subject to examination by the standard, of God's law, as to both its matter and manner, 1 Theff. v. 12. But it would be presumption, blasphemous presumption, to examine, Whether, what we know to be the law God be right and obligatory, or not, James iv. 11, 12. Isa. lv. 20. Deut. v. 32.

3. The law of God necessarily binds all men to the *most absolute perfection in holiness*, be they as capable of it as they will, Matth. v. 48. 1 Pet. i. 16. No man can, without mocking and tempting of God, bind himself by vow or oath to any thing but what he is able to perform. No man may attempt to do any thing which is not in his own power, for the performance of which he hath no promise or ability from God. But, no mere man since he is able, in this life either in himself or by any gift received from God, *perfectly* to keep the commandments of God, Eccl. vii. 23. James iii. 2. W.

God remains God, his law can demand no less than absolute perfection in holiness. While his word remains true, no mere man since the fall, in this life, can possibly attain to it; and therefore ought never to promise or vow it. The least imperfection in holiness, however involuntary, breaks the law of God, and is even contrary to the duty of our relative stations of husbands, parents, masters, magistrates, ministers, wives, children, servants or people, 1 John iii. 4. Rom. vii. 14, 23, 24. But it is only by that which is, in some respect, *voluntary sinfulness*, that we break our lawful vows, Psal. xlv. 47. Nothing can more clearly mark the distinction of the two obligations, than this particular. There is no evading the force of it, but either by adopting the Arminian *new law* of sincere obedience, or by adopting the Popish perfection of saints in this life.

4. The law of God binds *all men for ever*, whether in heaven or hell, Psal. cxi. 7, 8. No human law or self-engagement binds men, but *only in this life*, in which they remain imperfect, and are encompassed with temptations to seduce them from their duty. In heaven they have no need of such helps to duty, and in hell they cannot be profited by them.

The obligation of lawful promises, oaths, vows and covenants, as well as of human laws, respecting moral duties, however *distinct*, is no more separable from the obligation of God's law, than Christ's *two distinct natures* are separable, the one from the other, but closely connected in manifold respects. In binding ourselves to necessary duties, and to other things so long and so far as is conducive thereto, God's law as the only rule to direct us how to glorify and enjoy him, is made the rule of our engagement. Our vow is no *new rule* of duty, but a *new bond* to make the law of God *our rule*. Even

Adam's engagement to perfect obedience in the  
 nant of works was nothing else. His fallibility  
 estate of innocence, made it proper, that he sh  
 be bound by his own consent or engagement, as  
 as by the authority of God. Our imperfecti  
 this life, and the temptations which surroun  
 make it needful, that we, in like manner, shou  
 bound to the same rule, both by the authori  
 God, and our own engagements. It is in th  
 of God, that all our deputed authority to  
 mand others, or to bind ourselves is allotted t  
 The requirement of moral duties by the la  
 God obligeth us to use all lawful means to pro  
 the performance of them; and hence require  
 man laws and self-engagements, and the obser  
 of them as conducive to it. Nay they are all  
 precisely required in his law, as his ordinance  
 helping and hedging us in to our duty. In m  
 lawful vows, as well as in making human laws  
 exert the *deputed authority* of God, *the supreme*  
*giver*, granted to us in his law, in the manner v  
 his law prescribes, and in obedience to its pre  
 tion. In forming our vows as an instituted  
 nance of God's worship, which he hath requir  
 to receive, observe, and keep pure and entire,  
 lxxvi. 11. & cxix. 106. & lvi. 12. Isa. xix. 14  
 & xlv. 23, 24. & xlv. 5. Jer. l. 5. 2 Cor. viii.  
 we act precisely according to the direction o  
 law, and in obedience to his authority in it,—  
*ing ourselves with a bond, binding our soul with a*  
 Num. xxx. 2—11.—*binding ourselves by that*  
*we utter with our lips* ver. 2, 6, 12.—*binding our*  
*with a binding oath,—binding ourselves—bindin*  
*soul by our own vow—our own bond,* ver. 4, 7  
 In forming our vow, we, according to the pre  
 tion of his own law, solemnly constitute God,  
 is the supreme Lawgiver and Lord of the consci

—the witness of our self-engagement, and the Guarantee, graciously to reward our evangelical fulfilment of it, and justly to punish our perfidious violation of it. The more punctual and faithful observation of God's law, notwithstanding our manifold infirmities and temptations, and the more effectual promoting of his glory therein, is the END of our self-engagements, as well as of human laws of authority. And by a due regard to their binding force, as above stated, is this end promoted,—as hereby the obligation of God's law is the more deeply impressed on our minds, and we are shut up to obedience to it, and deterred from transgressing it.—In consequence of our formation of our vow, with respect to its matter, manner, and end, as prescribed by God, He doth, and necessarily must ratify it in all its awful solemnities, requiring us by his law, to *pay* it as a bond of *debt*,—to *perform* and *fulfil* it as an engagement to duties, and an *obligation which stands upon or against* us, Num. xxx. 5, 7, 9, 11. with Deut. xxiii. 21—23. Psalm lxxvi. 11. & l. 14. Eccl. v. 4, 5. Mat. v. 33. In obedience to this divine requirement, and considering our vow, in that precise form, in which God in his law, adopts and ratifies it, and requires it to be fulfilled, We *pay*, *perform*, and *fulfil* it *as a bond*, wherewith we, in obedience to Him, *have bound ourselves*, to endeavour universal obedience to his law, as our only rule of faith and manners. Whoever doth not, in his attempts to obey human laws or to fulfil self-engagements, consider them as having that binding force which the law of God allows them, he pours contempt on them, as ordinances of God, and on the law of God for allowing them a *binding force*. Thus, through maintaining the *superadded* but *subordinate* obligation of human laws, and of self-

engagements to moral duties, we do not make but establish the obligation of God's law.

The obligation of a vow, by which we engage ourselves to necessary duties commanded by the law of God, must therefore be **INEXPRESSIBLY SOLEMN**. Not only are we required by the law of God to make our vow; but we are bound, in the performance, to fulfil our vow, as an engaged obligation founded in the supreme authority of the law warranting us to make it. We are bound to fulfil it as a *mean of further impressing* his authority manifested in his law, upon our own consciences, and bond securing and promoting a faithful obedience to all his commandments. We are bound to fulfil it in obedience to that divine authority, by the power from which, we as governors of our people made it to promote his honour. In those respects, our fulfilment of our vows is a direct consequence to his whole law.——We are bound to fulfil it, as a solemn ordinance of worship, the essential form of which lies in *separation*, and must be received, observed, kept entire, and holily and reverently used, and in obedience to Command I. II. III. We are bound to fulfil it, as an ordinance of God, in which we have *pledged our own truth, sincerity and faithfulness* and so in obedience to Command IX. I. II. We are bound to fulfil it, as a solemn deed or promise in which we have made over our persons, property and service to the Lord and his Church; and in obedience to Command I. II. VIII. nay, in consequence to the whole law of love and equity, Mat. 23. 37, 39. & vii. 12. We are bound to fulfil it in regard to the declarative glory of God, as the witness of our making of it, that he may appear to be called to attest nothing, but sincerity and truth and so in obedience to Command I. III. IX.

are bound to fulfil it from a regard to *truth, honesty, and reverence of God*, as things not only commanded by his law, but good in themselves, agreeable to his very nature, and therefore necessarily commanded by him,—and from a detestation of falsehood, injustice, and contempt of God, as things intrinsically evil, contrary to his nature, and therefore necessarily forbidden in his law; and thus in regard to his authority in his whole law, as necessarily holy, just and good. We are bound to fulfil it, from a regard to the holiness, justice, faithfulness, majesty, and other perfections of God, as the Guarantee of it, into whose hand we have committed the determination and execution of its awful sanction,—as the gracious rewarder of our fidelity, or just revenger of our perfidy,—and hence in regard to our own happiness, as concerned in that sanction.—In fine, We are bound to fulfil it in obedience to that command of God, which adopts and ratifies it, requiring us to *pay, fulfil, or perform* our vow, oath or covenant, Psal. l. 14 & lxxvi. 11. Eccl. v. 4. Deut. xxiii. 21, —23. Mat. v. 33.

In VIOLATING such a vow, We do not merely transgress the law of God; as requiring the duties engaged, before the vow was made. But we also rebel against, and profane that divine warrant, which we had to make our vow. We profane that authority over ourselves in the exercise of which we made the vow, and consequentially that supreme authority in God, from which ours was derived; and so strike against the foundation of the whole law. We manifest a contempt of that law, which regulated the matter and manner of our vow. We profane the vow, as an ordinance of God's worship, appointed in his law. By trampling on a noted mean of promoting obedience to all the commands of God, We mark our hatred of them, and prepare ourselves to



transgress them, and endeavour to remove the aw  
 God's authority and terror of his judgments f  
 our consciences. We blasphemously represent  
 Most High as a willing Witness to our treachery  
 fraud. We pour contempt on him, as the Guar  
 tee of our engagements, as if he inclined not  
 durst not avenge our villainy. Contrary to the t  
 and faithfulness required in his law, and pledge  
 our vow, we plunge ourselves into the most cr  
 nal deceit and falsehood. Contrary to equity,  
 rob God and his Church of that which we had  
 lennly devoted to their service. Contrary to d  
 tion, we banish the serious impresson of God's a  
 ble perfections. Contrary to good neighbourh  
 we render ourselves a plague and curse, and en  
 rage others to the most enormous wickedness. C  
 trary to the design of our creation and preserva  
 we reject the glory of God, and obedience to his  
 from being our end. Mean-while, we trample  
 the ratification of our vow, by the divine law i  
 its awful solemnities, and manifold connections  
 itself,—and requirement to pay it.

It is manifest, that our covenanting ance  
 understood their vows in the manner above repre  
 ed. They never represent them as *mere acknow  
 ments* of the obligation of God's law, or as pla  
 themselves in *some new relation to God's law*, or  
*directly under any command of it*. But declare  
 a man *binds himself* by a promissory oath to wh  
 good and just.—It cannot oblige to sin; but in  
 thing not sinful, being taken, it binds to perf  
 ance.—By a vow *we more strictly bind ourselves i  
 cessary duties* \*. And; in expressions almost inu  
 able, they represent the obligation of their vow  
 distinct and different, though not separable fror

\* *Concill. XXII. 3. 4. 6.*

law of God †. They no less plainly declared, that no man may bind himself by oath to any thing, but what he is ABLE and resolved to perform;—no man may vow any thing which is not in his own power, and for the performance of which he hath no promise of ability from God ‡. And in their several forms of covenant; they never once pretend to engage performing of duties in that *absolute perfection* which is required by the law of God,—but *sincerely, really,* and *constantly* to ENDEAVOUR the performance of them.

II. These public covenants of our ancestors, in which they abjured the popish and other abominations, may be called NATIONAL, because the representatives, or the greater or better part of the nation, jointly entered into them, as covenants of duty grafted upon the covenant of grace. But they ought never to be called *national* or *civil*, in order to exclude them from being *Church-covenants*, and thus diminish the solemnity or continuance of their obligation. Both Church and State jointly promoted them, and in different respects they related to both, being at once covenants of men with God, and with one another. In so far as therein they covenanted with one another, with an *immediate* view to promote or preserve what belonged to the State, they served instead of a civil bond. But at the same time, they covenanted with one another as Church-members, in subordination to

† Stevenson's Hist. P. 345, 346, 347, 348, 354, 384, 413. *Wc.* Sir James Stewart, afterward advocate to K. William, in *Naphtali*, P. 160. and *Jus populi divinum*, p. 118. Brown, in *Apologetical Relation*, p. 241, 263, 364. *Covenanter's Plea*, p. 9, 10, 68. Durham on Commands, p. 14. 121, 122, 129, 120, 131, 132, 135, 137, 138. See also R. Erskine's works, Vol. I. p. 62, 170, 303, 419, 489. Vol. II p. 109, 142, 224, 227. Discourse at renewing of the Covenants at Lismahago, p. 11. Synod's Catechism of the third Command, Q. 40, 50.

‡ Hallen Gospel worship, Vol. II. p. 372, 385.

their covenanting with God himself as their principal party.—The ratifications given to these covenants by the State were really *civil ratifications*, which adopted them as a part of the laws of the State.—But that no more rendered them *merely civil covenants*, than the *civil ratifications* given to, and embodying our Confessions of Faith, made them *merely civil confessions*, and mere acts of Parliament,—or than the repeated legal establishment of our protestant religion in doctrine, worship, discipline and government, made it a mere *civil religion*. These covenants were sometimes used as means of promoting civil purposes. But that will no more prove them merely civil, than the use of fasting and prayer for advancing or securing the welfare of the State, will prove them a *mere civil worshipping of God*.——These covenants were formed for promoting the happiness of both Church and State, and were calculated to answer that end. But so is the Christian religion and all the ordinances of it, if duly observed, 1 Tim. i. 8. Prov. xiv. 34. I admit, that there was sometimes too mixed an interference of civil and ecclesiastical power in enjoining these covenants. But abuse of things doth not alter their nature. God's ordinances are too often used in a carnal, sensual and devilish manner, without ever being rendered such themselves. It is only, as *really religious covenants*, and not as *civil or State covenants*, they can be adopted into ordination vows or baptismal engagements. And that they were such, the following arguments evince.

1. The Covenanters themselves, who best knew their own intentions do, times without number, represent them as Vows, which their Confession declares to be a *religious ordinance*, as *covenants with God*, which must be *religious*, if any dealings with him be so\*. The Assembly, in 1649, in their list

\* Chap. XXII. 6. Lar. Cat. Q. 108. Calderwood's Hist.

session, represent them as *confirmations of that right which the Father had given Christ* to the ends of the earth.—They, times without number, call them *religious covenants*,—a *religious covenant with God*,—among themselves,—a *voluntary* covenanting with God,—a *more free service to God*, than that which is commanded by civil authority; and hence distinguish their covenant, as having a *religious and perpetual obligation*,—from acts of parliament establishing religion, which are changeable, and of the nature of a civil ratification †. Concerning the Solemn League, Principal Baillie says, The English were for a *civil league*, we for a *religious*. They were brought to us in this ‡. The Assembly 1645, in their Letter to the Dutch, say of it, “Having made a *religious covenant*, even as *bound to God* by the firmest bond, that God might avert his wrath already smoking and hanging over our heads,—a *covenant renewed with God*, (which shews that the Scots considered it as a *real renovation of their national covenant*) a *religious covenant with God and among ourselves*.—If it should seem meet to your prudence to think of joining in the *religious fellowship* of such a covenant.” How absurd, for persons of weaker capacities and less instructed by the Spirit of God, to pretend, at this distance of time, to know better the nature of their covenants, than themselves did!

2. Except perhaps in 1581, the Church, in her General Assemblies, or Commissions, took the lead in promoting the covenanting work. And the state, when it did any thing, did little more than ratify

p. 307, 318. Dickson, Henderson and Cant's Answers to Doctors of Aberdeen, p. 8, 9, 61, 50. Act of Assembly, 1638, p. 22. Supplication of Ass. 1639, to K. Charles. Letter of Ass. 1645, to Dutch.

† Stevenson's History, of Church of Scotland, p. 343, 347, 349, 350, 348.

‡ Baillie's Letters, Vol. I. P. 381.

the deeds of the Church appointing these covenants to be sworn §. Nay to me it appears evident, that even from 1581 to 1595, the national covenant was subscribed more in obedience to the Church than in obedience to the State.

3. In A. D. 1596 and 1638, in which the covenanting work was *most delightfully* carried on, in Scotland, the State had no influence at all in promoting it. Nay in 1638, the court did all it could, to oppose the covenanters procedure. Indeed our zealous ancestors in the preamble to their bond of that year quote many acts of Parliament in favour of that religion to which they engaged, and of the steadfast maintenance of it. But they never considered these acts as a part of their bond, or as a command to covenant in their manner; but as an evidence that they were doing nothing rebellious or treasonable, as their adversaries pretended. Nay, till 1640, no act of Parliament enjoined covenanting work.

4. All along in Scotland, England and Ireland, ministers not statesmen, were the ordinary administrators of these covenants. And upon religious occasions on the Lord's day, before administration of his Supper, or solemn fasting, were they appointed to be taken \*. If, without law, laymen sometimes

§ Calderwood, P. 220, 248, 254 Act of Ass. 1639, Aug. 30th, with act of Convention that day. Act of Commission, Oct. 11th, with act of Commissioners of Estates, Oct. 12th, 1643. and act of Parl. July 15th, 1644. Act of Commission, Oct. 6th, 1648, with act of Committee of Estates, Oct. 14th, and act of Parl. Jan. 5th, 1649.

\* Calderwood, P. 218 Stevenson, p. 291, 294. Baillie's Let. Vol. I p. 45 Livingston's Life, p. 22 Wilson's Defence, p. 113.—143. Letter of Ass. 1640, to Helvetians. Act of Ass. Oct. 15th. Acts of Ass. Aug. 8th, 17th, and Commission. Oct. 11th, 1641 and of June 2d, 1644 and Aug. 7th, 1648, and of Commission and Committee of Estates. Oct. 6th, 14th, 1648, and of Parl. Jan. 5th, 1649, and of Eng. Parl. Feb. 2d, 9th, 1644.

administered them, that will no more prove them *merely State-covenants*, than mid-wives' baptizing of children, will constitute baptism a *mid wife ordinance*. To protect them from the insults of Popish and other profane opposers, the ministers in A. D. 1590, had a royal commission, and a number of attendants appointed them, when they administered the covenant. But that will no more prove, that they acted as *civil judges*, than that ministers, receiving an order from King or Parliament to observe a public fast, or hold a Synod, they must, in their fasting and judging work, renounce Christ's sole headship over his church, and adopt the magistrate into his place.—If it is pretended, that ministers' marrying of persons is *not a religious* but *civil* work, I insist, that the marriage of Christians, which is to be *only in the Lord*,—to bring up an *holy seed* for Him and his Church, and the family to be a *Church in the house*, and the parties' mutual duty copied from, and influenced by the example of Christ,—and as it is a *covenant of God* which is not like civil contracts, dissolvable by the will of parties, be plainly proven to be a *merely civil* and *nowise religious* bond. If bishops, as spiritual lords, administer the king's coronation-oath, I leave it to others to explain and defend their conduct —It is certain, the defence of religion is a leading article in that oath.

5. There appears nothing in the origination of these covenants, which can prove them *merely civil*. Nothing appears in the five bonds of our Reformers, in 1557, 1559, 1560, 1563, but may well accord to the nature of a religious engagement. As Christians, and not merely as civil lords, they bound themselves,—chiefly to promote the true religion according to God's word.—Had K. James been not only the original adviser, but even the framer of the *National covenant*, it might nevertheless have

been a religious bond. The Psalms which K. David penned and James versified, are not thereby rendered *merely civil*. The fast which K. Jehoshaphat appointed, and at which he publicly prayed, was *really religious*, not *merely civil*. Our Confessions of Faith and Protestant religion were not rendered *merely civil*, though in 1560 and 1690, the State took the lead in the ratification and establishment before any General Assembly of these periods. It is not improbable, that the ministers of the Church had a principal hand in the origination of our national covenant. In 1580, James was about fourteen years of age, and by no transcendent genius, qualified for the work. Just before, and quickly after, we find him marking his hatred of true reformation. His ruling favourites were not a little suspected and complained of, by the zealous clergy, as addicted to Popery.—Through the tearing out of the minutes of four sessions of the Assembly, October 1580, by some parasite of the court, Calderwood's History, at least his printed abridgment, is imperfect on this period. He only says, that "the second Confession of Faith, i. e. *national covenant*, commonly called the King's Confession, was subscribed by the King and his household, i. e. *privy counsel*, January 28th, 1581, which is but an appendix to the First, i. e. *Scotch Confession*, and comprehends it; and so both are one,—that a charge was subscribed by the King, March 2d, whereby subjects of all ranks were charged to subscribe the Confession, (national covenant) and requiring ministers to demand said subscription, and to censure such as refused.—The General Assembly in April approved the said Confession, and enjoined the subscription of it.—The Assembly in October peremptorily enjoined ministers, to see that this Confession of Faith be subscribed, by all under their charge.—The Assembly, in

February 1588, enjoined all ministers to deal with noblemen and gentry to subscribe this Confession of Faith.—In March 1590, the privy counsel, at the earnest desire of the Assembly, appointed about ninety-six ministers to covenene before them, persons of all ranks to subscribe the Confession and general Bond.—The Assembly appointed the Confession and Bond to be subscribed *anew* on copies printed by Robert Waldgrave," (in 4to, and fronted with these Scriptures, Josh. xxiv. 15. 2 Kings xi. 17. Isa. xlv. 5. which certainly respect religious covenants)\*. Petry affirms, " That Romish dispensations for Papists to swear the oaths, or do other things required of them, providing they continued true to the Pope in their heart,—being shewed to K. James (but whether by ministers appointed to watch over the dangers of the Church, he says not) occasioned the formation and swearing of the national covenant, in order to defeat the intention of them. Mr. Craig, a celebrated minister, formed the draught of it at the desire of King James," (and perhaps instigated James to desire it) †.—With respect to James' conduct in the drawing, and first subscription of this covenant, Spotswood, who had the best access to original vouchers, had he been inclined to a faithful use of them, says, " So careful was the King to have the Church satisfied and the rumours of the Court's defection from the (Protestant) religion repressed ‡ "—Remarks in Williamson's Sermon, 1703, says, " The Presbyterian party, A. D. 1580, got an act of Assembly at Dundee against Episcopacy. That did not content them. They raised mighty jealousies against the King and his court, as if they intended to re-introduce Popery. To convince his

\* Hist. P. 94, 95, 102, 121, 220, 248, 254.

† Hist. part 3d, P. 406.

‡ Hist. p. 308.



subjects of his sincere adherence to the Protestant religion, His Majesty caused his minister John Craig to compile the negative Confession, (national covenant) in the form of an oath §." Collier says, "This covenant was signed, either by the king or the lords of the council, at the request of the General Assembly \*." Rapin says, "It was drawn up by order of the General Assembly †."

The origination of the Solemn League and Covenant was equally consistent with a *religious vow*. Not a few of the most pious clergymen in England had all along, from Elizabeth's establishment of the Protestant religion, hated part of the ceremonies, and the lordly power of the bishops. Many of these, driven from their charge, by the Prelatical persecution, under Elizabeth and James, and Charles I had been compassionately taken into the families of great men, for the education of their children. Their instruction and example were remarkably blessed, for rendering their pupils and others intelligent and pious. They perceived the encroachments made upon their religion and liberties by Abp. Laud and his assistants, and not a few of them conceived a strong relish for what was then called Puritanism. The success of the Scotch covenanters, in their struggles with the tyrannical court, made many of the English wish and hope for a similar deliverance. In their treaty with Charles 1641, the Scots requested, that the English should be brought to a reformed uniformity with themselves in religion. The Scotch ministers, who attended their Commissioners at London, in forming that treaty of peace, by their instructions and example, recommended their Presbyterian reformation not a little to many of the most learned and pious of the English. A cor-

§ P. 25. \* Hist. Vol. II. P. 788. † Hist. Fol. Vol. II. P. 303.

respondence for promoting a religious uniformity between the two Churches was carried on by a number of the English clergymen with the Scotch Assemblies, 1641, 1642, 1643; and by the English Parliament with the Assemblies, 1642, 1643. At their request, the Assembly appointed Messrs Henderfon, Rutherford, Gillespy and others, to assist the Westminster Assembly in compiling *ecclesiastical Standards*, of doctrine, worship, discipline and government. Alarmed by the terrible massacre of the Protestants in Ireland, and reduced to straits in their war with K. Charles, the English Parliament requested, that for promoting and establishing uniformity in religion, and preserving their respective liberties, the two nations might be more closely connected by a mutual League. The Letter from a multitude of English ministers,—the papers from the English parliament and their Commissioners, and the Scotch Assembly's Answers, manifest that an uniformity of religion was the principal thing proposed by this League. Henry Vane and perhaps some other English Commissioners, nevertheless, from a dislike of the Scotch Presbyterianism, thought to have gone no further than a *civil* league, but the Scots being positive for a *religious* one, he yielded. It appeared from that readiness and avidity, with which the Solemn League was received in England, that it answered to the wishes of his constituents. After the Westminster Assembly had examined and approved it, the English Parliament appointed it to be sworn by persons of all ranks, and issued forth instructions and an exhortation for promoting that work †.

6. There is nothing in the matter of these cove-

† Neal's History of Puritans, Vol. I. II. III. Naphtali, p. 142. Stevenson, Vol. III. Baillie's Let Vol. I. Acts of Ass. 1643, 1643. Paton's Collection of Confessions, p. 58.—107, 558, 546. Rapin, Vol. II. 481,—484.

nants, which doth not enter into the faith and practice of true religion. They principally engaged to the belief, profession and practice of the true Protestant religion, in doctrine, worship, discipline and government; and renounced, and promised the *regular* extirpation of Popery, Prelacy, and whatever else should, by the word of God, be found contrary to said doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, and holy practice. The preservation of the King's person and authority, and of the rights and privileges of the parliament and nation was promised as a thing subordinated to the interests of religion, in which view, it is a very necessary and important branch of practical Christianity, Rom. xiii. 1,—8. 1. Feb. ii. 13, 17. Tit. iii. 1.

7. The manner of covenanting represented in these covenants, corresponds not to *merely civil* but to religious Bonds. In their Bond 1531, 1590, &c. our ancestors covenanted as *thoroughly resolved in the truth by the word and Spirit of God,—as believing it with their heart,—and joining themselves to the reformed kirk in doctrine, faith, religion, and use of the holy sacraments, as lively members of the same, in Christ their Head.* If these expressions be but understood, as relating to the visible church, her concerns as such, are of a *spiritual* and *religious* nature, John xviii. 36. Their covenanting in 1596, was so much detached from the State, and so religiously conducted, that you dare not pretend it to have been *State-covenanting*; yet they viewed it as a mere renovation of their national covenant, in a manner suited to their circumstances. Shield in *Hind let loose*, De Foe, Crookshanks, and Stevenson, and Petry in their Church histories, and Gillespy in his *English Popish ceremonies*, call it a renovation of their national covenant\*.

\* Hist. on A. D. 1576, English Ceremonies, Part 4. p. 35.

Epistola Philadelphi subjoined to Altare Damascenum says, " Their sacred and solemn covenant was renewed, in which men of all ranks covenanted with God, that they would adhere to the religion and discipline †." Calderwood, who was perhaps present, says, " The end of the convention March 1596, was to enter into a new league with God,—holding up their hands,—entering into a new league and covenant with God,—that the covenant might be renewed in Synods, after the same manner.—The covenant was renewed in Synods.—The covenant was renewed in Presbyteries.—The covenant was renewed in parishes ‡.—In 1604, the whole brethren of the Presbytery of St. Andrews and Synod of Lothian, subscribed the confession of faith and national covenant anew, like as they subscribed the same—in the year 1596,——which Confession, i. e. national covenant is solemnly renewed in the covenant celebrated in the general and provincial Assemblies, Presbyteries, and Kirk-sessions, in the year 1596; and how shall any be heard against that which he hath solemnly sworn or subscribed §? The Assembly 1638, Sep. 17th, say, " The covenant was renewed in 1596." The preamble of the covenant, 1648, affirms, that " the Assembly 1596, and all the kirk judicatures, with the concurrence of the nobility, gentry and burgeses, did with many tears acknowledge before God the breach of the national covenant, and engaged themselves to reformation."——In 1638, they covenanted in obedience to the command of God, conform to the practice of the godly in former times, and according to the laudable example of their worthy and religious progenitors, and of many yet living among them, (i. e. who had covenanted in 1596.)—They covenant-

† P. 7.

‡ Hist. P. 317, 318, 323, 324, 325.

§ Hist. P. 484, 485, 712

as agreeing with their heart to the true religion,—and from the knowledge and conscience of their duty to God, their king and their country, without worldly respect or inducement, so far as human infirmity will suffer;—as Christians renewing their covenant with God;—as resolved to be good examples of all goodness, soberness and righteousness.—In 1643, they covenanted as unfeignedly desirous to be humbled for their sins, in not duly receiving Jesus Christ, and walking worthy of him.—In 1648, they covenanted in imitation of their penitent predecessors in 1596,—as deeply affected with their sins, especially the undervaluing of the gospel, that they had not laboured in the power thereof, and received Christ into their hearts;—and as really and sincerely penitent; denying themselves, and resolving not to lean on carnal confidences, but to lean to the Lord. Dare you pretend, that all these expressions, in their several bonds, represent men, merely as members of a commonwealth, employed in mere State-covenanting?

8. The ends of their covenanting expressed in their several bonds are religious not merely civil: In 1531—1596 and 1604, they covenanted in order to promote and preserve the profession and practice of the true Protestant religion;—in order to advance the kingdom of Christ, as the principal, and the welfare of their country as their subordinate end.—In 1638, they covenanted as a means of obtaining the Lord's special favour, and of recovering the purity of religion †. In 1643, they covenanted that they and their posterity might as brethren, live together in faith and love, and the Lord delight to dwell among them; and that the Lord might be one, and his name one, in all the three kingdoms, that the Lord might turn away his wrath and heavy indignation, and establish these churches and

† Stevenson's History, P. 284, 351.

*kingdoms in truth and peace.*—In 1648 they covenanted, for *advancing the knowledge of God, and holiness and righteousness in the land.*

9. There is nothing in these covenants, or in the seasons of taking them, which doth not perfectly harmonize with a taking hold of God's covenant of grace. Men's belief, profession and practice of the true Protestant religion, and labouring to promote the welfare of their king and country, agree well to it, Tit. ii. 11, 12, 14. & iii. 1, 8, 14. Prov. xxiii. 23. 1 Pet. ii. 13, 17. Rom. xiii. 1,—8, 11,—14.—Their voluntary joining themselves to the church of God as lively members in Christ,—and agreeing with their whole heart to his true religion and ordinances, agree exactly to it, Psal. xxii. 27,—31. & cx. 3. 2 Cor. viii. 5. Having before their eyes the glory of God, and advancement of the kingdom of Christ, and their earnest and constant endeavours, in their stations, that they and their posterity might live in faith and love, delightfully agree with it, Mat. vi. 9, 10. 1 Cor. x. 31. Eph. iii. 14,—19. 2 Theff. iii. 1. Psal. lxxviii. 4,—9. Isa: xxxvii. 19. An unfeigned desire to be humbled for their sin in not duly receiving Christ, and walking worthy of him, and for their unworthy use of the sacraments;—a real and sincere repentance, self-denial, and resolution to lean upon the Lord alone, accord excellently with it, Ezek. xvi. 62, 63. & xxxvi. 25,—32. Phil. iii. 3, 8.—14. The covenanting seasons being remarkable for trouble or danger,—the out-pouring of the Holy Ghost,—and deep convictions of sin, are precisely those marked out for that work in scripture, Joel ii. 12, 13. Psal. l. 14, 15. & lxi. 13, 14. Ezek. xx. 36, 37. Hof. ii. 7, 14. & v. 15: & iii. 4. 5. Isa. xlv. 3,—5. Acts ii. 2 Cor. viii 5. Jer. l. 4, 5.

These covenants indeed connect fulfilment with gracious rewards, and violation with fearful judg-

ments †. But this annexed sanction no more renders them covenants of works, than *so help me God*, in the conclusion of oaths, renders every oath a covenant of works. Notwithstanding this sanction annexed to the Israelites' covenants of duty with God, they might well stand steadfast in the covenant of grace, Lev. xxvi. Deut. xxvii.—xxx. 1 Kings ix. In this world, the Law, as a *rule of life*, hath an annexed sanction of gracious rewards and fearful chastisements, as well as it hath as a *covenant*, one of legal rewards and punishments, Psal. i. Isa iii. 10, 11. Exod. xx. 6, 12. Rom. ii. 7,—10. & viii. 13. Heb. xi. 6. Gal. vi. 7,—10. 1 Cor. xv. 58. Without Neonomianism, the Holy Ghost calls that which is annexed to believers' obedience, a *reward*, and that which is connected with their disobedience, a *punishment*, Psal. xix. 11. & lviii. 11. Prov. xi. 18. & xxiii. 18. Mat. v. 12. & x. 41. Gen. xv. 1. Ezra ix. 13. Amos iii. 2. 2 Cor. ii. 6. Lam. iii. 39. Psalm xcix. 8. “The threatenings of God's law shew believers what even their sins deserve, and what afflictions in this world they may expect for them, although freed from the curse thereof, threatened by the law. The promises of it shew them God's approbation of obedience, and what blessings they may expect upon the performance thereof, although not as due to them by the law as a covenant of works; so as a man's doing good, and refraining from evil, because the law encourageth the one and deterreth from the other, is no evidence of his being under the law, and not under grace. §”

10. The remarkable effusion of the Spirit of God, which attended the swearing of these covenants, for the conviction, conversion, and confirmation of multitudes, fixing in their hearts such a deep sense

† See Covenant-Bonds of 1581, 1638, 1643, 1648.

§ Confess. XIX. 6, 7. Marrow, Part 2d P. 14, 144—147.

of religion, as all the profaneness and persecution of twenty-eight years could not eradicate,—is no contemptible evidence that He looked upon them as religious, not merely State-covenants. It is at our infinite hazard, if we call that *common and unclean*, which God hath so singularly honoured.

OBJECT. I. “Our Covenanters’ characterizing themselves *Noblemen, Barons, Burgeffes* and *Commons*, proves their covenants to be *mere civil covenants*.”

ANSW. 1. Will then others characterizing themselves *ministers* render them, at the same time, *Church-covenants*? Hath Solomon’s denominating him-self King of Israel, in his Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, rendered these two books merely civil, not religious? If, in a Bond or Bill, I denominate myself *minister of the gospel*, Will that render the Bond or Bill religious and ecclesiastical?

2. As they never used such characters in their bonds, but when they covenanted contrary to their King’s will, they probably intended no more by them, than merely to mark the great harmony of all ranks, for the encouragement of their freinds, and the terror of their malicious enemies.

3. There was no irreligion, in subjecting themselves and all their honours to the service of Jesus Christ, as made of God Head over all things to his Church, Rev. xxi. 24.

OBJECT. II. “In 1638, and 1643, they framed their covenants to admit Episcopalians and Independents, whom they would not have admitted to the sacraments.”

ANSW. 1. As in taking these covenants, men bound themselves to the regular reformation of every thing found sinful, when tried by the word of God, our ancestors agreeable to Rom. xiv. 1. Isaiah xxxv. 3, 4. were willing to help forward the weak, and admit to their covenant and church-fellowship, every



person, who appeared willing to receive more light, even though they were not in every respect, equally enlightened and reformed as themselves. But, I defy you to prove, that they excluded one upright covenanter from their religious communion.

2. The covenants of 1638 and 1643, were not framed to admit any who resolved obstinately to adhere to Episcopacy or Independency. In the bond 1638, men bound themselves to forbear the practice of Episcopalian government, and of the articles of Perth, till they should be TRIED and ALLOWED in a free General Assembly. The covenanters declare, that their intention in that bond, was against all innovations and corruptions †. In the covenant of 1643, that paragraph, which peculiarly respected the Protestants in England and Ireland was prudently suited to the weakness of many of them. But there is nothing in it, which favours either Episcopacy or Independency. The preservation of the reformation attained in Scotland sworn to, excluded them both. If then Erastians or Independents, and others dissembled with God, and their brethren, in taking it, they, not the covenant, are blameable. Men's hypocritical reception of the sacraments will not render them *civil* ordinances.

3. You can never prove, that the covenant of 1538, was tendered to the Doctors of Aberdeen, after they had shown their obstinate attachment to Prelacy. Or that Philip Nye, or any others, after manifesting their obstinate attachment to Independency, had the covenant of 1643, tendered to them by any truly zealous covenanter. Baillie affirms, that the Scots were peremptory against keeping open a door to Independency in England §.

† Stevenson's Hist P. 351.

§ Committee of Westminster Ass. answers to Independents, P. 206--112. Wilson's Defence, p. 304. Bail. Lat. Vol. I. p. 307.

OBJECT. III. "The imposition of these covenants under civil penalties, proves them to have been merely State-covenants."

ANSW. 1. No more than the requirement of men under civil penalties, to partake, at least once a year, of the Lord's Supper, rendered it a merely civil ordinance. An ordinance may remain *religious*, though a civil sanction should be finfully annexed to it.

2. If, which I do not, you believe, that Afa and Josiah, by penal laws, compelled men to take their covenants, you can scarce condemn our covenanters' annexing civil penalties to the refusal of their bonds, especially as they knew, it would scarce come from any, but such as were malignant enemies to the civil as well as religious liberties of the nation.

3. In 1596, 1638, 1648, and 1649, these covenants had no penalty either civil or ecclesiastical annexed to the not swearing of them, without any hint from the covenanters, that this altered the nature of the engagement.

OBJECT. IV. "Our ancestors gave up with their covenanting work, whenever they got the State of the nation settled by means of it; and having got their civil liberties otherwise secured at the Revolution, they never covenanted at all."

ANSW. 1. Did ten years of murderous invasion and outrageous contention, and twenty-eight years of horrible profaneness and persecution make our nation so happy, that covenanting with God our deliverer was no more necessary? Or, Have the fearful profanation of the name of God by unnecessary and wicked oaths, or the shocking bribery and perjury, too common in the election of our Representatives in Parliament, and our other outrageous abominations, rendered Britain so holy, that these covenants need no more be regarded?

2. Not the alteration of the national affairs to the better, but the alteration of men's hearts to the worse, made covenanting with God to be so contemned at the Restoration and Revolution.

III. That these *solemn* and *religious* covenants with God, in which all gross heresy, blasphemy, idolatry, Popery, and other abominations have been repeatedly abjured, bind not only the immediate swearers or subscribers, but *all their posterity and other representees in all generations following, to a faithful performance of every thing engaged*, must now be demonstrated.

1. That which is engaged in these covenants, being moral duty, commanded by the law of God, is of *perpetual obligation*. The whole faith and practice to which we therein engage are stated from the oracles of God, in our excellent Standards. If the matter in itself, were contrary to God's law, no human covenant could bind us, or any represented by us to it for a moment. We can have no power from God to bind ourselves or others to any thing sinful, 2. Cor. xiii. 8. Nor can any human deed be valid in opposition to his supreme authority.—If the matter were indifferent, no vow or promissory oath could lawfully constitute a *perpetual obligation*, as the alteration of circumstances might render it very unexpedient and unedifying, 1 Cor. vi. 12. & x. 23. & xvi. 14. Rom. xiv. 19. But if that which is engaged be precisely, what every person, in every age or circumstance, is bound to, by the antecedent tie of the law of God, no man can be, in the least, abridged of any lawful liberty, by being brought under the most solemn obligation of an oath or vow.—The strictest fulfilment of it cannot but tend to the real profit of every one concerned, both in his personal and his social capacity. Psal. xix. 11. 1. Cor. xv. 58. Isa. iii. 10. Proverbs xiv. 34. Rom. ii.

1—10. It is therefore for the advantage of us and our posterity, to be hedged in, and bound up to the most exact conformity to God's law, by every mean which he requires or allows, in his word,—even as it is for our advantage to have our liberty bounded by the ledges of bridges.—The law of God requires us to do every thing which is calculated to promote or secure our own or our children's walking in the truth, Gen. xvii. 7. Psal. xlv. 17. & lxxviii. 1—9. Isa. xxxviii. 19. 3 John ver. 4.—It represents solemn vows as a mean most effectual to answer this purpose, Psal. cxix. 106. & lxxvi. 11. & l. 14. & lvi. 12. & lxvi. 13, 14. & lxi. 8. & cxvi. 12—19. & cxxxii. 1—5. Gen. xxviii. 20. Deut. v. 2. & xxix. Josh. xxiv. 15, 24, 25. 2 Chron. xv. 12. & xxiii. 16, 17. & xxix. 10. & xxxiv. 30—32. Ezra x. 3. Neh. ix. x. Isa. xix. 18, 21. & xlv. 3—5. & xlv. 23, 24. Jer. l. 4, 5. 2 Cor. viii. 5.

2. By the repeated judicial acts of both Church and State, approving and imposing these covenants, they were constituted the *adopted laws* of both, proper to be acknowledged and submitted to, by all their members, in the most solemn manner, which their circumstances permitted.—Several of these acts, as well as the best duties of Christians, had their sinful infirmities, particularly on the head of penalties, which I mean not to defend. But in so far as these acts approved and authorized these covenants, which bound men to receive and hold fast such temporal and spiritual privileges, as God had given them, and thankfully improve them to his glory,—and required a Christian, regular, and seasonable taking of them,—they were certainly good and valid. Being good in themselves, and the exact performance of them calculated to promote the glory of God, and eminent welfare of both Church and State, these covenants, if once regular-

ly adopted as laws, must remain obligatory upon the adopting societies, while they exist. Civil rulers being ordained *ministers of God for good to men*, Rom. xiii. 1—4. and Church officers appointed by Christ for the *edifying of his body*, Eph. iv. 11,—14. have no power against the truth, but for the truth, 2 Corinth. xiii. 8, 10. and so can no more repeal a law, which promotes only that which is morally good, any more than they can give validity to a sinful one.—These covenants must therefore, in the view of God and conscience, continue binding, as laws divinely ratified, upon us, as subjects, and as Christians. But it is their much more solemn obligation as *public Vows and Covenants with God*, which I mean to establish, particularly with reference to Scotland.

3. The matter of these vows being morally good, calculated to promote the holiness and happiness of every person in every age, the immediate covenanters were such as laid every possible foundation of transmitting the obligation of their vow to the whole Church and nation, to all generations. The REPRESENTATIVES of both Church and State,—the MAJORITY of the Society, and our own PARENTS, in their respective stations, took these covenants. What could transmit and extend an obligation to posterity, if all this did not? You cannot but allow, that even in private civil deeds, the obligation is extended far beyond the *immediate engagers*. In bonds, respecting money or service, men bind not only themselves, but their successors, and assigns, especially, if they have the continued right to, or possession of that fund or property from which that money or service natively ariseth. The obligations contained in a call to a minister, fix on the whole congregation, if subscribed by the majority, without any regular dissent,—and on such as afterwards

accede to it. The treaties of peace, traffick, &c. contracted by Kings, Parliaments, Magistrates, are held binding on their subjects, and even on their posterity. They, who accede to any society, fall under the binding force of its social engagements for debt, duty, &c. If bonds and covenants did only bind immediate contractors, nothing but the wildest disorder would ensue. If the immediate engagers, quickly after died, they who trusted to their engagement, might be totally ruined.—A minority, who had been silent during the transaction, might, in a few days, overturn a bond or contract of the majority. Subjects might, at their pleasure, render void the contracts and treaties of their rulers. To pretend, that men may not use the same freedom, in binding their representees and posterity to God, as in binding them to men, is highly absurd and shocking, as it represents God as more dangerous, and less honourable and useful to be dealt with, than the very worst of men. Why may not a parent, in offering his child to God in baptism, take hold of God to be his God, and the God of his seed after him to all generations,—and dedicate not only that child, but all his posterity to God, as his honoured vassals and servants. Gen. xvii. 7. Acts ii. 39. ?—Is this less dutiful, safe, or honourable, than to infect himself and them in some earthly property, and bind them as possessors of it, to be the vassals of some sinful superior?—If the majority of a society, especially in distress, may put the whole under the authority and protection of a man who is a great sinner, why must they act either wickedly or foolishly, if, by a solemn dedication, they put it under the especial care and protection of the Great GOD our Saviour? Rev. xi. 15. Psal. ii. 12. & xxii. 27. If the representatives of a people, may bind them to live peaceably and trade honestly with earth-

by neighbours; or may, in some cases, subject them to the power, laws, or exactions of other earthly superiors,—why allow them no power to bind them to study peace with God, and to follow peace with all men and holiness?—No power to surrender them to God, to be ruled by his law,—and to render him his due revenues of honour?—Hath not God an original and supreme right to all men as his creatures, subjects, and children? Are they not all bound by his law to the whole of that duty, to which, we contend, any man ought to be bound by a vow of *perpetual obligation*? Is it not inexpressibly honourable, safe and profitable to stand under the special care of, and in relation to God in Christ, Deut. iv. 7. & xxxiii. 29.? Why then more shy of devoting posterity, or other representatives to him, than to a sinful man and his service?

In covenants with men, a proper and timely dissent may frequently be well founded; and may effectually divert this obligation from the dissenters. But how there could be a lawful dissent from an engagement carefully to keep all the commandments of God and nothing else, I know not. Had the whole, or even the body of the Hebrew nation, timely and regularly dissented from the treaty made by their princes with the Gibeonites, it might have diverted its obligation from them.—Instead of this, they appear to have agreed to the final stating of it, without a single murmur, Josh. ix. But, if these princes had, by covenant, devoted themselves and their tribes to a careful keeping of God's commandments, I know not how the people's dissent could have diverted the obligation from themselves.—In covenants with men, the nonfulfilment of some condition or some dispensation or remission may weaken, if not perfectly annul, the obligation. But none can dispense with, or grant remissions,

in the matters of God. Covenants made with God are more absolute, and less clogged with conditions, and so *more obliging*. The covenants of which we now treat, being about indispensable duties of morality, upon which dependeth the glory of God, the advancement of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, the honour and happiness of magistrates, and the public liberty, safety and peace of the nation, and the good of posterity in all time coming, ought to have their obligation allowed to fix, wherever any ground can be found, while Christ hath a kingdom, and the covenanters a posterity, particularly in Scotland; for,

1. Our civil Representatives by these covenants devoted themselves in their station, and their subjects, in so far as under their power, to the service of God. In 1581 and 1590, King James and his privy council took the *National Covenant*, and required their subjects to follow their example. In 1638, the privy council again took it, as it stood in 1581. In 1640, the members of Parliament took it, as explained by the Assembly 1638, to abjure *Prelacy* and the *five articles of Perth*, and appointed it to be sworn by all the members of every future Parliament. It was sworn by the members of Parliament 1644. In 1649, the national covenant, and the Solemn League which was materially the same, were renewed by the members of Parliament, with solemn fasting and humiliation. The oath framed in 1641, to be sworn by members of Parliament, at taking their seats, expressly approved the national covenant. King Charles I. gave a solemn approbation of it. King Charles II. and other magistrates took the covenants in 1650 and 1651. Now, if a covenant made by the princes of Israel with the representatives of the Gibeonites, in a matter which concerned the *Lord's land* and the



*remote service of his altar*, extended its obligation to the whole nation of Israel, who consented to it, no otherwise, than by silence at the final stating of it,—and to their posterity, for many generations,—that four hundred years after, they were punished with a famine on account of Saul's breach of it, Josh. ix. with 2 Sam. xxi. and to the Gibeonites and their posterity;——Why not allow the covenanting deed of our Princes to extend its obligation in like manner? If magistrates be the *ministers of God for good* to men. Why should they not be capable to surrender themselves and their subjects to the special care and service of God, their common and beneficent Superior? If they possess the powers assigned them in our excellent Standards, Why may they not, as *nursing fathers* of the church, devote themselves and their subjects of the same true religion, to the enjoyment of God himself in his oracles and ordinances, and to serve Him regularly in Christ? If Joshua could bind himself and his family to serve the Lord, why may not magistrates bind themselves and their subjects of the same true religion, to receive and hold fast the like honour and happiness? If for the benefit of their subjects, magistrates may, in a time of need, subject themselves and their people to some powerful Monarch, whose fury is terrible, but his favour extremely profitable, or may approve and ratify some former grant of that kind,—Why may they not for the same end, devote themselves and subjects to the Great GOD our Saviour, and Prince of the kings of the earth? Why may they not bring their glory into the church? and as judges kiss the Son of God, solemnly approving and in their station ratifying that grant which his Father made to him, of the outermost ends of the earth? Rev. xxi. 24. & xi. 15. Prov. viii. 15, 16. Psal. ii. 8—12.

2. In these covenants our Representatives in the Church, in their station, devoted themselves and their people to the faith, profession and obedience of Christ. In April 1581, the General Assembly unanimously approved the *national covenant*, and then in October ensuing, in the name of Christ, appointed it to be subscribed by all Protestants. In 1588 and 1590, they made further acts for promoting this subscription. The General Assemblies of 1596, 1638, 1639, and the Commissions or Assemblies of 1643, 1644, 1648, 1649, enjoined the swearing of the covenant by all adult Church-members. I do not know of one Presbyterian minister or ruling elder in Scotland, who, in any of the covenanting periods of 1581, 1590, 1596, 1638, 1643, 1648, declined taking it. Now, if civil representatives may bind their subjects and their posterity by civil contracts, Why ought not the harmonious dedication of themselves and people to God, by Church-rulers to have a like binding force? If, in public prayers, ministers may devote themselves and congregations to Christ, why may not they and ruling elders conjunctly do it, by public covenant? But we do not chiefly rest the matter on these grounds; for,

3. It is beyond all contradiction, that the lawful and public covenants civil or religious, which are made by parents, do bind their posterity. The oath of Esau, in which he resigned his birth-right to Jacob, bound his posterity never to attempt recovering the privileges of it from Jacob or his descendants. Hence Esau, and his family, after the death of Isaac, removed intirely from Canaan, Gen. xxv. 33. & xxxvi. 6. Even the public curse, which the Jews took upon themselves and their children, hath been manifestly binding on them these seventeen hundred years past, Mat. xxvii. 25. The vow of parents in

the ancient circumcision, or the Christian baptism of their infants, extends to these children,—nay according to the extent of God's covenant and promise to all their future seed, Gen. xvii. 7. Acts ii. 38, 39. Hence, whatever any of them do contrary to that vow, must at once be perfidy and rebellion against God. Nor will their wilful or slothful ignorance of that obligation, or their non-consent to it, when grown up, free them from that guilt, any more than ignorance of Adam's covenant, or of the breach of it, can free his posterity from the guilt of his first sin, or from perfidy in their personal violations of that covenant of works. In Deut. v. 2, 3. God, by Moses declares, that the covenant made with the Israelites at Sinai, was not made with them only, but with all that new generation of their children and grand-children, who survived them, Num. xxvi. 64.—In Deut. xxix. 14, 15. he declares, that the covenant taken by that new generation in the plains of Moab, did not only bind them who were alive and present at the entrance into it, but also others, even their posterity.—Their covenant with the Gibeonites did not only bind the immediate engagers and consenters, but also their posterity, many ages afterward, Josh. ix. 15, 19. with 2 Sam. xxi. 1.—Now, these covenants of allegiance to God and duty to men, of which we are treating, were sworn and subscribed by our own *natural*, though now *mediate* parents, and when it is considered, how FREQUENTLY that covenant, the same in substance in the several Bonds, was sworn or subscribed, and how GENERALLY;—and how readily some covenanted on one occasion, whose ancestors had not on a preceding;—and how families have been since intermixed, it will scarce remain probable, that there is a Scotchman, at least on the continent of Britian or Ireland, who is not descended from some covenanter. If any, to his

own disgrace, will contend that in all these and different periods of covenanting 1581, 1590, 1596, 1638, 1639, 1643, 1648, &c. all his progenitors were such mere neutrals, or malignant opposers of the true religion and liberties of the country, that none of them took the covenant, let him take heed, lest, after all, God his creditor find him a perjured transgressor of the covenant of his fathers,—or at least, of the covenant made by his Church and nation, and their respective Representatives.

4. That lawful covenants, made by the greater part of a society bind the whole, and every future acceder to it,—at least, unless the minority or acceders have, by a proper dissent, diverted the obligation from themselves;—and that, if remarkably calculated to promote the common advantage, they bind the members of it, while it continues a society,—Common sense will not allow us to doubt. That the exact fulfilment of our covenants with God, is remarkably calculated to promote the honour of Christ and his Father, and the welfare of both Church and State, hath been formerly hinted. No person therefore could, or can, by any lawful dissent, divert their binding force from himself. Nor do I remember of any, who regularly attempted it in Scotland.

Without doubt, the majority, nay body of the Scotch nation entered into their Solemn Covenant with God. In 1581, both the privy council and the General Assembly, in their respective acts enjoined the taking of the National Covenant. “In this year, in the month of March, was the National Covenant solemnly taken by the king, his council and court, and afterwards by the inhabitants of the kingdom \*.” “The National Covenant (was) subscribed by the

\* Brown's *Apologetical Relation*, P. 17.

King, his court, and council, and afterwards by all ranks of people in the land. \*” “That good order of the Church was three years ago approved, sealed, and confirmed with profession of mouth, subscription of hand, and religion of oath, by the king, and every subject of every estate †.”——“In 1590, the National Covenant was again subscribed by all sorts of persons †.” “In March 1590, the bond for religion was again ratified in council and about ninety-six ministers, in different parts of the kingdom, were appointed to convene before them the godly of all ranks, and minister unto them the National Covenant, and to take their subscriptions; and an hundred and thirty of the nobility and gentry to assist them, as should be necessary—In consequence hereof, copies of the covenant and general Bond were dispersed through the whole kingdom, and the covenant subscribed †.” “Their Confession of Faith and Solemn League and Covenant (was) subscribed by the whole Scotch nation §.” “It was subscribed by all sorts of persons, the whole land rejoicing at the oath of God. It was attended by many choice blessings from the Lord ¶.” About this time the General Assembly appointed this covenant to be renewed in Universities every year.—In 1596, the covenant was renewed in the General Assembly by about four hundred ministers, besides elders and

\* Crookshank's Hist. P. 10 Comp. Calderwood, p. 96, 102, 121. Spotswood, p. 309. Petry, part 3d, p. 407. Collier, Vol. II. p. 572.

† And. Malvin, in Petry, p. 445. Comp. Vindicia: epistolæ Philadelphi, P. 55. ‡ Crookshanks, P. 11.

§ Calderwood, P. 248--254

¶ Neal's History of Puritans, Vol. II. P. 259.

¶ Testimony by Rutherford, Guthrie, and 15 other Protestors, p. 14. Comp. Epist. Philadelphi, p. 6. Stevenfon's Introduction, p. 164. Willson's Testim. p. 5. Seced Testimony, p. 27.

others, with great solemnity, and attended by a remarkable effusion of the Holy Ghost, and bit mourning for sin, and earnest reformation from It was afterwards renewed in Synods, Presbytri and Parishes; but in many parishes particularly Edinburgh, where the court had much influence, was delayed and neglected. In 1634, the coven was subscribed by all the members in the Presbytri of St. Andrews and Synod of Lothian\*.

The renovation of the covenant in 1638, was f more universal and harmonious. "This coven: like an alarm-bell brought together all the Sco who were dissatisfied with the government, that almost the whole nation. It was subscribed by t great men and the people, except the privy cou tellors, the judges, and the bishops, and such mi sters as were dignitaries in the Church.—By t publication of this covenant, the Royalists were r above one to a thousand. The covenant was t sole law the people would follow, with respect religion †." "All ranks and conditions, all ag and sexes flocked to the subscription of this covenal Few in their judgment disapproved it, and still fe er dared openly to condemn it. The King's mi sters and counsellors were, most of them, seized the general contagion.—The covenanters fou themselves seconded by the zeal of the whole r tion †." "In the severall counties and shires, was received by the common people as a sacred or cle, and subscribed by all such, as were thought have any zeal for the Protestant religion, and the

\* Calderwood, P. 311, 312, 317, 318, 323, 324, 325, 4 485, 712. De Foe, p. 132. Crookshanks, p 13. Brow Apol. Relat p. 24, 403. Petry, p. 511, 570. Spotwood, 476. Stevenson, P 169...172. Epist. Philad p 7. Acts Ass 1638. p. 38 Preamble to Covenant 1638 & 1648.

† Rapin, Vol. II. P. 303.

‡ D. Hume's Hist on 163

berties of their country. The privy counsellors, the judges, the bishops and the friends of arbitrary power were the principal who refused it \*." "These rightly judging that the procuring cause of all the calamities of the nation was the violation of their National Covenant, unanimously resolved to renew the same. The town of Aberdeen was the only place of any note in the kingdom, that declined joining in the covenant,——(yet even there) several of special note cheerfully put there hands to the covenant, which was sworn by the generality of all ranks through the nation, before the end of April †." "They resolved upon renewing the national covenant, which had been almost buried for forty years before.—Being read in Churches, it 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 cheerfully return to their ancient principles, and subject themselves to the oath of God for reformation. Both the court and prelates were enraged against them for it; but the Lord remarkably countenanced them with the extraordinary manifestation of his presence and down-pouring of his Spirit †." "The whole body of the people of Scotland were engaged to God, by solemn covenants and vows frequently renewed, to own and endeavour the preservation of the reformed religion, &c.—Not only did the body of the commonalty, swear these covenants, but the magistrates themselves did take on the same vows and engagements,—solemnly promised to prosecute the ends of this covenant. All the lovers of God and friends to the liberties of the nation

\* Neal's History of Pu. Vol. II. p. 260.

† Crookshanks, Vol I. p. 48. ‡ Willison's Testimony, P. 7

did solemnly renew the national covenant, whercin they were signally countenanced of the Lord \*." So much for the testimony of foes and friends, who lived at some distance of time.

Let us now hear eye and ear witnesses of that work. "Upon the first of March 1638, the covenant was publicly read and subscribed by them all, with much joy and shouting.—Afterward the covenant was subscribed every where in parishes, with joy, except in the North †." "Within not many months, almost the whole land did subject themselves to the oath of God, which was attended with more than ordinary influences of the Spirit ‡." "The Lord did let forth much of his Spirit on his people in 1638, when this nation did solemnly enter into covenant.—Then did the nation visibly own the Lord, and was visibly owned by him. A remarkable gale of Providence did attend the actings of his people, which did astonish their adversaries, and force many of them to own subjection ||." "Except one day at the kirk of Shots, I never saw such motions from the Spirit of God,—all the people *generally* and *most willingly* concurring (in swearing the covenant) thro' the whole land, except the professed Papists, and some few who for base ends, adhered to the prelates, the people *universally* entered into the covenant of God §." When the covenanting work of that year was still unfinished, Dickson, Henderfon, and Cant affirm, that *almost the whole kirk and kingdom* had joined in the late covenant, and

\* Sir James Stewart in *Jus Populi*, P. 3, 4. He and Stirling in *Naphtali*, p. 140. Wilson's *Defence*, p. 236--243. Steven-son, P. 291, &c. Esq. Guthrie's *Hist. of Scotland*, Vol. IX. p. 238. Burnet's *Memoirs of the Dukes of Hamilton*, 1638.

† Bishop Guthrie's *Memoirs*, p. 30.

‡ Testimony by *Rutherford*, &c p. 16.

§ Fleming's *Fulfilling of the Scriptures*, p. 407.

|| Livingstone's *Life*, p. 22.



that they had been sent to Aberdeen from almost the whole kirk and kingdom. And this the Protestant Doctors there, grant to be true \*. “The covenant being drawn up, was subscribed by all present (at Edinburgh) and copies thereof sent to such as were absent, and being read in the Churches, it was heartily embraced, sworn and subscribed, with gladness and joy. Great was that day of the Lord’s presence for much willingness and cheerfulness was shown by the people, so as in a short time, few, in a land did refuse, except some Papists, some of the courtiers, some who were addicted to the English ceremonies, and some few, who had sworn the oath (of supremacy and canonical obedience) at the try †.” “This covenant was subscribed by almost every assertor of liberty, who was present (at Edinburgh). Copies of it were sent to such as were absent, to be communicated to all the inhabitants of the kingdom, that every one who had religion at heart might swear this covenant.—The non-subscribers were first all the Papists, the number of whom did not exceed six hundred,—some court parasites, who had lately been advanced to dignities, or employed in offices, or grasped at them, or who were more addicted to the English rites and canons,—as the doctors and magistrates of Aberdeen.—Some others for a while declined subscribing from a regard to the oath (of Supremacy and Canonical obedience) which they had taken, and because the king had not entered into this covenant, and because it bound the subjects to assist one another in this cause ‡.” “The covenant having been agreed to, with so great unanimity, amidst a world of difficulties,—upon the

sisting of all the nobles, who were then in Scotland, (except the Lords of privy council, and four or five more)—and of commissioners from of all the Shires within Scotland, and from every Burgh, except Aberdeen, St. Andrews, and Crail,—and of other gentlemen and ministers.—Before the end of April, every parish through Scotland, where the minister was friendly to the reformation then sought, having observed a fast, to humble themselves for the former defection and breach of covenant, did renew the same with great solemnity, scarce a person opposing himself, but every one, women as well as men, concurring, and publicly avouching the Lord to be **THEIR** God, with their hand lifted up, except,

(1.) Papists, to whom it was not offered,—the number of whom in all Scotland, was not reckoned above 600 persons.

(2.) Courtiers, who had no will to displease the king.

(3.) Some of the clergy, who had sworn the oath for conformity, (to Prelacy) or were dignitaries in the Church, the chief of whom were the doctors of Aberdeen:—The most of the Hamiltons, Douglasses, all the Gordons who were under the influence of Sutherland and Kenmure,—all the Campbells, Forbesses, Frasers, Grants, M'Kenzie's, M'Kays, M'Intoshes, M'Leans, M'Donalds, Irvines, and Innesses, subscribed the covenant. Many in Aberdeen and Glasgow, who for a time refused,—subscribed. Not a burghers in St. Andrews refused.—In Edinburgh Dr. Elliot a minister, and Robert Rankin, and John Brown, Regents of the College, were the only persons of note, who declined subscription \* †."

\* † Stevenson's Hist. P. 291, 294, 311. from Baillie's MSS. Letters, p. 196—273. Bail. printed Let. Vol. I. p. 45—49, 66, 73. Acts of the Ass. 1638 p 24—41 Stevenson, p. 416—418, &c. Large Declaration. Burnet's Memoirs of D. Hamilton.

Add to all these, the 28,000, who, at King Charles's command, subscribed the covenant as it stood in 1643, declared to be the same in substance with the Bond,—and it will appear that few, very few, neglected to swear or subscribe the covenant. What numbers took the covenant from 1643 to 1648, in obedience to the peremptory act of the Church and State enjoining it, I know not.

In 1643 and 1644, the swearing of the *Solemn League and Covenant* by all adult persons, was peremptorily required by both Church and State. From a copy of it before me, I have reason to think that the subscription of it was pretty universal. The takers of it in Scotland are affirmed to have been seven to one of their opposers\*. “It was solemnly sworn and subscribed almost in all parts of the Kingdom †.” “With a marvellous unanimity was every where received. In God’s great mercy that I have yet heard of, have taken this oath. Scotland now, I hope, in a happy time, hath entered into a league with England ‡.” In their speech to the council of London, after their return, Sir John Vane and Stephen Marshall affirm, “That they believed the Solemn League had been *universally* subscribed by the whole Scotch nation. The exhortation of the English Assembly and Parliament affirms, that “the whole body of Scotland had willingly sworn with rejoicing.” Rutherford, and his sixteen brethren, affirm, that “the Solemn League was actually sworn and taken by the whole body of the Kingdom, from the highest to the lowest—by the whole body of the land §.” Sir James Stewart and Stirling—who, perhaps, both covenanted that year—affirm, that “in 1648, in the month of Decem-

\* Steven: Vol. III. † Crook p. 33. Hind let loose

‡ Bail. Let. Vol. I. p. 237, 239. § Test. p. 20. &

(the Solemn League) was, for the second time, sworn in *all the congregations* of Scotland, upon the same day except where a vacancy, or the minister's being under scandal, did occasion a delay till another day,—with great solemnity and such mixture of joy and sorrow, as became people entering into covenant with the Lord.—There was at that time a great zeal for God, from clear knowledge and sad experience, generally and solemnly professed before God and all men, in our public *acknowledgments* 1648,—in consequence whereof, the League and Covenant was also, by the whole kingdom, renewed that same year, and in answer thereto, the Lord did mightily save us.—He did highly advance his blessed work \*.”

That the body of the English nation also swore the Solemn League and Covenant, is manifest. The Westminster Assembly and English Parliament, affirm, “The honourable houses of Parliament, the Assembly of Divines, the renowned city of London, and multitudes of other persons of all ranks and quality in this nation, and the whole body of Scotland, have all sworn it, rejoicing at the oath so graciously seconded from heaven. God will, doubtless, stand by all those, who with singleness of heart shall now enter into an everlasting covenant with the Lord †.” Rutherford and his sixteen faithful brethren, affirm, that “this Solemn League was actually sworn and taken by the whole body of Scotland,—also by the honourable houses of the parliament of England, the Assembly of Divines, the renowned city of London, and multitudes not only of the people, but of persons of eminent rank and quality throughout that nation, and the nation of Ireland, and all this by

\* Naphtali, p 91, 156.

† Exhortation to take the Covenant, FEBRUARY, 1644.

the authority of the powers, civil and ecclesiastic. Who can have forgot, how deliberately it was resolved, and how unanimously it was concluded? The respective authorities of both Church and State in Scotland, did all with one voice approve and embrace the same, as the most powerful mean by the blessing of God for settling and preserving the true Protestant religion, with perfect peace in these nations, and propagating the same to other nations, did ordain it to be, with *humiliation and all religious solemnities*, received, sworn and subscribed by all ministers and professors within this kirk, and subjects within this kingdom,—which was accordingly done by the whole body of the land, and in many congregations attended with the feelings of that joy, and comfortable influence of the Spirit of God,—which they did find in so great a measure upon the renovation of the national covenant in 1638.—And this solemn oath of God being taken by the honourable houses of the Parliament of England, by the renowned city of London, by the reverend Assembly of Divines,—the Lords and Commons, upon the account of its being thought a fit and excellent means to acquire the favour of God towards the three kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland, and to establish and propagate the true reformed religion, peace and prosperity of these kingdoms, did—ordain, that the same covenant be solemnly taken throughout the kingdom of England. And upon these grounds, and according to these instructions and exhortations of the Assembly and Parliament, was that solemn covenant taken by multitudes of all ranks and sorts, many of which did rejoice at the oath of God. A little thereafter, it was ordered by the House of commons, that the solemn League and Covenant be, on every day of humiliation, (*i. e.* once every month) publicly read in every Church and congregation,

within the kingdom; and that every congregation have one of the said covenants fairly printed on a fair letter, in a table to hang up in some place of the Church, to be read, (where many copies continued hanging till the restoration).—No power on earth can absolve either themselves or others from the bond and tie of this sacred oath of the Most High \*.” An apologetical declaration of the conscientious Presbyterians of the province of London, and of many thousands of other faithful and covenant-keeping citizens and inhabitants, which was subscribed by these many thousands in January, 1649, at the hazard of every thing dear to them, hath these words, “ calling to mind our Solemn League and covenant; which was so religiously and unanimously sworn †.” “ The sacred oath was first taken by the Lords and Commons legally assembled in Parliament, then by the generality of the people in England.—They (the parliament) no sooner met in 1649, but they ordered it to be hung up before their eyes, as a constant monitor to them ‡.” “ If all tables were as legible as those of the Lords and Commons, I believe their (i. e. subscribers of the covenant)-number would be found more than a 4th part of the nation (in 1660, notwithstanding the death of perhaps more than one half of them from 1644 to 1660). Can any considerate observer, take notice, that the covenant (in England) was imposed on, and submitted to, by all sorts and degrees of men in all counties, cities, and towns, tendered, and since testified, by their public subscriptions, by the most of ministers in their several counties, and to their individual congregations, and yet without the supposal of a very great mortality, imagine not a fourth part of the nation (now liv-

\* Testimony, P. 20, 21, 22, 24.

† P. 2.

‡ Covenanters' Plea, P. 3, 70.

ing in 1660) to have taken it?—Nor shall I insist on the universal alacrity, joy and content of the most serious in England and Scotland, that accompanied the first making of the covenant, and the solemnities and order, in which it was taken in the city of London, and the several counties and congregations of England,—than which—no act ever passed among the people of England, more solemnly or more religiously.—The Solemn League and Covenant is really public and national (in England),

(1.) Its matter is public and national relating to the kingdom under its civil, religious and reformed capacity, being the reformation and defence of religion, under a national profession, and the honour and happiness of the king, privileges of the Parliament, and liberties of the subjects.

(2.) These matters were consulted, debated and agreed to, by two distinct nations in their most public capacities.

(3.) The end of it was public and national,—the *true liberty, peace, and safety of the kingdom*, wherein every one's private condition is included;—and that *the Lord may be one and his name one in the three kingdoms*; and *the kingdoms of England and Scotland may remain conjoined in a firm peace to all posterity*,—in a case that concerned the good of these kingdoms:

(4.) The covenant was sworn by the nation.

[1.] *Collectively*, in the most full and complete body, that could, or ever did represent the same, the Parliament consisting of Lords and Commons, and that in their public capacity, and with the greatest solemnity imaginable, did as the representative body of the kingdom, swear the covenant, which as a further Testimony that it was a national covenant, they caused to be printed with their names subscribed, and to be hung up in all Churches, and in their own (Parliament) House, as a compass, whereby to steer

their debates, and to dictate unto all that should succeed them into that place and capacity, what obligations before God lie upon *the body* of this nation.

[2.] It was *universally* sworn by the people of this kingdom, (England) solemnly testified in their particular places of convention, all over the kingdom, and by all manner of persons, from eighteen years and upwards, and that at the command of, and by the authority of the Parliament, who, in their place, and in behalf of this nation, did order it to be *universally* sworn.—Certainly, whoever will but weigh the directions given and duly executed, in the tendering of the covenant in *all counties and parishes*, and taken by *all persons*, religious, military or civil.—If the several rolls within the several parishes and precincts of this kingdom, in which the several names of such, as did swear the Solemn League and Covenant, were ingrossed, be viewed, it will be found that it was sworn by the *universality* of the nation;—and I hope we, who are a free people, tied by no bonds but such as we lay upon ourselves, may be allowed to bind ourselves by an oath.

[3.] His Majesty (Charles II.) did swear the Solemn League and Covenant, in behalf of himself and his successors, and that as King of Great Britain and Ireland.—More than six hundred ministers of England in thirteen different counties, in their testimonies, (1648) to the truths of Christ and to the Solemn League and Covenant, attest it as *national*.—The Yorkshire ministers say, “It cannot but be known to the Churches abroad, that all the three kingdoms stand engaged by virtue of the Solemn League and Covenant\*.” The London ministers say, “We shall never forget, how solemnly and

\* Crofton's Peter's bonds abide, P. 26, and Fastening of St. Peter's fetters, p. 108, 138—146.



cheerfully the *ſacred* League was ſworn,—wherein the three kingdoms ſtand engaged jointly and ſeverally. The Parliament have not only enjoined it to be taken by all men above eighteen years of age, throughout the kingdom of England and dominion of Wales; but the Commons have alſo required it to be publiſhed on every monthly faſt-day, for the better remembrance and obſervation of it, and that every congregation have one of the ſaid Covenants fairly printed in a fair letter, in a table, fitted to hang up in ſome public place of the Church, to be read \*.”

In IRELAND, Rutherford and his ſixteen faithful brethren, who had full acceſs to know the truth, affirm, That multitudes ſwore the Solemn League. In Cox' hiſtory of Ireland, Ormond, then Lord lieutenant there, ſays, “ The covenant hath been impoſed by ordinance of (English) Parliament, (which hath the *ſupreme* power over Ireland as a dependent kingdom, act 6. Geo. I.)—The covenant was impoſed on all that were under the power of the Parliament.” In a ſubſequent page it is affirmed, That all the province of Ulſter (in which the Proteſtants chiefly reſide,) and a conſiderable part of Munſter were under the power of parliament; and that in 1649, The Puritans and Preſbyterians profeſſed, that their regard to their covenant made them ſide with Charles II. againſt the Seſtarians headed by Cromwel †.” In the *Chriſtian loyalty of the Preſbyterians, particularly in Ulſter, ſince their Settlement there by K. James*,—the moſt of which is verified by original papers inſerted, we have the following and like hints,—“ The petition of *many thouſand* Proteſtant inhabitants of Ulſter preſented to the English Parliament 1640, avows their approbation of the

\* Teſtimony P. 46. Paton's Collection of Confeſſions P. 971

† Cox' Hiſtory Vol. II P. 177, 180, &c.

ch national covenant; and complain, that the Prelates had exclaimed against it, and concurred Lord lieutenant Strafford in imposing an oath, uncing it;—The Scots, who were generally dissenters, *i. e.* Presbyterians took arms against the Pop-massacrers, and were the first that appeared in Ul-against the common enemy, who were then ex-ing unheard of cruelty;—With the Scotch army x thousand, under General Alexander Lesly, h were sent to check the ravage of the murderous sts, ministers were sent to attend the several re-nts, who, associating themselves with some for-y in Ireland, formed themselves into a Presby- in which Lesly and several other officers of the r, sat as ruling elders.—They preached both mp and country.—At this time, those who had from Ireland, on account of the oath imposed ytrafford, before the massacre began, returned eat numbers, and joined with the Scotch army, Sir John Clotworthy, a zealous puritan; so that ith his party scoured the whole country of An- from massacring Papists.—When the established Episcopalian) clergy were generally destroyed ie massacre, or had fled, the work of the mini- was mostly in the hands of Presbyterians, who, indefatigable industry, attended both camp and try, not without comfortable success.—In i, the Irish Protestants petitioned the Scotch Gel Assembly, that some ministers of the gospel it be sent to comfort them in their great calamity, a, by the massacre, left as without shepherds; particularly that their own ministers, who had formerly banished by Abp. Laud's partizans, it be restored to them.—Six ministers were to concur with those of the Scotch army sent er by authority of king and Parliament; and as came very seasonably to encourage the army

and their friends, God mightily blessed their  
 yours with success \*." Upon a request of *ver*  
*numbers*, the Assembly 1643, sent them further  
 of ministers.—A petition of the distressed Ch  
 in the North of Ireland, subscribed by *ver*  
*hands* to the Assembly 1644, says,—“Your  
 is with your God, for your zeal and care t  
 your reformation spread, in sending hither th  
 sed League and Covenant, which we much  
 and longed for,—which hath had a wished a  
 cious success, by the blessing of God accomp  
 the pains of those, to whom the tendering of  
 intrusted by you.—When the said---cc  
 was presented to the regiments (of your ar  
 made bold to lay hold on the opportunity, an  
*fully* and *unanimously* joined ourselves theret  
 if we die (by the hand of the Popish murder  
 may die a covenanted people;” and they beg  
 of ministers for twenty-four desolate congrega  
 Much about the same time, “the English Parl  
 by an ordinance enjoined that covenant to b  
 in Ireland; and accordingly it was sworn by al  
 the Protestants in Ulster, who acknowledged  
 thority of the Parliament,—the greatest part  
 Protestants in Ireland all concurred in it,—ar  
 posterity enjoy large estates from that *Englisk*  
 ament which enjoined the taking of the cover  
 It is known, that the Irish army under the  
 Ards, were all Presbyterian covenanters.—M  
 the Irish Protestants renewed the Solemn  
 about 1649; and hence the Presbytery of  
 in their declaration that year affirm, “Th  
 and others had *renewed* their covenant,—and  
 that none, who had *renewed* covenant, shou

\* Christian Loyalty, &c. P. 137, 140, 175, 176, 87, 1

† Acts of Ass. p. 151, 190, 191. 214—217.

the army of Ards, who, after he and they had *late-ly renewed* the covenant, had turned over to assist the malignants; and foretel that the quarrel of the covenant should pursue them,—as it soon did, in their ruin and of Ormond's army which they assisted.—The Irish Presbyterians, in their representation against the procedure of the Sectarians with K. Charles I. publicly read in their several congregations, avow the Solemn League, as *their covenant*; and warn the well affected to that covenant, to avoid all compliance with the Sectaries \*. The Presbyterian ministers in their Narrative to government of their stedfast loyalty, and of their sufferings under Cromwel, say, "We could not own them, *i. e.* Cromwel and his *substitutes*, as lawful magistrates, and could not pray for their success, &c. considering the strong obligation of the oath of God, that lay still upon us, to maintain his Majesty's power and greatness according to our covenant †." Notwithstanding all the cruel banishment, imprisonment, &c. which they had suffered under Cromwel, for their attachment to K. Charles, there remained so many staunch covenanters in Ireland, that in one Synod of Bellimnoch, fifty-nine ministers, in 1662, refused to conform to Prelacy, which is more than were in some six Synods in Scotland. Nor, in any Synod here, except in that of Glasgow, which consists of above 130 ministers, and in which the Protestors chiefly resided, was that number of Non-conformists exceeded ‡. From these hints it appears, that the body of Protestants in Ireland took the Solemn League and Covenant; and that the number of Covenanters there, could not be

\* Christian Loyalty, P. 176, 177, 89, 143, 197--200, 203.

† Ibid. p. 214--217.

‡ Wodrow's History Vol. I. p. 155. Appendix, p. 78.

less than 50 or 60,000, if it was not double or triple that reckoning.

If then, Sir, the public engagements of representatives of Church and State can bind those represented by them and their posterity;—if the public engagements of parents can bind their descendants;—if the public engagements of the greater part of a society can bind the whole and their successors;—Our public covenants with God must bind the Protestants in Ireland, the whole nation of England, and in a peculiar manner the Scots, who are so manifestly affected by all the four sources of obligation, that no not our perjured Prelatists, for their own vindication, ever dared, that I know of, to contest it. And answerable to this source, these fourfold vows must fix upon us a kind of *fourfold solemn obligation to God*, frequently repeated, renewed, or confirmed: How fearful then must be our guilt, if we cast all the cords of God behind our back, in favour of gross heresy, blasphemy, idolatry, Popery!

4. Our ancestors did not covenant with God as mere individuals, but as a BODY. Covenanting at the same time with each other, they made a joint surrender of themselves to God. In their Bond of 1636, they call it a blessed and loyal *conjunction*. In their Reasons against giving it up, they call it a *Bond of union and conjunction*,—a *mutual union and conjunction* amongst themselves; and in reasons of protestation they call it a bond of *inviolable union* amongst themselves †. The Assembly August 6th, 1649, say,—“Our engagement therein is not *only national*, but *personal*.”—The subject bound by the covenant being thus, not merely particular persons, but a Church and nation, the obligation of it must be as permanent as the society bound by it.

5. Our ancestors did what they could to make their covenant as binding as possible. The express terms in which the different forms of it are conceived, manifest it a *promise*, an *oath*, a *vow*, a *covenant*. If then there be any *binding force* in a promise from the *truth of men* which is therein pledged; if there be any *religion* in an oath because of the *reverence* we owe to the sacred name of God interposed in it; if any *obligation* results from a *vow*, because of the *fealty* we thereby owe to God; if a man be *obliged* to keep his covenant from regard to *truth or justice* due to others, who are parties in it;---all these, transacted with the utmost solemnity, must concur in constituting the *binding force* of this *public engagement*.---Hence the commission 1651, in their Warning, say, "The *bonds and obligations* that lie upon us to this duty, by the law of God, the law of nature and the National Covenant and Solemn League, and the pains therein contained, whereunto we have devoted ourselves, if we shall desert or fail \*."

6. Our ancestors plainly intended, that their public covenants should bind all future generations. In 1638, they lamented their own sins as breaches of the covenant made or renewed in 1581, 1590, 1596 †. In their Reasons against giving up their sworn covenant, they affirm, "Our religious ancestors, by the like oath, have obliged us to the substance and tenor of this.---This our oath being a religious and perpetual obligation should stand in vigour, for the more firm establishment of religion in our own time, and in the *generations following*.---Although the innovations of religion were the occasion of the making of this covenant, yet our intention was against these

\* Stevenson, P. 10.

† Hist Mot. p 43. Short Relat. on 1638. Aff. Letter to Helvetians. Steven p 285. Bail. Let. p. 35. Apol. Relat. p. 47. Wilson's Defence, p. 237, 238, 242, &c.

and all other innovations and corruptions, to establish religion by an *everlasting covenant*, never to be forgotten\*." In their preamble to the covenant that year, they say, "Being convinced in our own minds, and professing with our mouths, that the *present and succeeding* generations are bound to keep the foresaid national oath and subscription (of 1581, 1590, 1596,) inviolable." In the Solemn League, they swear, "We shall endeavour that these kingdoms may remain conjoined in a firm peace and union to *all posterity*."

7. The ends of these covenants declared in their express words are *perpetual* till the end of time, *viz.* "To maintain the true worship of God, the majesty of our king, and the peace of the kingdom, for the common happiness of ourselves and *our posterity*,—that religion and righteousness may flourish in the land to the glory of God, &c.†." "To promote the glory of God, and the advancement of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ,—the honour and happiness of the King's Majesty, and his *posterity*, and the public liberty, safety, and peace of the kingdoms; that we and our posterity may, as brethren, live in faith and love, and the Lord delight to dwell in the midst of us;—that the Lord may be one and his name one in the three kingdoms,—may turn away his wrath, and establish these Churches and kingdoms in peace ‡." If then, the matter being moral duty, was proper for a covenant of perpetual obligation; if the covenanters had full power to bind the whole society and their posterity; if the subject upon which the obligation was laid be permanent; if the end of the covenanters and their covenant was to fix the obligation upon posterity, as well as upon the im-

\* Stevenson, p. 347, 348, 351.

† Covenant of 1638.

‡ Covenant of 1643.

mediate engagers; and if they did every thing in their power to render that obligation solemn and permanent, What further evidence of the perpetuity of that obligation can any man demand, who singly regards the honour of God, or the welfare of this Church and nation? May I therefore adopt the words of a truly great man, "It was the glory of Scotland, that we were solemnly in covenant with God,—wherein our forefathers, for themselves engaged and swore against *Popery*, *Prelacy*, superstition, and every thing contrary to the word of God;—and to the doctrine, worship, discipline and government of the reformed Church of Scotland, and that as we should answer to Jesus Christ at the great day, and under the pain of his everlasting wrath;—May not our hearts bleed to think on our defection from old covenanted principles, and our violation of our engagements, yea of the burning and burial of our covenants,—and the prevalence of *abjured Popery* in this land.—*Covenant obligation* to duty is what we still stand under,—though many be ashamed and refuse to own these obligations,—the glory of our land.—Let us go forward—lamenting our sinful defection from a covenanted reformation, and acknowledging our solemn *covenant-obligation*\*.—Never was a nation more solemnly bound to the Lord by national covenants. Religious covenants in scripture comprehend absent as well as present, and posterity to come as well as the covenanting forefathers, Deut. xxix. 14, 15, 22, 24, 25. Now, our solemn covenants, which our forefathers entered into, being nothing but a *superadded* and accumulative obligation, to what we were previously bound to by the word of God, they cannot but stand binding upon us their posterity †.—As Israel avouched the Lord to be

\* R. Erskine's Works fol. Vol. I. p. 62. † Ibid, p. 170, 106.



their God by solemn covenants, that were binding upon them and their posterity after them; so in this moral duty, We, in our forefathers, followed the example,—entering into a solemn covenant with him, which he many signal ways countenanced,—attended with internal displays of (his) power and glory. ———To disparage these covenants is to cast dung upon our glory. I think it worse than the breaking burning, and burying of them. To bespatter their reputation, and deny their obligation, is to render them odious to all generations\*. ———There is—a *superadded obligation* lying on us by our covenants of gratitude and duty, which, though it bind us to nothing, but what we were authoritatively bound to before, yet it strengthens the obligation †. ———When God hath manifested his covenant of grace to a people, receiving them to be his people, and they thereupon have entered into a covenant of duty with him, avouching him to be their God, and promising thro' grace, subjection to him, though it were four hundred, yea four thousand years, it stands; and they who succeed are bound by the covenant. ———A number of honest covenanters, when they avouched the Lord to be their God, and promised obedience to him, did it in the faith of his avouching them to be his people, and trusting to his covenant of grace and promise, and not to their covenant or engagement. We, in these lands, have devoted ourselves to the Lord, in which we were warranted by many scripture precedents. ———Never was an action done more sedately and advisedly.—The binding obligation of it upon us is plain. If we have the benefit of that religion to which our forefathers swore, we must be heirs of that oath they came under to the Most High (as Levi paid tithes in his father's loins &c

\* Ibid, p. 489.

† Ibid, Vol. II. p. 224.

we, in our forefathers, swore to this covenant.) We are obliged to stand to it, though it were ever for many years after.—Being partakers of the benefit, we are bound to do that which they promised to do for it. If a parent bind his children, are not their seed and heirs bound by his promise as well as they were? What continual changes and confusions would there be in the world, if persons themselves were only to be tied by their own personal bonds?—How much more impiety is it for men, to deny that *obligation by covenant* to God, made by their forefathers in their name.—Our solemn covenants, are one of the grounds of our claim to him,—and of his continuing his claim to us, who own these covenants.—How will God avenge the violation of a lawful oath made with himself in this land?—Unless these professed Presbyterians can now prove, that *Presbytery is sinful*, they must acknowledge that our national covenants are binding on us in this matter. If a covenant in things lawful be not binding, then no covenant ever was\*.

OBJECT. I. “Many things were wrong in the imposing and taking of these covenants; and their words are ill chosen, as to *extirpate Popery, Prelacy, i. e. to kill Papists and Prelatists.*”

ANSW. 1. Let us allow no malignant enemy or perjured violator of these covenants to be held a sufficient witness against them. Nor let us have the long ago refuted calumnies of such men revived upon their mere authority.

2. Though the covenant had had infirmities,

\* R. Erskine's Works, Vol. II. p. 142, 224, 204. Comp. Hind let loose, p. 514—521. Apol. Relat. p. 327—416. Discourse at the renewing of the covenants, 1688. M'Ward's earnest contentings, p. 229—230, 266. Examinat. of 13. Bp. Leighton's Accommodation; English Ministers' Testimonies to Solemn League, Covenanters' Plea, Crofton's tracts on covenant, &c. &c.

even infirmities sufficient to have hindered the swearing of it, as the Doctors of Aberdeen and Oxford pretended, was the case,—it may nevertheless bind when once it is sworn. Though its matter had been in part sinful and self-contradictory, it would bind to the part which was lawful.—Though the authority which imposed it, had been insufficient, and the manner of imposing it improper, it would bind when once sworn. Zedekiah was in some respect compelled to swear allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar, whose sovereignty over Judah was very disputable, yet his oath bound him, Ezek. xvii. 12—19. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 13.—Though our covenanters' ends had been carnal, or even sinful, the oath, as far as lawful in its matter, is binding, when once it is sworn.—Without allowing these things as *fixed principles*, no oaths or covenants could be any securities among mankind.

3. If Popery and Prelacy be plants which God hath not planted, why may we not, as lawfully, in our stations, endeavour to *extirpate* or *root* them out, as we may mortify the deeds of our body, that we may live? The one includes no more violence against men's persons than the other, Rom. viii. 13. Do you imagine, that the covenanters swore to cut their own throats, or tear out their own hearts, when they engaged to endeavour, in their station, to *extirpate every thing contrary to the power of godliness*, as indwelling sin, vain thoughts, &c. which adhere to believers in this life, certainly are.

OBJECT. II. "Many in England and Ireland never took the Solemn League, or took it in a sense consistent with Prelacy or Independency."

ANSW. 1. I do not expect that any hater of that covenant will ever be able to invalidate the proof which hath been given of the number of the covenanters in both these kingdoms.

2. The covenanters declared "that an oath is to be taken in the plain sense of the words, without equivocation or mental reservation.—It cannot bind to sin; but in any thing not sinful, being taken, it binds to performance, although to a man's own hurt \*." All but Jesuits profess the same principle. And indeed if oaths, vows, or covenants bind not men, according to the plain meaning of their words, they become quite useless. Men's prevarication therefore, in favours of Prelacy or Independency, cannot free them from the obligation of an oath, which strikes against both.

3. As the Scots stood bound by their National Covenant to every duty contained in the Solemn League, long before the English had a thought of covenanting along with them, and did also swear the Solemn League, no neglect or prevarication of either English or Irish can free us from our obligation. It was neither to the English nor to the Irish, but chiefly to the faithful and unchangeable God of all grace, that our fathers bound themselves and their seed. The Assembly in their *Letter to the council of London* justly observe, "It is not in the power of any human authority to absolve you from adhering to this so solemnly sworn League and Covenant." And in another letter, "The covenant hath been broken by many in both kingdoms.—We do not doubt, but there are *many seven thousands* in England, who have retained their integrity in that business." And in their *Warning 1648*, "The violation of the covenant by some in England doth not set us free from the obligation of it. No laws, nor authority on earth can absolve us from so solemn an obligation to the Most High.—We are not acquitted from the obligation of our solemn covenants because of the

\* Confession of Faith, Chap. xxii. 4.

troubles.—In the worst of times, all those duties whereunto, by covenant, we oblige ourselves, do still lie upon us.—We have sworn, and we must perform it.” And in their *Warning* 1649, “Albeit the League and Covenant be despised by that prevailing party in England, yet the obligation of that covenant is *perpetual*; and all the duties contained therein are constantly to be minded and profecuted, by every one of us and our *posterity*, according to their place and station.” And in their *Letter to brethren in England*, “Although there were none in the one kingdom, who did adhere to the covenant, yet were not the other kingdom, nor any person in either of them, absolved from the bond thereof; since in it, we have not only sworn by the Lord, but also covenanted with him. It is not the failing of one or more that can absolve others from their duty or *TIE* to him. Besides, the duties therein contained being in themselves lawful, and the grounds of our *TIE* thereto moral, though others forget their duty, yet doth not their defection free us from that obligation which lies upon us by the covenants, in our places and stations. The covenant being intended as one of the best means of steadfastness, it were strange to say, that the backslidings of any should absolve others from the *TIE* thereof, especially seeing our engagement therein is *not only national*, but personal.—All these kingdoms joining together to abolish that oath by law, could not dispense therewith, much less can any one of them, or any party in either do the same.—(They are) testimonies which the Lord Christ hath entered as protestations, to preserve his right in these ends of the earth, long ago given unto him for his possession, and of late confirmed by solemn covenant.”

OBJECT. III. “The influence of the Highland chiefs, and the gross ignorance of the Scotch islands,

together with the general dislike of the covenant at the Restoration and Revolution, are *internal evidences*, that but a part, perhaps a small part, of the Scots took the covenant."

ANSW. 1. I boldly defy you to invalidate the proofs I have brought to the contrary. Nay, for ought I know, you cannot produce one of these perjured Prelatists, that pretended that only the smaller part of the Scotch nation took the covenant, especially in 1590, 1638, & 1643.

2. Were the Highland chiefs, and the gross ignorance of the islanders, occasioned by the negligence of the curates, a whit more able to withstand the enlightening and heart-bowing power of God, so remarkably manifested on these occasions, than K. Charles and many others on the continent? Have we not produced evidence that multitudes of the Highlanders entered into the reformers' covenant, 1638, and were not Argyle, Mar, and many other Highland chiefs zealous covenanters? Did not such as were otherwise minded take the covenant of 1581, as imposed by the Privy Council according to its original meaning? Did not even the Doctors and Prelatic inhabitants of Aberdeen take that bond, without approving the Council's limitation of it to its original meaning?

3. You can produce no evidence that the covenanting work was not carried on in the Scotch islands, but such as we have, that never a Hebrew child was circumcised on the 8th day, from Isaac to John Baptist;—or that never a weekly Sabbath was observed from the creation till the manna fell around the Hebrew camp, *i. e.* want of positive evidence to the contrary,—and that too in places, of which, to this moment, we have little account, except what relates to their situation, soil, product, or the like.

4. It is highly absurd to pretend, that the so gea

neral disregard of the covenants, twelve or forty years after the last taking of them, is *internal evidence* that few had taken them. Will it irrefragably prove, that Adam was never made after the image of God, or taken into covenant with him, because within a few days or hours he had become a sinner, hating both God and his covenant---or that devils were never created holy and happy, because within a few days they had left their first estate? Will the general concurrence of the Hebrews in worshipping the golden calf, prove that they had not entered into solemn covenant with God, about forty days before? Will their subsequent apostasies, prove that but few of them had covenanted with God, under Joshua, Aza, Joash, Hezekiah, Josiah, Ezra, and Nehemiah? Will Peter's fearfully heinous and repeated denial of Christ, prove that he had not, a few hours before, solemnly engaged against it?

OBJECT. IV. "Force or fear caused many to covenant."

ANSW. 1. Though force or fear should have rendered the manner of covenanting unacceptable to God, they cannot render void an oath which is sworn.

2. I Will never contend, that the penalty annexed by law to the refusal of the covenant in 1643, or even on some other occasions, was proper. But, after a laborious search, I find no proper evidence, that any force was ever used in Scotland to make any take the covenant, except in 1639, by Montrose and Munro, two military men, without any warrant from either Church or State,—the former, if not both of whom afterward turned out a malignant murderer of his covenanting brethren. Never, Sir, pick up or retail the mere inventions of perjured violaters of these covenants, who were glad to say *any thing* to copeat or excuse their own wickedness.

3. In 1638, when the covenanting was most universal, the bishops and some other anti-covenanters, afraid of prosecution for their enormous debts, or for their oppressive and other wicked deeds,—and perhaps chiefly to calumniate the covenanters at court, did flee their country. But none were obliged to do so for refusing the covenant. Fear of danger probably restrained some from reviling a Bond which the nation so highly esteemed. But none, that I know of, were thereby constrained to swear it. Some mobs happened, occasioned by the king's suspension of the common exercise of the civil law, and the sitting of its courts. But these were detested by the zealous covenanters, and not one of them appears either to have been intended, or to have issued in favour of the covenant. If the influences of God's Spirit, and the affecting appearances of his Providence—as at Sinai or in the apostolic age, awed or allured numbers to take the covenant whose hearts were not sincere before him,—should we quarrel with the Almighty on that account?——But, Sir, Henderson, Dickson, and Cant, who being the principal leaders of the covenanting work that year, affirm to the doctors of Aberdeen, who were eager to have detected them of falsehood, if it had been possible, “ No pastors in our knowledge have been either forced to flee or have been threatened with the want of their stipends for refusing their subscription; but some have of their own accord, gone to court for procuring protection against their creditors,—and have made lies between the king and his people. Others have wilfully refused to abide with their flocks for no reason, but because the people have subscribed.—Arguments have been taken from (promised) augmentation of stipends to hinder subscription. Fear of worldly loss rather hinders men to subscribe, than scruples of conscience.—The relates'



and *not from the fear of man*. No threatenings been used, except of the deserved judgment of God, nor force, except the force of reason, the high respects which we owe to religion, to king, to our native country, to ourselves, and to posterity \*."

4. Since the covenanting work was so remarkably countenanced by the Holy Ghost,—attended perhaps more sincere mourning for sin,—more serious repentance and solid conversion to God, hath within an equal space of time and place, opened any where in the world, since the apostolic age,—and since the covenanters in their vow declared, that they covenanted *without any worldly reward or inducement*, as far as human infirmity would allow,—Take heed, Sir, lest after your objection manifested the carnality, selfishness, and dissimulation of your own religious appearances.——— at last, should publicly expose you as a blasphemer of his great work, and a malicious slanderer of the people, as *wilfully perjured*.

OBJECT. V. "It is impossible our covenanters could understand their bonds, particularly in

which relates to Popery in the *national covenant*, or to prelacy in the *Solemn League*."

ANSW. 1. Ignorance indeed hinders a right and acceptable swearing of oaths or covenants, but cannot invalidate their binding force if once they be sworn; otherwise millions in Britain would through ignorance, be freed from all their solemn engagements in Baptism and the Lord's Supper; and thousands freed from all obligation of their oaths of allegiance or fidelity to magistrates; or even their oaths to declare the truth and nothing else, in witness bearing. Candidates for the ministry needed but keep themselves in a great measure ignorant of the doctrines of the Confession of Faith and duties of the ministerial office, in order to render their ordination-vows or subscriptions *altogether unobligatory*.

2. Being trained up in the abominations of Popery or prelacy, or having frequent access to witness them, our covenanting ancestors, who had common sense, might have more knowledge of them, than most clergymen in Scotland now have; even as a common sailor, who hath served 20 years in a man of war, may have more knowledge of her tackling and other pertinents, than all the learned doctors of six British universities.

OBJECT. VI. "If nothing be engaged to in these covenants, but what God hath declared or required in his word, they *never could lay any obligation* upon the covenanters, much less a perpetual obligation upon their posterity: It is absolutely inconsistent with sound philosophy, Christianity or common sense to imagine that any human deed can bind to any thing declared in the word, or required by the law of God."

ANSW. 1. Then it seems the common Protestant doctrine of our Confession of Faith, which in your ordination vows you solemnly declared to be *founded*

on the word of God, viz. That a man BINDS HIMSELF by oath to what is GOOD and JUST, that in ANY THING not sinful, it BINDS to performance; That by a vow we more strictly BIND OURSELVES TO NECESSARY DUTIES. &c. must be grossly erroneous.

2. Instructed by some Papist or some ring-leader in the perjurious violation of these covenants in the last century, you have indeed now hit upon a sentiment, which if proven, would effectually undermine the obligation of our covenants, and for ought I know, all religion,—all morality,—all mutual trust and order among mankind along with it. If our promises, oaths, vows or covenants can have no binding force except in things to which the revelation and law of God cannot reach; neither Adam, nor Christ as Mediator, could bind themselves to fulfil God's law; and so there must be no proper, no real covenant of works or of grace; and so no religion among mankind. And, for the same reason, the promises of God, in so far as their matter corresponds to his natural excellencies can have no binding force; and thus the foundation of our faith and hope is quite overturned. All engagements in Baptism or the Lord's Supper to believe what God reveals, receive what he offers, and do what he commands, must be absolutely *null and void*, destitute of all *binding force*.—Jesuitical equivocation and mental reservation are no more necessary in the making of promises, covenants or vows, or in swearing promissory oaths of allegiance, fidelity or witness bearing; or in subscribing Articles, Creeds or Confessions of Faith, Calls to ministers, Bonds or Bills of service or debt. —If the law of God, which is exceeding broad can but reach to the matter of them, and require the believing, maintaining or practising of what is therein engaged, that alone renders them *null and void*, and not binding to all intents and purposes. And so

there can be no such a thing as *perjury, perfidy, or breach of promise*, except it be with respect to such things as the law of God could not directly or indirectly reach,—which if it be as perfect and exceeding broad as the Bible affirms, must certainly be very few and very trifling;—for *where there is no law,—no binding of a law, there can be no transgression.*—Mens' promises, covenants, oaths and vows, in word or writ, in so far as they respect things to which the law of God can reach, must be mere *villainous impositions*, seeming to bind, while they do not, in the smallest degree; and therefore ought to be detested, instead of being required, made or trusted.—For the same reason, no commands of parents, masters, magistrates, or any other superiors being *human deeds*, can have any *binding force* in any thing relative to religion, equity, kindness, &c. to which the law of God can reach its requirements, and hence cannot be *lawfully OBEYED*, or their authority regarded, except when they commend what is *absolutely indifferent and trifling*.—If human engagements and commands can only bind men to that which is *absolutely indifferent*, it is plain, that we can only be answerable to men for such parts of our conduct as the law of God did not reach;—but, let men once firmly believe, that their promises, covenants, oaths or vows, and the commands of superiors, have *no binding force*, but in that which is left absolutely indifferent by the law of God; and that they are answerable to men only for such parts of their conduct as the law of God could not reach,——how naturally they will rush headlong into all manner of profligacy, every man doing that which is right in his own eyes, in every thing important.

3. How absurd to pretend honouring of religion, or of the law of God by making it the murderer of that *deputed authority* which God hath, by it, grant-

ed to men; or of these covenants, oaths or vows, which He hath therein appointed as means of his worship.—Not only scripture, but even common sense dictates, that the authority of God in his law cannot be rightly regarded, unless in a way of also regarding that authority which he hath deputed to men, and all the commands or self engagements which proceed from it, in due subordination to it. If I read my Bible daily, in obedience to the command of God as my God in Christ,—in obedience to Christ as appointed by God to be my mediatorial prophet and king,—and at the same time in due subordination hereto,—in obedience to my civil ruler, as the minister of God for good to men,—in obedience to my pastor or Church judicature as the messenger of Christ to me,—in obedience to my parents or masters as God's deputy-governors over me, —and in fulfilment of the vow, which I as God's deputy governor over myself, have laid myself under, according to his appointment, where is the inconsistency? Must I wickedly put asunder the *immediate* and *deputed* authority of God, which he hath so closely and delightfully joined together? God forbid.

OBJECT. VII. "What have we to do with our fathers' engagements in religion, to which we never gave any personal consent, especially after we have become capable to judge and choose for ourselves,—nay to do with engagements, which I cannot prove my ancestors ever took."

ANSW. 1. To rest obligation to pay debt or perform duty on the *debtor's* proving the contraction of it, or engagement to it, is highly absurd in itself, and opens a wide door for breaking through almost every engagement. According to this scheme you may hold your ancestors, who lived 130 years ago unbaptized Heathens, and perhaps yourself too, and so renounce your baptism, because you cannot prove

that ever you received it. If God, who is our creditor in these covenants, can prove our ancestors' taking of them, he will hold us bound by their deed; and even though they did not take them, he will hold us bound by the deed of the society and its representatives.

2. You know, that Lord ——, about four hundred years ago, granted your ancestor, the valuable estate of ——, to be held under him and his heirs, for a very small honorary service, as an acknowledgment of vassalage; and that the celebrated farmer *A. B.* about six years ago took a ninety-nine years lease of one of your farms at a very high rent. Have you certified the present heirs of that Lord and Farmer, That they are no-wise bound by their progenitors' deeds, unless they have given their own personal consent, —— and that the one may recal your estate, and the other may keep your farm, and refuse to pay you any rent? —— You have not, nor ever will. You allow such freedoms only to be used with God, —— not with yourself; —— too strong a presumption, That you more value your estate and rent, than all that you hold of God in religion, and all the honour you owe to him.

3. If our fathers bound us to any thing in religion which is not warranted by the word of God, we have nothing to do with it, but to bewail their sin in such engagement. But, if they bound us to what is commanded by the law of God, we must stand bound, —— till we prove from scripture, that vows binding to duty are not lawful; or that fathers have no right to devote their children to God's service. No slothful or wilful ignorance or withholding of personal consent, can so much as excuse the non-performance of such engagements. Nothing can free from their *binding force*, which would not annul our *baptismal vows*.

4. Once more, Sir, be pleased to review these public covenants of our fathers, in their principal contents and meaning. They were a *solemn acquiescence* in and *confirmation* of God's grant of the utmost ends of the earth to his Son Jesus Christ for his possession. They implied a *solemn acceptance* of God himself in Christ as the God, Saviour and portion of the covenanters and their posterity freely granted to them in the gospel,—and of his oracles and ordinances as the means of familiar fellowship with Him,—a *resolution* through his grace to retain him and them, as their inestimable privileges,—and a *solemn engagement*, thankfully to improve these privileges in an holy obedience to all his commandments, to promote his glory, and the temporal, spiritual and eternal advantage of these covenanters and their seed. Now, Sir, do you so heartily envy our Redeemer his Father's grant of the ends of the earth for his possession, Psal. ii. 8. that you would gladly renounce our ancestors' solemn acquiescence in it? Do you so heartily dislike the having of a reconciled God in Christ for your and your posterity's God, Saviour and portion, and his pure oracles and ordinances for your privileges, that you would fondly renounce a solemn acceptance of God's gracious grant of them sealed and confirmed by the remarkable influences of his Spirit? Do you so undervalue these enjoyments, and hate a grateful and self-profitting obedience to all the commandments of God, that you would gladly renounce a solemn obligation to it? Or, are you offended with the declared ends of these covenants, *viz.* the glorifying of God, the preservation and reformation of religion and promoting the welfare of the nation,—and that God may delight to dwell among us to the latest posterity?—You will perhaps pretend, that you love our reformed doctrine, worship, Presbyterian government and

discipline; but hate to be bound to them, especially by others than yourself. But, Sir, for the same reason you must renounce your baptismal engagements, and state your quarrel with God himself, who hath appointed vows, as his ordinances for hedging up men to their duty, and who hath entered into covenants with parents for their posterity as well as for themselves. Moreover, it is scarce credible, that you can love every thing engaged to in a vow, and yet hate to be bound by it, after God hath signally countenanced it. It is scarce possible, that my wife can dearly love her husband, and the order and enjoyments of my family, if she hate and wish to renounce her marriage Vow.

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THE Substance of the following Sermon was preached on a day of Solemn fasting, appointed by the *Associate Presbytery*, to be observed within the Parish of *Finwick*, *March 23, 1738*. Having formerly undergone several impressions, it is again reprinted, at the request of the Friends of that *Cause*, in the propagation of which it was delivered by the Author.

GLASGOW, AUG. 25, 1803.

## TO THE READER.

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I Know that the Conduct of the *Associate Presbytery*, in complying with the Desires of the Lord's Remnant through the land, to observe Days of Fasting among them, is generally condemned by these who want to live at Ease in our Zion: But whoever takes a View of the deplorable Circumstances of many Corners of the Land, who are starving for lack of the Knowledge of the Gospel, occasioned by imposing upon them Men, who by their Doctrine and Practice make it evident that they want the Scripture-qualifications of the Gospel-ministry; Whoever, again, considers that many of the People are driven from their Pastures by reason of their public Appearances both in Pulpit and Judicatories against the known Principles of this Church; And whoever will reflect upon the indispensable Duty of all Ranks to humble themselves before the Lord, when he is calling so loud both by his Word and Providences to Weeping and Mourning; and yet considers that they cannot have an Opportunity of sanctifying a Fast, in regard the present Judicatories refuse to call a *solemn Assembly* for that Purpose, or to make an ingenuous Acknowledgement and Confession of former and present Sins: I say, Whoever will seriously reflect upon these Things, will easily own, that it is both for the Interest of Religion in general, and the Benefit of the Church of *Scotland* in particular, to join with the Lord's People in mourning over former and present Defections before the Lord, as the best Mean to avert his righteous Anger and displeasure, and to prevent Multitudes from being led *aside by the cunning Craftiness of them that lie in wait to deceive*. What is it that makes People such an easy

Prey to every Wind of Doctrine, but the Silence of Ministers, and their endeavouring to keep their Hearers in Ignorance ament the Sins and Duties of the Times, and their employing the whole Stock of their Talents in vindicating their own Conduct, though it should be at the Expence of their professed Principles? Now, what Harm is there in endeavouring to persuade People to *hold fast the Profession of their Faith without wavering*, in a Day like this, when the Truth both of the Doctrine and Government of the House of Christ is *sold at a very cheap Rate*? And if, in so doing, the *dumb and sleeping Watchmen* through the Land be touched at the *Quick*, there is less Hazard, if the Inhabitants of the City of God get timeous Warning of approaching Danger.

I am apt to think, that, among all the Evils complained of at this Day, there is not a greater Grievance with many, than that there should be a standing *Testimony* for the Reformation-Principles of this Church, and against the Steps of Deviation from them in the Hands of the *Associate Presbytery*: And therefore all Means have been used to suppress the same; particularly, in order to raise Prejudices in the Minds of poor People, *Lies* and *Calumnies* are industriously spread. Suppose a Thing where ever so ridiculous, and out of the Way, yet, if it is but said of any of the Brethren of the *Associate Presbytery*, it is immediately received, and handed about without asking Questions. But, says our Lord, Mat. v. 11, 12. *Blessed are ye when Men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of Evil against you falsely for my sake.—For so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you; particularly Jeremiab, Chap. xx. 10. I have heard the Defaming of many: Report, say they, and we will report it.* Besides, it is well known, that in order to reach a Thrust at the *Brethren*, and to vindicate the Conduct of the present

Judicatories, the *Reforming Assemblies* of this Church are now exposed to the utmost Contempt and Ridicule, particularly by the Reverend Mr. Currie in his *Essay on Separation*: Which Performance, besides the many unfair Quotations, and Misrepresentations of Facts that are in it, has an evident Tendency to smother the many Dishonours that are done to the Lord at this Day, by magnifying some things in the present Judicatories that have the Appearance of Good, and vindicating others by alledging the Authority of great and Good Men, quite contrary to their stated Principles discovered in most of their Writings which he quotes. Thus *Absalom*, by his specious Pretences stole away the Hearts of the Men of Israel while, in the mean Time, he aimed at nothing less than the Overthrow of the Kingdom, 2 Sam. chap. xv. I shall say nothing of *Mr. Williamson's Seasonable Testimony*; the queries which he puts to the Brethren, discover such an inebriated and rankled Spirit, as cannot but beget Contempt of the Author, in every sober thinking man.

But whatever Devices are used for suppressing the Covenanted Principles of this Church, and whatever shall become of these who are at present essaying to support them; I am persuaded, that if ever the Lord return to this Mount Zion, wherein he has formerly dwelt, these Principles, which are now *borne down*, will be more universally *adopted*: And if what is said in the following Sermon, be of any Use for confirming any in the *Truth as it is in Jesus*, he has obtained his Design, in allowing it to be published.

*Who desires to favour the Dust of our Zion.* .

JAMES FISHER.



# S E R M O N.

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PROVERBS xxiii. 23.

*Buy the Truth, and sell it not.*

**T**HIS Book of *Proverbs* contains a vast Variety of short and comprehensive precepts, of which this in our Text is one, *Buy the Truth, and sell it not.*

In which Words you have, (1.) A notable Bargain, and that is *Truth*. (2.) The purchase of this Bargain enjoined, *Buy the Truth*. (3.) The Persons who are called to make this Purchase, implied; and they are certainly all these who are privileged with a Revelation of God's Mind and Will in this everlasting Gospel. (4.) The high Value we are to put upon the Bargain when bought, in these Words, *sell it not*; by no Means quit with it again. As Truth can never be bought at too dear a Rate, so it can never be sold at the true Value. God himself is the great and sole Proprietor of this rich Treasure; it is of him we are commanded to buy it, and to put such an high Value upon the Purchase, as to refuse the greatest Price that can be offered for the Disposal of it. According to this View of the Words, I observe from them the following

DOCTRINE, "That it is the Duty of all the Hearers of this Gospel to purchase the Truth at any Rate, and by no means, or for no Price whatsoever, to part with it." Prov. viii. 11. *Wisdom is better than Rubies; and all the Things that may be desired, are not to be compared to it.* Chap. iv. 7 *Wisdom is the principal Thing, therefore get Wisdom: and with all thy getting get Understanding.*

In speaking upon this Subject, I shall essay (as the

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Lord shall give Countenance) to observe the following Order. 1. Enquire what we are to understand by *the Truth*. 2. What it is to *buy* the Truth. 3. Who they are that *sell* the Truth. 4. Deduce some Inferences for *Application* of the Doctrine.

I. I am to enquire what we are to understand by the *Truth*. TRUTH is sometimes in Scripture put for Christ himself; and sometimes for the whole Revelation of his Will, whether with respect to the Doctrine, Worship, Discipline or Government of his House: In both which Respects, we are to buy the Truth, and not to sell it.

1<sup>st</sup>, I say, Truth is put for the Lord Christ himself, John xiv. 6. *I am the Truth*. Here it may be enquired, In what respect Christ is called the Truth? I answer, He is the Truth of all the *Types* and *Shadows* under the Old Testament, John i. 17. *The Law was given by Moses, but Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ*. They all pointed at him, and received their full Accomplishment in him, who is the End of the Law for Righteousness. He is the Truth of all the Scripture-*prophecies* concerning the Messiah; for they were all literally fulfilled in him, Acts x. 43. *To him gave all the Prophets Witness*. He is the Truth of all the *Promises*; for he is the Sum and Substance of them, and they are all in him *Yea and Amen*. He is the Truth of all the *Names* that are given him in Scripture. He is called JESUS, and accordingly has saved an innumerable Company from their Sins, Rev. vii. 9. He is called CHRIST, the Messiah, or the Anointed; for *the Spirit is not given by Measure unto him*, John iii. 34. He is called IMMANUEL, *God with us*, Mat i. 23. For he is not only God on our Side, Psal. xlv. 7. but also, as the Foundation thereof, he is God in our Nature, John i. 14. *The Word was made Flesh*. He is called the WONDERFUL, Isa. ix. 6. for he is the Wonder

of Angels and Men. He is called the COUNSELLOR, and accordingly there are *hid in him all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge*. He is called the MIGHTY GOD, and accordingly many are the mighty Works that he has done: He has *travelled in the Greatness of his Strength, mighty to save*. The Legions of the Prince of Darknes have been vanquished by his victorious Arm; the Unbelief, Enmity, and other spiritual Wickednesses that are in the Heart, have been made to give way, upon his Entrance into the Soul in the Day of his Power: He has ransomed from the Power of the Grave, and has made Death a plain passage for the Redeemed from among Men to go up to Zion, *with Songs of everlasting Joy upon their Heads*. Again, he is called the EVERLASTING FATHER; for many Children has he begotten, nourished up, and brought into Glory, Heb. ii. 13. *Behold, I, and the Children which God hath given me*. He is called the PRINCE OF PEACE; and accordingly he has *made Peace by the Blood of his Cross*, Col. i. 20. And, to add no more upon this Head, he is called THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, Jer. xxiii. 6. and accordingly he has *brought in an everlasting Righteousness*, in virtue whereof we are *made the Righteousness of God in him*. So that Christ is the Truth of all the Names that are given him in Scripture. But, moreover, he is the great Recipient of all Divine Truth, as Mediator, in order to his being the great Means of conveying of it to the Children of Men, John i. 18. *No Man hath seen God at any Time; the only begotten Son, which is in the Bosom of the Father, he hath declared him*. The Words of Mercy and Salvation had never founded in the Ears of lost Sinners, had not God spoken them to us through the Chaniel of the Blood of Immanuel; for it is in this Way that *God hath spoken to us by his Son*, Heb. i. 2. Finally, Christ is the Truth, in regard

he bears *Witness to the Truth*, John xviii. 37. *To this end was I born, and for this Cause came I into the World, that I should bear Witness unto the Truth.* And there are these three great Truths, among others, that he bears Witness unto: (1.) That all Mankind have sinned and come short of the Glory of God; and that they were utterly incapable to help and relieve themselves. This he has witnessed, by coming in our Nature, *to seek and to save that which was lost.* (2.) That the Justice of God is satisfied, and an honourable Passage for Mercy unto Sinners opened in the Chanel of his Blood. To this he has witnessed, by his Resurrection from the Dead, and sitting down at the right Hand of the Majesty on High. (3.) That as he is the Gift of God to Sinners of all Sorts, *so him that cometh unto him, he will in nowise cast out.* This he witnesseth daily in the Dispensation of the Gospel. These are a few Reasons why Christ is called **THE TRUTH**; and indeed he is the great Truth, which we are called to *buy*, as we shall afterwards essay to make appear.

2dly, By the *Truth*, we are to understand the whole of the Revelation of God's Mind and Will, contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament; so the Word *Truth* is frequently taken, 2 Cor. xiii. 8. *We can do nothing against the Truth, but for the Truth.* Gal. v. 7. *Who did hinder you, that you should not obey the Truth?* Titus i. 1. *And the acknowledging of the Truth, which is after Godliness.* And we find the Scriptures frequently called the *Word of Truth*, 2 Tim. ii. 15. *Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a Workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.* James i. 18. *Of his own Will begat he us, with the Word of Truth.* So that the *Truth*, which we are to *buy*, and not to *sell*, is the whole of that Truth revealed in the holy Scriptures, which we are to believe con-



cerning God, and which relates to the Duties that God requires of Man; which may be comprised under the four general Heads following.

1<sup>st</sup>. The Truth concerning *Doctrine*: Or, all these Truths relating to the Nature, Perfections and Works of God; the Creation of Man in a State of Innocency; his Fall into a State of Sin and Misery; the Way and Manner of his Recovery and Redemption through Jesus Christ, Immanuel, God with us; and his endless Happiness or Misery in the Life to come: Or all these Truths concerning the Breach of the Covenant of Works by the first *Adam*, as a federal Head; the Fulfilment of it by Christ the second *Adam*, as the Representative of his Elect Seed, both as to the Precept and penalty of it: In consequence whereof, Grace and Glory, and every good Thing, is offered to Mankind lost, in the Way of a Covenant of Grace; which Covenant is full, well-ordered in all Things and sure, and, with respect unto us, absolutely free. In a Word, all these Truths concerning the Contrivance, Purchase, Application and Consummation of the Work of Redemption, to the Glory of God, and the Salvation of the Sinner; a summary Account of which Truths, agreeable to the holy Scriptures, you have in our excellent *Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms* larger and shorter, which we earnestly recommend unto your serious and deliberate Perusal, that so you may be *perfectly joined together in the same Mind, and in the same Judgment*, 1 Cor. i. 10.

Now, since I have mentioned our *Confession of Faith*, I cannot but take this Opportunity, of warning you against these who set themselves in Opposition to all *Confessions*, whether more openly or more slyly. Some, out of a pretended Regard to the holy Scriptures, reject all public Standards, as if they were exalted to equal Authority with the Scriptures

themselves; others pour Contempt upon them, because they are designed to support supernatural Truth, in Opposition to the various Shapes in which Error and Heresy has appeared in the World. But the plain Reason of all this Outcry against Confessions is just this, that *Free-thinkers* of all Sorts cannot endure to have their wild and extravagant Notions circumscribed, and hemmed in, by the pure Doctrines of the Word, brought together and compared in a *methodical Chain* of Divine Truth, which is the very Nature and Design of Confessions. The Scriptures are unquestionably the only perfect Rule of Faith and Manners, containing not only a plain Revelation of all these Truths necessary to be believed and practised in order to Salvation, but also a clear Refutation of all the Errors that ever have been, or shall be broached in the World; but then these are so scattered through the Volume of this *holy Book*, that the collecting and digesting of them, under proper Heads, is necessary for the edifying of the Church of Christ, and convincing Gainsayers: And therefore *Confessions*, which are nothing else but a Collection of Divine Truths, by comparing of one Scripture with another, cannot but be the Eye-sore of Men of corrupt Minds, who *cannot endure* to come to the *Light* of God's Word, *lest their Deeds* and Principles should be made manifest.

2dly, There is the Truth concerning the *Worship* of God; that a God in Christ is the only Object of a Sinner's Worship, Mat. iv. 10. *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.* That he is to be worshipped, in the Use of these Ordinances which he has prescribed in his Word, as the only *Means* of Worship; such as prayer, Phil. iv. 6. Reading and searching the Scriptures, John v. 39. Preaching and hearing of the Word, Rom. x. 14, 15, 17. Singing of Psalms, Eph. v. 18, 19. Ad-

ministring and receiving the Sacraments, Mat. xxviii. 19. 1 Cor. xi. 23,—27. Fasting, Luke v. 35. Spiritual Conference and Discourse, Mal. iii. 16. Meditation, Pfal. lxxvii. 12. Vowing and paying to the Lord, Pfal. lxxxvi. 11. *Lastly*, That the true Worship of God, under the Gospel, doth not consist in outward Rites and Ceremonies, but is spiritual, not only as to the Matter, but also as to the Manner of it, flowing from Grace in the Heart, or an inward reverential Esteem of, and Trust in, that God whom we worship, John iv. 23, 24. and consequently that the bringing in of the Inventions of Men into the Worship of God, will be accounted by him Will-worship and Superstition, Mat. xv. 9. *In vain they do worship me, teaching the Commandments of Men* 3dly, There is the Truth concerning the Government and Discipline of the House of Christ, a short Account whereof, from the holy Scriptures; we shall lay before you; it having been that Branch of Truth which the Church of *Scotland*, ever since her Reformation from Popery, has mostly suffered for.

I do not pretend to advance any Thing *new* upon this subject, but only, in this reeling and shaking Time, to endeavour the Confirmation of your faith in these Scripture-truths concerning the Government and Discipline of the House of Christ, which have been largely handled by others before me; and thus I shall essay in the following Chain of Propositions without enlarging much upon them.

(1.) The Lord Jesus Christ, as Mediator, has all Authority and Power in Heaven and in Earth, for the Government of his Church, committed unto him from God the Father. Pfal. ii. 6. says Jehovah, *I have set my King upon my holy Hill of Zion.* John iii. 35. *The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his Hand. He hath put all things under his Feet, and gave him to be Head over all things to the*

Church, Eph. i. 22. And, in Consequence of this eternal Grant and Donation of the Mediatory Kingdom from the Father, Christ the faithful Witness testifies of himself, Mat. xxviii. 18.—*All Power in Heaven and in Earth is given unto me.* So that the Lord Christ, as Mediator, is the only *first Receptacle* of all power from the Father, John v. 22. *The Father*—*hath committed all Judgment unto the Son;* and consequently, he is the sole *Root* and *fountain* of all Ecclesiastical Power and Authority to his Church, John xx. 21, 23.—*As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.*—*Whose soever Sins ye remit, they are remitted; and whose soever Sins ye retain, they are retained.*

(2.) The Lord Jesus Christ, in virtue of the supreme Power with which he is invested as the alone Head of the Church, has committed the Government of his Church unto Church-officers of his own institution, as the *immediate Receptacle* of that Ministerial Power and Authority by which he would have his Church governed in this World. This Proposition contains in it the following particular Truths.

That the Lord Christ has institute and appointed Officers in his Church, for the Edification of his spiritual Kingdom, 1 Cor. xii. 28. compared with Eph. iv. 11.

These Officers were either *extraordinary*, whose Office was to cease with themselves; or *ordinary*, standing and perpetual.

The *extraordinary* Officers were *Apostles*, *Prophets* and *Evangelists*, Eph. iv. 11. And that their Office expired with themselves, is evident from the extraordinary Qualifications with which they were endowed, which, in the Nature of the Thing, could not be transmitted by them to others; such as, immediate Mission, universal Commission, infallible Inspiration, Power of working Miracles, and the like.



The ordinary standing Officers appointed by the Lord Christ in the Church, unto the End of the World, are, *Pastors* or Teachers, Eph. iv. 11. *Ruling Elders*, 1 Tim. v. 17. and *Deacons*, Acts vi. 3, 5, 6. The Divine Institution of these Officers might be easily evinced from the Texts just now mentioned, and several other Texts of Scripture. Rom. xii. 6, 7, 8. 1 Cor. xii. 28. Hence it follows,

That the Office of a *Diocesan Bishop*, or any Superiority in Office whatsoever above a Pastor or teaching Presbyter, is contrary to the Word of God, Mat. xx. 25—29. *Jesus—said, Ye know that the Princes of the Gentiles exercise Dominion over them, and they that are great exercise Authority upon them; but it shall not be so among you. But whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be Chief among you, let him be your Servant; even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.* 1 Pet. v. 3. *Neither as being Lords over God's Heritage.*

The Preaching of the Word and the Administration of the Sacraments is peculiar to the Office of the Pastor, Mat. xxviii. 19, 20. Rom. x. 15. And this Branch of the Ministerial Office every minister may exercise by himself, wherever he has a lawful Call. But,

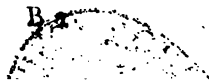
The Power of governing the Church, is derived from the Lord Jesus to the Officers of his House (Ministers and ruling Elders) met in his Name, as the *only Receptacle* thereof under him. 2. Cor. x. 8. says the Apostle, *Though I should boast somewhat more of our Authority which the Lord hath given us, for Edification, and not for Destruction, I should not be ashamed.* Here you may see, that the Apostle asserts an Authority given unto him and other Church-Officers from the Lord, which he calls *our Authority given unto us*, including himself with other Church guides,

which are plainly distinguished from the body of the Church, whose Edification was to be consulted in the Exercise of that Authority, and not their Destruction; for, says he, *our* Authority is given for Edification and not for *your* Destruction.

Besides, the *Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven*, or the Exercise of Ecclesiastical Power, was given by our Lord to the Apostles and their Successors in ordinary Office to the End of the World, Mat. xvi. 19. *I give unto thee the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven.* What is here mentioned as given unto *Peter*, is also given to the rest of the *Apostles* Mat. xviii. 18. *Whatsoever ye shall bind on Earth, shall be bound in Heaven.* Opening and Shutting are the proper Acts of *Keys*. And as the *Keys* are the Ordinances which Christ has instituted, to be dispensed in the Church, namely, the Preaching of the Word, and the Administration of *Seals* and *Censures*; so, by the right Use of these *Keys*, the Gates of the Church here, and of Heaven hereafter, are opened or shut to Believers or Unbelievers. And as the Lord has committed the Exercise of these *Keys* to Church-officers *only*, (as is plain from the above Texts) it follows, that Church-officers are the *only Receptacle* of Ecclesiastical Power under him.

From what I have said, concerning Church-officers being the only Receptacle of Church-power from the glorious Head, two Consequences unavoidably follow:

The first is, That the Lord Jesus has not committed any spiritual Power, formally Ecclesiastical, or any Exercise thereof for the Government of the Church, to the *Civil Magistrate*, Heathen, or Christian, as the Receptacle thereof by virtue of his Magistratical Office; and therefore, however desirable the Countenance of the Civil Magistrate may be, or his *Presence* in the Judicatories of a constitute Church,



yet it is evident from the Word, that neither the Presence of the supreme Magistrate, or any commissioned by him, is essentially necessary to the Validity of Ecclesiastical Decisions and Determinations, which depends allennary upon their being past in the Name of Christ, agreeably to his Laws published in his Word, and declarative thereof, Mat. xxviii. 20. 1 Cor. v. 4.

Further, Since the sole Power of inflicting Ecclesiastical Censures is lodged in the Office-bearers of the Church by the glorious Head, it plainly follows, that it is incompetent to the Civil Magistrate, and quite beyond the Limits of his Office, either to execute the Censures of the Church, or to prescribe any Rule how it should be done; and therefore we cannot but regret it, as a sinful and unwarrantable Invasion upon the Headship and Sovereignty of Christ, that the Civil Powers, in the *late Act of Parliament*, have taken upon them, by their *own Authority* allennary to declare such Ministers *incapable of sitting and voting* in Ecclesiastical Judicatories, who should not read the said Act, according to the Manner therein prescribed. And likewise, since a great many of the Ministry have so sinfully complied with, and some way or other yielded Obedience to the Authority of that Act (as a crowning Step of Defection) we would be unfaithful to our Trust, if we did not signify unto you, that they ought to be testified against, as having recognised the Civil Magistrate for their Head, and quit their Holding of the Son of God, our *Immanuel*, on whose Shoulders the Government of the Church is laid.

The other Consequence is, That as the Civil Magistrate is not the first Subject of spiritual Power, so neither is this spiritual Power, for the Government of the Church, delegated by the glorious Head to the Multitude of Believers or the *Community of the*

*Faithful.* They are no where in Scripture called Church-rulers; and therefore they cannot be the first Subject of Church-Government; upon the contrary, they are called the *stock*, and Church-officers the *Overseers* set over them by the Holy Ghost, Acts xx. 28. Yea, the *Community of the Faithful* are so far from being the Subject of Church-Government themselves, that they are expressly charged by the Word of God, to *know, honour, obey and submit* to other Governors set over them, and distinct from themselves, 1 Theff. v. 12. *We beseech you, Brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord.* 1 Tim. v. 17. *Let the Elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double Honour, especially they that labour in the Word and Doctrine.* Heb. xiii. 17. *Obey them that have the Rule over you, and submit yourselves, for they watch for your Souls.* So that it is *Church-officers only*, and neither the Civil Magistrate, nor the Community of the Faithful, that are the first Subject or Receptacle of Church-Government from the Lord Jesus Christ.

(3.) The Key of Discipline, or the Power and Authority derived from the Lord Jesus for the Government of his Church, is to be exercised, at his Appointment, by Church-officers, two or more met together in his name, in a judicative Capacity, Mat. xviii. 20. *Where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them.*

The Judicatories appointed by the Lord Christ, under the New Testament, are *Parochial Sessions, Presbyteries,* and *Synods* Provincial or National.

The Divine Right of these Judicatories, in general, may be evinced from Mat. xviii. 15—21. where our Lord makes a Gradation, from the lowest Number of Church-officers, warranted to assemble in his Name, to the most numerous Synod or Council: Whence it is plain, That though one single Person

cannot, yet two or three, or any larger Number of Officers, may assemble for Acts of Government and Discipline that may tend for the Interest of that spiritual Society whereof they are Members: It follows also, that as two or three in one Congregation may meet together, so the Officers of several Congregations may assemble in a Presbytery, for the Interest of that larger body; and they have Christ's Warrant in the above Text, and the Promise of his presence in so doing. Besides, there is in the Word a *Pattern* of Presbyterial Government over diverse single Congregations; as may be seen from the Account we have in the New Testament of the Churches of *Jerusalem*, *Antioch*, *Ephesus* and *Corinth*; in every one of which large Cities there were more Congregations of Christians than *one*, having their own proper Officers, and all under the Government of one Presbytery, for a Rule to the Church in after-ages; as has been cleared from Scripture, by many eminent Hands, particularly the famous *Assembly of Divines at Westminster*, in their *Answers* to the Objections of some *Independent* Brethren against some of the Propositions concerning Church-Government agreed upon by that Assembly, and approved by this Church, as a part of the intended Uniformity sworn to in the *Solemn League and Covenant*.

Moreover, Since the Edification of the whole visible Church is the great End of Church-Government, the more generally extensively Christ's Ordinance of Government is managed, the more complete Provision is made for the Edification of the whole Body of Christ: And therefore the Lord Jesus, upon whose Shoulders the Government is laid, has left unto his Officers a Warrant to meet in a *Synodical* or *National* Assembly, in the Pattern of that *Synodical* Meeting at *Jerusalem*, recorded Acts xv. Chap. where you will see it evident, that the constituent Members of

that Synod, together with the *Apostles* and *Elders* at *Jerusalem*, were *Delegates* from other Churches, particularly the Church of *Antioch*, from which *Paul* and *Barnabas*, and certain others with them, were sent, by the public Authority of that Church, *Acts* ii. And granting that Commissioners from the Churches of *Syria* and *Cilicia* were not at *Jerusalem* (which yet I am apt to think they were, from the Indorsement of the Decree to them, as well as *Antioch*, v. 23.) yet, if but two Presbyterial Churches are warranted by Apostolical Example to join in one Synod, then by the same Warrant the Representatives of as many more Presbyteries may assemble in one Synodical Meeting as are necessary for determining Matters of a common Concern to them all.

Further, That the Members of this Synod were only Church-officers will appear from this one Consideration; That the Question in Debate in the Church of *Antioch* was referred only to the Decision of *Apostles* and *Elders*, *Acts* ii. who were unquestionably Church-officers: So it was the *Apostles* and *Elders* only that *came together for to consider of this Matter*, *Acts* vi. And whereas *Brethren* are mentioned with the *Apostles* and *Elders*, *Acts* xxiii. yet: these *Brethren* cannot be the Community of the Faithful, in regard they could never be Judges in this Question, to whom it was not referred; for the Question was referred to Church-officers only, as I have already said; And therefore these *Brethren* must be *Delegates* or *Commissioners* from the several Churches, who were concerned to have the Errors suppressed, which were broached among them at that Time, concerning the Necessity of circumcision and the Observance of the Law of *Moses* in order to Salvation.

I shall only add upon this Head, That the Decree past by this Synod, was formally binding upon the Churches of *Antioch*, *Syria* and *Cilicia*; as is plain

from the Tenor of the Decree itself, Acts xxviii. It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater Burden than these necessary Things. Whence it follows, that the Presbyterial Churches of *Antioch, Syria and Cilicia* were subordinate to the Synod at *Jerusalem*; and consequently here is a Pattern of the Subordination of Judicatories. Thus I have endeavoured to evince the *Divine Right* of the Judicatories of the House of Christ. And, for your further Confirmation in what I have here only very briefly hinted, I refer you to the *Propositions concerning Church-Government*, which you have bound along with your *Confession of Faith*, which I intreat you may read and consider, that you may be guarded, in this shaking Time, against the Danger of *Prelacy* upon the one Hand, and of *Independency* upon the other. But then,

(4.) The *Power and Authority* of Ecclesiastical Judicatories is not an *Absolute and Magisterial*, but only a *Stewardly and Ministerial* Power, expressly limited to the *Observation* of these Things which the Lord Christ has *commanded* in his Word, Mat. xxviii. 20. *Teaching them to observe all Things whatsoever I have commanded you.* Hence it follows, that when any Ecclesiastical Judicatory enacts any Statute which is contrary to the *Word*, or passes any Decision which is not founded thereupon, that such *Statutes and Decisions* ought to be reputed by all the Subjects of Zion's King, as *null and void in themselves*, as wanting the Stamp of his Authority who is Zion's *Statute-maker*; according to the marginal Reading, Isa. xxxiii. 22.

Lastly, As the great End of Church-government; next to the Glory of God, is the Edification of the Church; so, when the Discipline of the Church is not faithfully and impartially exercised, but on the contrary the *Errours tolerated; Intenders counte-*

nanced, and such as have in their Practice given up with the Headship and Sovereignty of Christ, excused and vindicated; I say, when the Discipline of the Church is not exercised upon such Offenders (as is the Case at present) it is a just Provocation to the Lord to leave that Church. Thus we find the Lord passing a very severe Censure upon the Churches of *Pergamos* and *Thyatira*, Rev. ii. for *having* the Scandalous and Erroneous among them: And their neglecting to purge them out, was no doubt one of the Reasons why the Lord has removed his Candlestick from among them to this Day. These are a few of the Scripture-truths concerning the Government and Discipline of the House of Christ.

*4thly*, There is the *Truth* concerning *Christian Practice*, which includes the following Particulars among a great many others; (1.) The inviolable Obligation of the holy and righteous Law of God, upon the Regenerate, as well as the Unregenerate: But, in order to the yielding acceptable Obedience to the Law of God, it is absolutely necessary that there be a vital Union with the Lord Jesus Christ, John xv. 4, 5. Hence it follows, that Gospel-obedience ought to flow from a Principle of Faith, connecting the *Precept* with the *Promise*, *I will cause you to walk in my Statutes, and to keep my Judgments and do them.* And from a Principle of Love to God, *If ye love me, keep my Commandments.* (2.) That the Law of God, or the Revelation of his Will, is the only Standard by which our Actions are to be tried, Isa. viii. 20. Hence it follows, that the Goodness of our Actions is not to be judged by our *extensive Benevolence* upon the one Hand, nor by any *selfish Consideration* upon the other. (3.) That our main Purpose or ultimate End, in all our Actions, ought not to be the advancement of our own *Self-interest*, but the glorifying of God, or the manifesting of his





glory, Rom. xiv. 7. *None of us liveth to himself, and no Man dieth to himself.* 1 Pet. ii. 9. *Ye are a chosen Generation,——that ye should shew forth the Praises of him who hath called you.*——(4.) That the glorious *Excellencies and Perfections* of the Divine Nature are the main Ground of our Love and Obedience, and not chiefly his *Benefits*; as is plain from the first Commandment, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me.* Hence it follows, That it is not our *delighting* in any virtuous or religious Action, that is the chief Reason and motive thereof; but because God the great Lawgiver enjoins it, as tending to the Manifestation of his own glorious Excellencies and perfections. These are a few Truths concerning Christian Practice; and it is Matter of Regret, that the *supreme Judicatory* of this Church have testified so little Zeal for these precious Truths, which so nearly concern the very Life of Sanctification, when they have assolizied the *Impugner* of them without the least Censure. Thus I have endeavoured to give you some View of the *Truth*, which we are to *buy* and not to *sell*. I proceed now to the

II. Head of the Method, and that was, To enquire *what it is to buy the Truth*, or, what is imported in the buying of it.

1. To *buy* the Truth, is to have some *Knowledge* and Understanding of the Truth. Men do not use to purchase that which they know nothing about; some Knowledge of a Bargain is always necessary to the purchase of it: So here, *to buy the Truth*, supposes some *Knowledge* of it, that unto you it has been given in some Measure to *know the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven*; that the Spirit has been taking the Things of Christ, and shewing them unto you: In a Word, that as you have been searching the Scriptures which testify of Christ, so he has been

expounding to you from all the Scriptures the Things concerning himself, Pſal. cxix. 104. *Through thy Precepts I get Understanding; therefore I hate every falſe Way.* Ignorance of the Truth is the great Reason, why ſo few are in-Queſt of it at this Day; *Man knoweth not the Price thereof,* Job xxviii. 13.

2. To buy the Truth, imports an *high Value* and *Eſteem* for the Truth. Men do not purchaſe that which they undervalue and deſpiſe; ſome Value for, and Eſteem of a Bargain is always ſuppoſed in the Purchaſe of it: So to *buy the Truth*, imports a *Value* for the Truth, Pſal. cxix. 72. *The Law of thy Mouth is better to me than thouſands of Silver and Gold.* O what an high Value doth a believing Soul put upon the Truth! ſuch an high Value, as to make no Account of all Things in a World, in Compariſon of it, Phil. iii. 8. *Yea, doubtleſs, and I count all things but Loſs, for the Excellency of the Knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus my Lord.* Well, Sirs, try by this if you are Purchaſers of the Truth; What Value are you putting upon Chriſt, who is *the Truth*? Can you ſay, as it is Pſal. lxxvi. 4. *Thou art more glorious and excellent than the Mountains of Prey?* What Value do you put upon the *borne-down Truths* of Chriſt at this Day? Can you ſay, that the price of Truth riſes with you; the more it is undervalued by a wicked World? Thus it was with the *Pſalmiſt*, Pſal. cxix. 126, 127, 128. *They make void thy Law: Therefore I love thy Commandments above Gold: Therefore I eſteem thy Precepts concerning all Things, to be right.* The Meaning is, the more Contempt the Wicked put upon Truth, the higher Value he had for it: The Wicked were endeavouring to make the *Law concerning all Things to be void*; therefore, for this very Reason, he eſteemed the *Law concerning all Things to be right*. For it muſt certainly be the Truth, which meets with *Oppoſition* from the World.

3. To buy the Truth, is to *appropriate* the Truth, or to make use of it as our own. *Property* necessarily follows upon a Purchase: So here, to buy the Truth, is to have *Propriety* in the Truth: and so it is the same Thing with *believing* the Truth, for it is of the Nature of Faith to appropriate its own Object, John vi. 4. *He that believeth hath everlasting Life.* Therefore we find, that *being of the Truth*, or belonging to the Truth, is inseparably joined with *believing*, or hearing of Christ's Voice, John xviii. 37. *Every one that is of the Truth heareth my Voice.* O Sirs, How wonderful is it, that such a valuable Thing as Truth, should be the Property of Sinners! Christ himself, and consequently all the good Things contained in the Promise of a God that cannot lie, is *That Truth* which is the Property of every one that believeth, 1 Cor. iii. at the Close, *All Things are yours, and ye are Christ's.* Try by this if you have made a Purchase of the Truth. Are you making Use of Christ as *your own*, for *Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption?* for so is he made over of God, unto you, in the Gospel, 1 Cor. i. 30. Do you know what it is to claim a Right unto all the good Things contained in the Promise and Word of Truth, upon the Right that Christ has to them, and as being *joint Heirs* with Christ, who is the *Heir of all Things?*

4. To buy the Truth, imports a *Meditating* or thinking much upon the Truth. Men's Thoughts commonly run upon their Bargain or Purchase that they have made: Now, as there is not another Bargain so valuable as Divine Truth, so nothing ought to engross our Thoughts so much as it, Psal. cxix. 97. *O how love I thy Law! it is my Meditation all the Day.* Sirs, if you have made a Purchase of the Truth, your Meditation upon it will afford many *sweet Thoughts* unto you, Psal. civ. 34. *in Metre,*

*Of him my Meditation shall  
Sweet Thoughts to me afford.*

You will have sweet Thoughts of God, when you think upon the glorious Excellencies and Perfections of his Nature, as they are all eminently displayed, and harmoniously agree in the Person of Christ, anent the Salvation of the Sinner. Particularly, you will have sweet Thoughts of the *Love* and *Mercy* of God, when you think upon the costly Channel of Blood in which it runs unto you; you will have sweet Thoughts of the *Justice* of God, when you think upon the the complete Satisfaction that it has got by the Obedience and Sufferings of the Son of God in your Room; sweet Thoughts of the *Truth* and Veracity of God, when you think upon the Execution of the Threatning on the Person of the Surety. Again, you will have sweet Thoughts of Christ, when you think upon his Person, Offices, Relations to us, and the Appearances he has made on our behalf; when you think upon what he has done, is doing, and will do; how that he became Man, and a *Man of Sorrows*; that he hath magnified the law, and brought in an everlasting Righteousness; that he hath spoiled Principalities and Powers, confirmed the New Testament by his Death, and ever liveth to see all the Blessings or Legacies thereof conferred upon the Heirs of Glory. So that, if you have made a purchase of the Truth, your Thoughts will run much upon that valuable Bargain.

5. To buy the truth, imports a *Rejoicing* in the Truth. Men use to rejoice in a good Bargain, and to boast of it: So here, to buy the Truth, imports a Rejoicing and a Glorifying in it, *Psal. cxix. III. Thy Testimonies have I taken as an Heritage for ever; for they are the rejoicing of my Heart.* Sirs, if you have bought the Truth, you will rejoice in ~~the~~

Word of Truth, as your *Charter* for eternal Life; you will rejoice in the Truth of a promising God, as your Security for the Accomplishment of the Promise. Whatever Ground of sorrowing you may find within yourselves, or abroad in the World, yet you will find Ground of rejoicing in Christ Jesus, as the *All* of your Life, Strength, Righteousness and Salvation. And, if you are rejoicing and glorying only in his Holy Name, you will rejoice also *if you are Partakers of his Sufferings, that, when his Glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy*, 1 Pet. iv. 13.

6. To buy the Truth, imports a *Maintaining* of and *Contending* for it. Men are very diligent and careful in maintaining and defending their Properties; So here, to buy the Truth, imports a Contending for the Truth, Jude v. 3.—*Contend earnestly for the Faith once delivered unto the Saints.*

This *earnest Contending* includes in it the following Particulars.

*First*, A weighty and important *Cause* for which we are to contend, even the whole of that *Faith once delivered to the Saints*, or the Word of Truth which is to be believed to Salvation. And, that this Word of Truth is worth the contending for, will appear if you consider, that the *Author* of it is the *faithful and true Witness*, Rev. iii. 14. The instruments, or *Penmen* of it, infallibly guided by the Holy Ghost, 2 Pet. i. 21. *The holy Men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.* The *Matter* of it is everlasting Truth, which shall stand firm when Heaven and Earth shall pass away. The *Form* of it is in Conformity to God himself: The Power, Purity and Truth of the Word, is in Conformity to the Power, Holiness and Faithfulness of God himself. The *Price* of it is the Blood of Christ. The *Benefits*, that redound to us by it, are all these

Blessings we have forfeited by Sin, and are now purchased and regained by the glorious Surety. So that it is a weighty Cause we are to contend for.

Again, Contending for the Truth supposes that there are numerous and powerful adversaries to contend with, even all the Swarms of Soul-ruining *Seducers*, animated and set on Work by the god of this World; for we wrestle not with Flesh and Blood only, but with Flesh and Blood assisted by *Principalities and Powers, and the Rulers of the Darknes of this World*, Eph. vi. 12. And these erroneous Seducers cannot want Cunning, to colour over their damnable Heresies, with smooth Words and doubtful Expressions, when they have the Old Serpent for their Teacher; nor can they want Malice, Diligence and Activity, when they are instigated and driven on by the *Destroyer*, who goes about seeking whom he may devour.

Further, This Contending, in the Purchasers of Truth, supposes that they have Strength whereby to resist these Powerful Adversaries. But now, their Strength is not in themselves, but in their glorious *Head*, who, in virtue of their Union with him, gives them continual Supplies of Grace for resisting Temptations, and going through the Difficulties and Dangers that may be in their Way, while among the *Lions' Dens and Mountains of the Leopards*; And, in a Word, for enabling them to *do all Things through Christ strengthening them*, Phil. v. 13.

Moreover, They that have bought the Truth, ought, in their Contending for it, to put forth this borrow'd Strength against the Enemy, in their several Spheres and Stations wherein they are placed in the World: *Magistrates*, by restraining Heretics and Seducers as *Hezekiah* and *Josiah* did; *Ministers*, by preaching the Word of Truth, by sound Doctr.

rine convincing Gainsayers, and censuring the scandalous and Erroneous, Titus i. 6, 11. *Christians*, of whatever Station, by praying for the Success of the Word of Truth, *that it may have free Course and be glorified*, 2. Theff. iii. 1. and by confessing the Truth, and suffering for it when called thereto.

The Way and Manner in which the Purchasers of the Truth ought to essay to put forth their borrowed Strength in contending for the Faith, is, (1.) Resolutely and courageously, with Purpose of Heart cleaving to the Lord, Acts xi. 23. (2.) Unanimously, *with one consent, and with one Mind, striving together for the Faith of the Gospel*, Phil. i. 27. (3.) Impartially and universally, for every Truth, and against every Error. (4.) Constantly and steadfastly, holding fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering, Heb. x. 23. (5.) Humbly and meekly, under a sense of our own Inability to contend, and guarding against our own Spirits, eying singly the Glory of God, and depending upon his Grace to be made sufficient for us, and his Strength to be made perfect in our Weakness. So much for the second Thing proposed, What it is to buy the Truth. I proceed now to the

III. *Head of the Method*, and that was, To enquire who they are that sell the Truth.

You may take their Character in the following Particulars; and, wherein it is applicable to any, may the Spirit of the Lord fasten saving Conviction upon the Soul.

1. They sell the Truth, who are *destitute of the Truth*; as the Expression is, 1 Tim. vi. 5. Such as are void of Spiritual Understanding, and never had their Hearts moulded and fashioned according to the Truth; whatever natural or acquired Parts they may have, yet they never had the saving and solid Knowledge of the Truth, and therefore they cannot but

part with it at a very cheap Rate. Such are all these, who have *not received the Love of the Truth, that they might be saved*, 2 Theſſ. ii. 10. Though they be the Hearers of the Word, yet they are not the *Doers* of it, and therefore, when Tribulation attends the Profession of the Truth, *by and by they are offended*.

2. They sell the Truth, who *turn from the Truth*. The Apostle (to Titus, chap. i. 14.) discharges to give heed to the *Commandments of Men, who turn from the Truth*. There are many who appear on the Side of Truth when there is no Hazard in professing of it, who yet change Sides when Truth is universally run down. And, Sirs, you will always observe, that they who turn from the Truth which they once professed, are the most Bloody Adversaries that ever Truth or the Defenders of it had. The *Bishops* and their *Underlings*, in the late persecuting Times, at least for some Years after the *Restoration*, what were they, but *apostate* and *perjured Presbyterians*? and you all know with what Rage and Cruelty they defiled the whole Land with the Blood of the Lord's Witnesses from which it is not yet purged. And there are many living amongst us at this Day, who made some zealous Appearances a few Years ago, both in the Pulpit and Judicatories, for the Covenanted Principles of this Church, against the Current of Defection at that Time, who now discover a great deal of more Warmth against these who are witnessing for the same Cause which they themselves once seemed to espouse, and are turning the Edge of their Resentment with more Keeness against them, than they who never made such a Profession.

3. Erroneous persons sell the Truth with a Witness. There are many, of whom it may be said at this Day, as it was of *Hymeneus* and *Philetus*, 2 Tim. ii. 18. that, *concerning the Truth they have erred*.



The Flood of Error never swelled to such an Height, in any Period of this Church since her Reformation from *Papery*, as at this Day; and never was there so little Zeal shown for Truth, when lying bleeding every where in our streets; the sad and dismal effects whereof are to be seen in every Corner of the Land: Many calling in question the great Truths of God, and rejecting all the *peculiar* Doctrines of the Gospel, because they are not adapted, as they imagine, to their rational Taste; many disputing themselves and others out of the Truth; others mocking at Truth and the Professors of it; and the most Part quite unconcerned to have the Truth conveyed and brought home with Power upon their own Souls.

4. They sell the Truth, who *resist* the Truth; like these mentioned, 2 Tim. iii. 8. Truth has an evidencing Light going along with it, yet many rebel the Evidence: Although their Consciences be convinced with silencing Arguments on the Side of Truth, yet such is their Enmity and Prejudice at the Truth, that they give a deaf Ear to all that is said in Defence of it, or endeavour to shift the Force of Argument by mere Evasion. Yea, some are so blindly wedded to a *Side*, or give such implicit Faith to their *Leaders*, that, though a *Testimony* be published for Truth and against a Current of Defection, a Sight of the *Title page* thereof sufficeth them. And I am apt to believe, that the open Appearances of many, against the Truth of Reformation-principles at this Day, is just in Opposition to a *few Ministers* and *Professors* through the Land, whom the Lord in his adorable Providence has raised up to witness for the Truth, and against the Defections both of former and present Times: But let not this surprise you as if it were some strange Thing; for you will always find that *Witness-bearing* for the Truth, is cer-

menting to them that dwell upon the Earth, Rev. xi. 10. If there had been always a Compliance with the World, there could never have been any Persecution from it; for the *World will love its own*: But the Ground of all Opposition and Hatred from the World, is a Non-compliance with, and Testifying against, the Principles, Practices and Customs of it; hence says our Lord of himself, in Opposition to the *Time-servers* of his Day, John vii. 7. *The World cannot hate you, but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the Works thereof are Evil.*

5. They sell the Truth, who part with it for *Worldly Gain*; like *Demas*, of whom the Apostle says, 2 Tim. iv. 10. *He hath forsaken me, having loved this present World.* There are many who will comply with the Times, rather than disoblige their Superiors, or risk their worldly Advantages: And how lamentable is it, that herein they should have the Example of so many of the *present Ministry*, who, by their late sinful Compliance, have so shamefully sold the Truth, concerning the Headship of Christ (which he witnessed for before *Pontius Pilate*) for their worldly *Incomes*! It is an heavy Word, which our Lord has concerning such, Mat. x. 37. *He that loveth Father or Mother,—Son or Daughter* (that is, the most valuable Thing in a present World) *more than me, is not worthy of me.* But, *Sirs*, if there are any of you made willing by Grace to lay down your *worldly All* at Christ's Feet, in Defence of his Truth, there is an encouraging Word to you, Mat. xix. 29. *Every one who hath forsaken Houses, or Brethren, or Sister, or Father, or Mother, or Wife, or Children, or Lands for my Name's Sake, shall receive an Hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting Life.*

6. As they sell the Truth, who part with it for *Worldly Gain*; So they sell the Truth, who make a Profession of embracing it for *Worldly Advantage*,

like these who followed Christ for the *Leaves*. It has been observed by several, that, at the Reformation from Popery, there were many zealous against the *Abbasies*, more out of Love to their Lands, than Hatred to their Idolatry. But they who do not embrace the Truth merely for itself, and because of its Conformity to a God of Truth, will easily part with it, when the Profits and preferments of the World are not upon its Side.

7. They sell the Truth, who endeavour to *conceal* and *smother* the Truth; like these who *deal deceitfully with the Word*, as it is in the *marginal Reading*, 2 Cor. ii. 17. Now, they conceal the Truth, who cover former and present Sins, and refuse to acknowledge them to the Glory of God; as it is the Practice of Ministers and Judicatories at this Day. They conceal the Truth, who do not give faithful Warning of the Hazard that Truth may be in from the Enemies and Opposers of it. They conceal the Truth, who do all they can to keep the People in Ignorance about the Evils of the Time; like treacherous Watchmen, who see the Enemy approaching, yet allow the City of God to be surpris'd, without once giving Notice of it. Again, they conceal the Truth, who palliate their own sinful Practices, by a partial acknowledgment of some part of Truth; like many of late, who in Words profess'd they owned the Headship of Christ over his Church, and yet in their Practice renounced the same. But, *Sirs*, they who are really upon Truth's Side, *have renounced these hidden Things of Dishonesty*, and are not *walking in Craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully, but, by Manifestation of the Truth, commending themselves to every Man's Conscience in the Sight of God*, 2 Cor. iv. 2.

8. They sell the Truth, who *distinguish* away the Truth. There are two Distinctions which I would

have you to be aware of: There are some who distinguish between *greater* and *smaller* Truths. I will not say that every Truth is of equal Importance to Salvation; but sure I am, that there is not a Truth of God within the whole Bible, that is of such small Consequence to a Believer, but that he would rather choose to give up with his Life, than part with it. Again, some distinguish between *controverted* and *uncontroverted* Truths; alledging, that we ought not to be tenacious about these Things that have been controverted among learned Men. But, were we to cast off all controverted Truth, we should reject the whole Bible; for I know not that Truth in it but has been controverted by some of the Learned. And, if you would have it, the great Reason why many use these Distinctions, is just that they may throw the Doctrine concerning the House of Christ, among these *lesser* and *controverted* Truths about which Men may safely differ. But it has been observed, that they who have been easy about Matters of *Government*, have been as indifferent about Matters of *Doctrine*, when they have come into their *Cast*; as is evident from the little zeal that has been shown for the great Truths of God, that have been controverted in our own Day. Hence it follows,

9. They sell the Truth, who are not *valiant* for the Truth; like these mentioned, Jer. ix. 3. of whom it is said, That *they are not valiant for the Truth upon the Earth*. There are many who are mere *Cowards* in the Cause of Truth at this Day: The Enemy is bold and forward in opposing and bearing down the Truth, and *they* shamefully and pitifully give it up, without the least Stroke of Sword. The most part of these, who were once thought well-affected to the Cause of Truth, are now standing by, as neutral and unconcerned Spectators of the Desolations of our Zion, or at least fighting and going backward.

Where is there a standing Testimony for Truth, among all the present Judicatories at this Day? Yea, there are standing Sentences and Decisions against a plain and faithful Testimony, whether doctrinal or judicial. This Partiality in the Judicatories, in turning the Edge of their Sentences against these who are essaying to witness for the Truth, and, upon the other Hand, their omitting and refusing to give any suitable Testimony themselves, even when Opportunities were put in their Hands for being valiant for the Truth, has produced two fatal Consequences which will not be so easily remedied.

*First*, This Neutrality in the Judicatories, about the Truth both of the Doctrine and Government of the House of Christ, has given Latitude to that uncontrouled Freedom, which is used with the great Mysteries of Godliness, by a numerous Set of *Preachers* in this Church, by whose Sermons one would scarce know that they are *Christians*; For you will seldom or never hear from them one Word about the original Corruption and Depravation of Man's Nature, by his Fall in the first *Adam*; of his Incapacity to recover himself; nor of the Necessity of a vital Union with Christ, as the Foundation of our Justification and of all acceptable Obedience: These and the like Doctrines, so necessary to the Salvation of Sinners, are quite dropt by many of them; whereby they that hear them are left to *perish for lack of Knowledge*.

Another bad Consequence that has followed upon the sinful Neglect of a timeous Testifying for the Truth, and that is, That *Deism* or Disregard to the holy Scriptures, is now almost become universal, whether it be from a Principle of Malice, or from mere Ignorance, or a fond Desire to imitate one another: But so it is, that there are few of these who imagine *themselves* to be raised above the ordinary Rank of

Men, but who use intolerable Freedom with the holy Scriptures; some by denying them in Bulk, others by wresting them to their own Destruction, and others by passing profane Jest upon them; whereby they verify what the Apostle *Peter* says, 2 Epistle iii. 1. That *there shall come in the last Days Scoffers, walking after their own Lusts.* Yea, to such an Height of Impiety are we arrived at this Day, that few or none are reckoned *Men of Sense*, but such as can with Freedom expose Religion and the Professors of it, however void they be of true and solid Learning: I shall only say of them, as the Apostle *Jude* has it, *They speak Evil of the Things which they know not.* These are some of the sad Consequences of omitting to be valiant for the Truth: but let us all consider, that *whosoever shall be ashamed of Christ, and of his Words, in this adulterous and sinful Generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the Glory of his Father with the holy Angels,* Mark viii. 38.

I shall now essay to make *Improvement* of what has been said, in the following INFERENCES.

*Inference* 1. Are all commanded to buy the Truth? Then it follows, that all are by Nature destitute and void of it; a Man needs not buy what is his own already, or what he has a Right to by birth. Our buying of any Thing, says plainly, that we have no previous Property in it. We have lost and forfeit our Possession of the Truth in the first *Adam*, who *changed the Truth of God into a Lie*, and left all his Posterity to *inherit Folly.* All we have now by Inheritance, or can call our own, is Wretchedness, Misery, Poverty, Blindness and Nakedness, Rev. iii. 17. and till we are convinced of this, it is impossible that we can have the least Thought of *buying* the Blessings which are suitable to us in these deplora-

ble Circumstances, though they be presented to us in this everlasting Gospel.

*Inf. 2.* Are all commanded to buy the Truth? Then it follows, that *Truth* is now *exposed to Sale*, and that all have free Access to make the Purchase. And therein shines the infinite Love of God to Mankind Sinners, although we have justly forfeited all Good, and deserve to have been miserable for ever, as well as the Angels that fell, yet he hath *so loved the World*, as to give his only begotten Son, to Purchase and regain, with vast Advantage, what we had irrecoverably lost in the first *Adam*: And the Son of God having actually made the Purchase at the Price of his Blood, and in consequence thereof having full Power and Authority to dispense and give out all *purchased Good* among the Children of Men, hence doth he issue forth the Proclamation to Sinners of all Sorts, to come and buy of him *Gold tried in the Fire* that they may be rich, *white Raiment* that they may be clothed, and *Eye-salve* that they may see, Rev. iii. 18. Only you would notice, that, when we are called to come and buy these inestimable Blessings at the Hands of this great *Proprietor*, we have not any Thing like an equivalent Price to offer, as in the Case of Contracts among Men, where there is a just Proportion between the Price and the Purchase; and therefore they are offered *freely*, and we invited to buy *without Money*, and *without Price*, Isa. lv. 1. *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the Waters, and he that hath no Money; come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy Wine and Milk without Money and without Price.*

*Inf. 3.* Are we commanded at any Rate to make a Purchase of the Truth? Then it follows, that it must be of *inestimable Value*. Christ himself, and all the Blessings of his Purchase, Grace and Glory, and every good Thing, is that *Truth* which we are com-

manded to *buy*; and consequently the Price of it is above *Rubies, and all the (worldly) Things, that can be desired, are not to be compared to it*, Prov. viii. 11. Yea, it is of such a Value, that our very *Life* depends upon the Purchase of it, Prov. iv. 13. *Take fast hold of Instruction, let her not go; keep her, for she is thy Life.* If you lose what is contained in the Word of Truth, you lose infinitely more than your Life is worth; for, *what will it profit a Man, though he gain the whole World; if he lose his own Soul?* If you get Possession of this valuable Treasure, it will bear your Charges through all the Hardships and Difficulties of a present World; it will keep you alive and support you in the very Jaws of Death, and last with you through Eternity: If you lose it, you are dead while you live; and, though you had the whole World in Possession, you enjoy nothing but Vanity, an empty Shadow, while you have no Interest in this *Inheritance* that is *incorruptible undefiled, and which fadeth not away.* Besides, the Word of Truth is of such a Value, that there is no travelling Heaven-wards without it. It is that *Pillar of Fire*, which is necessary to guide us through the dark Night of a present World, into the Land of everlasting Light and Life. We have within us, Hearts that are *deceitful above all Things and desperately wicked*; without us, innumerable Snares and Dangers; We have missed our Way to eternal Life in the first *Adam*; and though we be in the high Road to eternal Ruin, yet such is our Pride and Ignorance, that we cannot be persuaded of it; and therefore, if the Word of Truth is not a *Lamp* to our *Feet* and a *Light* to our *Path*, we can never arrive at the Rest that remains for the People of God.

*Inf. 4.* Is it the Duty of all at the command of God, to buy the Truth, and for no Price to part with it? Then see the *Folly* of the World, in putting



such a low Rate upon this inestimable Treasure; like these who were invited to the *Marriage of the King's Son*, yet made light of it, and went their Ways, one to his Farm, and another to his Merchandise, Mat. xxii. 5. preferring the Things of a present World to the greatest Offer that could possibly be made to them. There are some that put such a low Value upon the Truth, and are so far from buying it themselves, that they do what they can to hinder others from making the Purchase; like these of whom our Lord speaks, Luke xi. 52.—*Ye have taken away the Key of Knowledge; ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in, ye hindered.* They could not endure to see Multitudes following Christ, and they used all Methods to prevent it, although the poor People were starved then (as they are in many Places amongst us at this Day) with the dry and insipid Doctrines of these Times; and therefore no Wonder that they travelled abroad, to buy Food to their Souls, when there was nothing but mere Famine at Home. There are others who undervalue Truth to such a Degree, that they will not so much as frequent the *Market-place* where it is to be sold, I mean, the Ordinances of the Gospel; the least outward Inconvenience will keep them from Attendance: But, did they know the Worth of what they are despising, they would dig for it as for hid Treasures, and reckon nothing too dear for the necessary Food of their perishing Souls.

*Inf. 5.* Are we commanded to buy the Truth? Then the *Question* is, Have you, upon the Warrant and Command of God, made a Purchase of the Truth? and are you so well satisfied with the Bargain, that you are resolved through Grace never to part with it again? Now, in order to assist you in this Enquiry, we shall put the following *Questions* to your Consciences, which we require you to con-

sider, and to try yourselves by, as in the Sight of God to whom we must make an account. Have you felt the Power of the Truth upon your own Hearts, subduing Sin in you, and making you lothe and abhor yourselves upon the account of it, as offensive to God, and framing your Hearts and Lives into a Conformity to the Image of God, and sweetly contraining you to all the Duties of New Obedience? Do you consult with the Word of Truth in all the pinching Straits and Difficulties that occur to you while in this Valley of Tears? When the World, or your own carnal Reason, suggest this or the other Danger attending the Practice of Duty, whether do you listen to their Motions, or are you determined by the Word as your only *Counsellor*, with the *Psalmist*, Psal. cxix. 24. *Thy Testimonies are my Delight, and my Counsellors?* Have you been convinced that the Word of Truth is of such absolute Necessity to you, that there is no living without it? Psal. xxviii. 13. *I had fainted unless I had believed to see the Goodness of the Lord in the Land of the Living.* Psal. cxix. 92. *Unless thy Law had been my Delight, I should then have perished in my Affliction.* Although the Times wherein we live be among the *dear Years* of Truth, when they that will buy it, and keep it, must be at greater Expence than ordinary; yet, Are you convinced that it must be had, cost what it will? Are you satisfied that your Credit and Reputation sink in the Defence of Truth; that you may be reviled and reproached for Christ's Name's Sake; that every Thing that is valuable to you in a World, be at the Lord's sovereign Disposal; and that you would rather part with your *worldly All*, than with one Hoof of Divine Truth? Are you walking in the Truth? 2d Epistle of John, v. 4. *I rejoiced greatly, that I found thy Children walking in Truth.* Are you walking in the Light of Truth, essaying to perform every

and from what Motives have you done it? W  
because you saw evidently a Stamp of Divine  
thority upon the Truth, and felt the inward Op  
tion of the Spirit, bearing Witness by and with  
Word in your Hearts, and therefore could not  
dure to see the Truth trampled upon as Mire in  
Streets, without appearing as Witness for it? I  
you engaged in the Cause of Truth, out of Lov  
the person of Christ, who is *the Truth*? and, is  
Love to Christ the Spring of all your Appear  
for him? *Lastly*, Are you abounding in the Ki  
ledge of the Truth? If you are possess of the Tr  
your Desires will be more and more enlarged tow  
it, you will never think that you have enough  
you will *follow on to know the Lord*, Hof. vi. 3.  
ry new Discovery of his Glory will make you  
more ardently with *Moses*, for a fresh Discovery  
*I beseech thee shew me thy Glory*; and at the same  
you will be sensible of your own Ignorance, and  
to say with *Agur*, Prov. xxx. 2. *Surely I am*  
*brutish than any Man, and have not the Understan*  
*of a Man.* And in the same Glass that you see  
Glory of the Lord, will you see your own Vile

*Truth.* (2.) *Be aware of selling it, or parting with it again.*

*1st. Branch of the Exhortation, answerable to the Command of God, is, Buy the Truth.* Sirs, this everlasting Gospel is like a *Market*, where all the Necessaries and Ornaments of Life are exposed to Sale; Christ, and all the Blessings of his Purchase, are set before you in the *Word*, that you may buy them, and make use of them as your own. Only, for your better Understanding of this, you must know, that *Buying* here, is *Believing*. Faith is variously expressed in Scripture, according to the several Views in which Christ the Object of it is presented, and brought near in the Word of Grace. When Christ is held out as a person of matchless Comeliness and Beauty, and as having that Comeliness in him, for the adorning of us, who have *lien among the Pots*; then Faith is a *Looking* to him, Isa. xlv. 22. *Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the Ends of the Earth.* When Christ is exhibited as the *unspeakable Gift* of God to Mankind lost, then Faith is a *Receiving* of him, John i. 12. *As many as received him, to them gave he Power to become the Sons of God.* And here, when Christ is presented as the *best Bargain* for poor, miserable, wretched, blind and naked Creatures, Faith is a *Buying* of him. Only you must conceive of this *Buying* in a Suitableness to the *Bargain*: The *Bargain* is inestimable, infinitely above all Value; and therefore this *Buying*, on our Part, must exclude all *Price*; and so it agrees with the Nature of Faith, which is a *taking and receiving* Grace. So then, the Meaning of the *Exhortation, buy the Truth*, amounts just to this; *Since the best Bargain that ever was is offered and presented unto you for nought, take it, and make use of it as your own, giving Credit to all the Testimony of God concerning it, without wavering or doubting.*

Now, to engage you to this, consider, that God has made a free and gratuitous Donation of his eternal Son, and all Salvation with him, in the Dispensation of the Gospel, and requires Sinners of all sorts to accept of the Offer, without doubting either of his Ability or Willingness to bestow all the Good contained in the Promise: This is clear from Rom. viii. 32. *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all Things?* Where you see the Person that makes the Grant is JEHOVAH, who was justly offended by our Sin, but now well-pleas'd for Christ's Righteousness' sake: The Grant itself is Christ and all Things with him: The Persons to whom the Grant is made, are Sinners of all Sorts, to whom the Gospel comes: It is not unto Men as they are *Elect*, but unto Men as *such*, that is, unto Men as they are Sinners, Prov. viii. 4. *Unto you, O Men, I call, and my Voice is, unto the Sons of Men.* O then, be persuaded to take home this valuable Treasure in the Arms of your Faith; it will be Life to the Dead, Light to the Blind, Liberty to the Captive, Bread to the Hungry, Righteousness to the Guilty, Strength to the Weak, and all Things to the empty Sinner. Sirs, you are just now in the Market-place, and there is here all imaginable Variety of the most useful and costly Wares, all of them absolutely necessary for you; and we can assure you, in the Name of the God of Truth, that you are heartily welcome to them all: *The Spirit saith, Come; and the Bride saith, Come; and whosoever will, let him Come, and buy Wine and Milk without Money and without Price.* Oh Sirs, will you go empty away, when the Fulness of the Godhead is set before you? The Promise is indorsed to you, and therefore you have a Right to intermeddle with all the Good that is contained in it; Oh then, be not faithless, but believing. The

Market-Day will draw to a Close ere it be long; it may be the last Hour of it with many of us who have hitherto been standing in the Market place, idle: You have now no Time to lose, shortly may these Things be hid from your Eyes; and we have no Warrant to allow you one Moment to deliberate upon this Matter: Here is the Command of God to every one of you in particular, *Buy the Truth;* therefore instantly give Obedience at your highest Peril, especially when there is no Room for Deliberation in this Case. Should a starving Man deliberate if he will take Meat, when it is set before him? Should a Prisoner deliberate if he will go out of the Prison-house, when the doors are opened for him? Oh then, without further Delay, *buy the Truth;* reach forth the Hand of Faith and take it, and the Bargain is made. Our Lord Christ is not standing upon Terms with you, he knows you have nothing; and therefore he is just now offering himself to you, and all that he is, and has, for nought, in this Market of free Grace. The Way to be possesst of the rich Commodities that are in it, is just to take them all, and then you have them. Let not the Pride of your Hearts deprive you of that which will make you up through Eternity. Let not Unbelief fill you with Jealousies, as if these valuable Goods were not ordained for such guilty Creatures as you; for we can assure you from the Word, that Christ came to seek and to save, only, *that which is lost;* He came not to call the Righteous, but Sinners unto Repentance. Who is it that needs Life but the Dead? who need a Righteousness but the Guilty? who need Eye-sight but the Blind? and who stands in need of an Indemnity but the condemned Criminal? Therefore, since Christ is a Saviour ordained for Men in these Miserable Circumstances, O come to him as you are, and buy of him, or, which is the

same Thing, take from him *Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption*; for there is enough in him to satisfy the Need of every Thing that liveth. And, if you are thus determined to believe on the Son of God, you will see such a Beauty and Excellency in him, and in the whole of the Truth concerning him, that you will account all Things but Loss in Comparison of him, and the least Point of Divine Truth worth a thousand Worlds. And this leads me to the

2d. Branch of the *Exhortation*, namely, 'That you be aware of *selling* the Truth, or parting with it.

This is a Day wherein the Truths of God go at a very low Rate; many, who once Professed to be Christ's Disciples, are going back, and walking no more with him. The Cares of this World, the Deceitfulness of Riches, the loving the Praise of Men more than the Praise of God, together with the outward Dangers and Disadvantages that attend a strict Profession of the Truth, are among the sad and dismal Causes why so many part with it, in this sinning and trying Time. But we would have you all to consider, that however low the Price of Truth may be at this Day, yet there is a Time coming when the Worth of it shall be fully known. What would the greatest Enemies and Contemners of Truth give to be possist of that, which they now so much despise, in the Day, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with his mighty Angels, in flaming Fire, to take Vengeance on them that knew not God, and obeyed not the Gospel? what will this World and all the Pleasures of it avail, when the Heavens shall pass away with a great Noise, and the Elements shall melt with fervent Heat, and the Earth and the Works that are therein shall be burnt up? The Beauty and Glory of Truth shall then shine forth in perfection; and they who have bought it at the

highest Rate, will then find, to their sweet Experience, that they are the greatest Gainers. O then, be aware of parting with such a valuable Treasure. And, in order to guard you against it, I shall lay before you the following

**DIRECTIONS.** 1. Endeavour to get the Knowledge of the Truth as it is in Jesus. And, for this End, be much employed in searching the Scriptures, and examining what you read or hear with that unerring Standard, as the Bereans did. Look to the great *Apostle and high Priest of our Profession*, Christ Jesus, that he may teach you to profit; for he has Compassion on the Ignorant, and on them that are out of the Way, and is commissioned of the Father to open the eyes of the Blind, and is fully qualified for this Work, for all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge are hid in him. Essay to fasten upon the Promise of God, for the saving Knowledge of the Truth, Jer. xxxi. 34.—*They shall all Know me, from the least of them, to the greatest of them.*

2. Seek to be established in the Truth, and particularly in the *present Truth*, as the Expression is, 2 Pet. i. 12. that is, in the Truths that are presently opposed and controverted: And you have the more need to seek to be established in the Truth, in regard of the Cunning and Subtilty of *Seducers*, who *with feigned Words make Merchandise of Souls*, 2 Pet. ii. 3: or, as it is, Rom. xvi. 18.—*By good Words and fair Speeches deceive the Hearts of the Simple*, that is, such as mean well, but want Wisdom to discern the Cunning of these who mean ill, and therefore are easily imposed upon by the fair Speeches of these who lie in wait to deceive. Now, in order to your being established in the present Truth, see that you be well grounded in the Principles which you profess, that you may not be *beguiled as unstable Souls*, or be at the Mercy of every *Wind of Doctrine*. Again,



it will be very establishing in the Truth, to get a View of it, as having a Stamp of Divine Authority upon it, to see it with a *Thus saith the Lord* upon the Front of it. Further, endeavour to keep your Eye upon him who is *the Truth*. You will deviate and turn aside that Moment you lose Sight of him; therefore be much in Prayer, seeking to be established, strengthened and settled by the Lord himself. *Lastly*, Rest not, till you feel the Efficacy of every Truth you profess, upon your own Hearts.

3. See that you maintain a stedfast Profession of the Truth, Heb. x. 23.—*Hold fast the Profession of your Faith, without wavering.* This is a wavering and shaking Time wherein we live, and they who once begin to stagger are at the next Door to Apostasy. But, to engage you to make a stedfast Profession of your Faith, consider, That *Truth* is that great *Trust* which God has committed unto us, with a strict and solemn Charge to keep it, against all that would undermine or oppose it; for which Reason it is called the *Faith once delivered unto the Saints*. Since therefore this is such a valuable Trust which is committed unto us, we ought to be faithful to our Trust, in maintaining a stedfast Profession of the Truth, in this *reeling* Time. And, in order to this, *receive the Love of the Truth*. Love to the Truth will make you bear Witness to it at all Hazards, though it should be at the Expence of your Name, Reputation, worldly Interest, or even of your Life itself. Labour also to get your Hearts inflamed with Love to God himself, who is the God of Truth. *David's* Love to *Jonathan* made him enquire for some of his Race, to whom he might shew Kindness for *Jonathan's* Sake: So Love to God will make the Soul inquisitive to know what is near and dear to God, that, by shewing Kindness to it, he may express his Love to him: And no-

### of Divine Truth.

thing is dearer to him than his Truth, for it is one of the greatest Mercies that can be bestowed upon a People, Psal. cxlvii. 19. 29. *He sheweth his Word unto Jacob, his statutes and his Judgments unto Israel, he hath not dealt so with any Nation.* And dreadful are the punishments he inflicts upon the Enemies of his Truth, even all the Plagues that are written in the Word of Truth, Rev. xxii. 18.

I shall conclude with a few *Properties* of the Truth, which may be considered as *Motives* to engage you to a steadfast Profession of it. (1.) Truth is *pure* Psal. xix. 7. Not only pure in itself, but also maketh the Soul pure and holy that embraceth it. (2.) Truth is a sure and lasting Possession; it *endureth for ever*, Psal. xix. 7. It has a firm Bottom, able to bear your Weight. *Sirs*, cleave to the Truth, and it will abide with you, and go with you to Prison, Banishment, yea to Death itself, and bear your Charges wherever you go upon its Errand. (3.) Truth is *free*, John viii. 32. *You shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free.* When once Christ and the Soul are brought together by the Word of Truth, then the Day of your Redemption is come, a Deliverance from your spiritual Bondage is accomplished. (4.) Truth is *victorious*, the Counsel of the Lord shall stand. The age of Truth runs parallel with God's Eternity: It shall live to see their Heads laid in the Dust, who were so busy in seeking to bury it; yea, it shall reign in Peace with the Sufferers for it, when the unrelenting Oppressors thereof shall gnash their Teeth with never-ending Pain, for there Opposition unto it. Witnesses for Truth may sometimes be *few*, but there shall always be *some*; and therefore, though Persecutors may sometimes be permitted to get the present *Sett* of Witnesses off the Stage, yet instantly will others start

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*Ineffable Value, &c.*

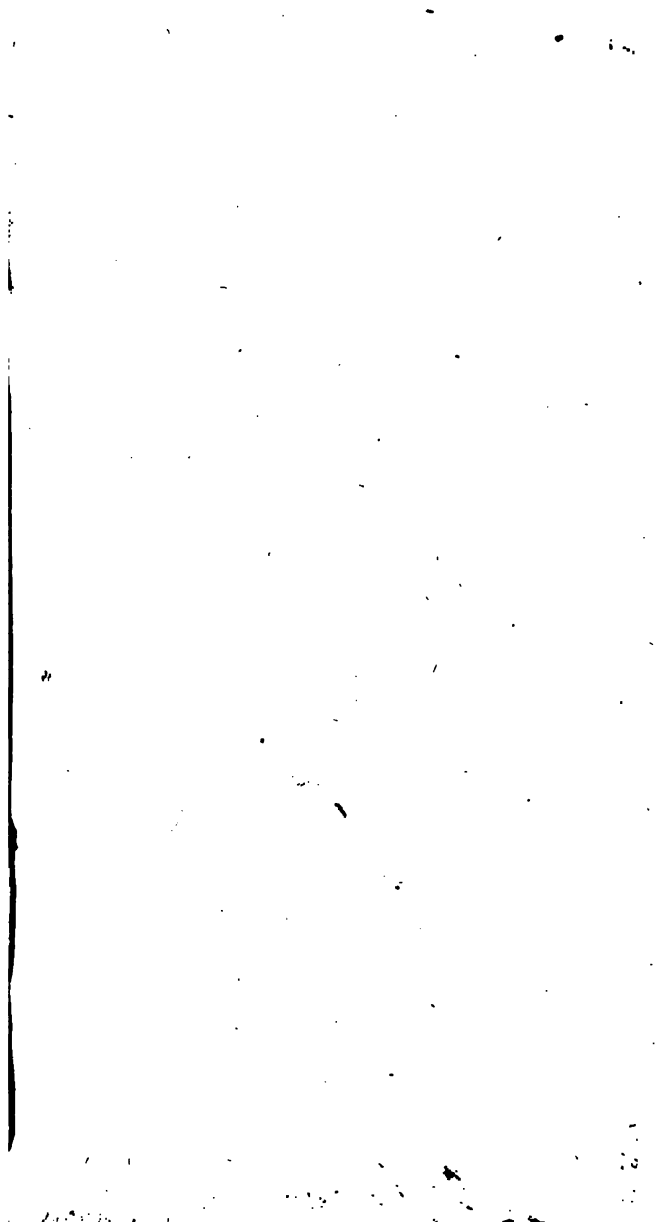
up in their Room, whom they did not think of be-  
fore: For his Name shall endure for ever, and conse-  
quently there shall be a Seed to serve him, who will  
make his Name to be remembered in all Generations.

F I N I S.



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