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ACT

FOR

RENEWING OUR COVENANTS;

IN AN

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF SINS,

AND

ENGAGEMENT TO DUTIES:

TOGETHER WITH A

FORMULA OF QUESTIONS

FOR ORDINATION AND LICENSE.

BY

THE ASSOCIATE SYNOD OF ORIGINAL SECEDERS.

EDINBURGH:

SOLD BY GUTHRIE AND TAIT, AND WILLIAM DON, EDINBURGH;

WILLIAM M'CARTER, AYR; WILLIAM TROUP, ABERDEEN;

ROBERT DICK, DUNDEE; AND JAMES DEWAR, PERTH.

1828.

At Edinburgh, the 15th of May 1828,

THE ASSOCIATE SYNOD having read and corrected an Overture of an Acknowledgment of Sins and Engagement to Duties, suitable to the present circumstances of this church and land, unanimously agree in adopting it; and they appoint that, agreeably to the order which has hitherto been observed in this work, our Covenants, the National Covenant of Scotland, and the Solemn League and Covenant of the three nations, shall be renewed, by all such as shall willingly offer themselves, in the different Congregations under their inspection, in the said Acknowledgment of Sins and Engagement to Duties; the tenor whereof follows, viz. ^

THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF SINS.

WE all, and every one of us, seriously considering the great goodness of God towards these lands in bringing our fathers, at an early period, out of pagan darkness, and afterwards scattering the thick clouds of antichristian idolatry and superstition by the light of the glorious gospel of Christ;—in disposing all ranks of persons in Scotland, by a National Confession, Oath and Covenant, expressly to abjure the errors and corruptions of Popery, and by the same covenant, frequently renewed, to bind themselves and their posterity to continue in the faith, profession, and obedience of the true Reformed Religion, as held forth from the word of God, in our first Confession of Faith and Books of Discipline;—and in bringing forward all ranks of persons in the three kingdoms, by the Solemn League and Covenant, to abjure not only Popery, but also Prelacy, and to engage, through the grace of God, sincerely to endeavour, in their several stations, the preservation of the said reformed religion in Scotland, and the reformation of religion in England and Ireland, that so the Churches in the three kingdoms might be brought to the nearest conjunction and uniformity in doctrine, worship, discipline and government, according to the Scriptures, while every one also bound himself to personal reformation;—and that, in pursuance of the above engagements, the Assembly which met at Westminster, with commissioners from the Church of

Scotland, by the good hand of God upon them, agreed upon a Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms, a form of Presbyterian Church Government, and a Directory for Public Worship; all which were received and approved by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, as parts of the covenanted uniformity, while many important steps were taken at the same time in England and Ireland for the reformation of religion agreeably to these standards: And considering, farther, the course of defection, by which all ranks in Britain and Ireland, both in former and present times, have treacherously departed from the Lord, by transgressing his laws, changing his ordinances, and violating their covenant engagements to be the Lord's people; and that we are at present suffering under the many spiritual plagues, which are the ordinary forerunners of desolating strokes both upon churches and nations:—Therefore, being warranted by the command of God, and the approved example of his Church recorded in Scripture; and being encouraged by the example of our religious ancestors, and by the consideration that the public confession of sin, when practised according to the word of God, and in the faith of his promise of forgiveness, hath in former ages received the divine countenance, and proved a means of the remarkable revival of religion,—we desire, in a sole dependence upon promised grace, and in the faith of pardon through the blood of Christ, whom God hath exalted a Prince and Saviour, to give repentance and the forgiveness of sins, to acknowledge, and **WE HEREBY DO ACKNOWLEDGE AND CONFESS**, as in the sight of the great Searcher of hearts, our own, and the transgressions of all ranks in these lands.

We, with our fathers, have sinned—we have done wickedly—our kings, our princes, our nobles, our judges, our magistrates, our ministers, and all classes of persons in these lands, have been in a great trespass. Though the Lord hath spoken long and clearly to us in his word, yet we have not hearkened to his voice; though we have made a profession of the name of Christ, we have not been careful to receive him into our hearts, nor to walk worthy of him in our lives; and in this respect we have, in a heinous degree, transgressed the covenant of the Lord our God. Our consciences, and the many judgments, both spiritual and temporal, which we are under, may convince us of our manifold and wilful breaches of our solemn engagements to be the Lord's people.

We acknowledge with sorrow the public defections of these lands from a covenanted work of reformation. England soon discovered a disposition to draw back and violate the engagements

she had come under. Her representatives in Parliament, after having sworn, along with their brethren, to “endeavour the preservation of the reformed religion in Scotland, in discipline and government,” and to “bring the Churches in the three kingdoms to the nearest conjunction and uniformity;” accompanied their approbation of the presbyterial form of church-government, drawn up by the Westminster Assembly, with such exceptions and restrictions as rendered it in a great measure abortive in that country, and as opened the way to the introduction of new sects, errors, heresies, and blasphemous opinions, which till then had been unknown in Britain. In Scotland, so early as 1650, in consequence of the Public Resolutions, a deep wound was given to the covenanted interest, by the introduction of the avowed and active enemies of the Reformation into places of power and trust. These defections from the covenanted cause speedily led to the overthrow of all that had been done in the late reforming period.

On the restoration of Charles II. to the throne, the Presbyterial order and government of the house of God was overturned, and Prelacy, which had been abjured by our covenants, was set up in the three kingdoms. In Scotland, particularly, the famous Assembly which met at Glasgow in 1638 was declared, by the Parliament, an unlawful and seditious meeting; all that was done for promoting reformation between that period and the year 1651 was pronounced treasonable and rebellious; the National Covenant, as sworn in the year 1638, together with the Solemn League and Covenant, were condemned as unlawful oaths, and declared not to be binding; and so great was the height of wickedness, that the Solemn League was ignominiously burnt in some considerable places of the nation. The overthrow of Presbytery, and the restoration of Prelacy in the three kingdoms, were accompanied with most sinful and wicked invasions of the royal prerogatives and sole headship of Christ over the Church, by several Parliamentary acts and deeds, which asserted the king’s supremacy in all causes whatsoever, and declared, that the regulation and external government of the Church belonged properly to the king, as an inherent right of the crown. These enactments were followed by the imposition of many sinful oaths, declarations, and bonds, by which the king’s usurped supremacy over the house of God was recognised and acknowledged, and a covenanted reformation renounced and abjured; so that persons of all ranks in these lands who submitted to these sinful encroachments, were involved in the heinous crimes of perjury and apostasy.

It is to be lamented that, in this hour of trial, there was a general fainting among the friends of the Reformation, which led to a tame, and for some time almost universal, submission to the wicked and tyrannical measures of the Court, and prevented any judicial testimony being given against them. The indulgences granted by Charles II. to some ministers who had not conformed to prelacy, to exercise their ministry under certain conditions, restrictions and limitations, proved a snare to a number of them, who, by accepting these, virtually acquiesced in the usurped supremacy over the free and independent kingdom of Christ. And although the unlimited toleration granted by the Duke of York, when raised to the throne, was plainly designed for the introduction of popery and slavery, and was expressly derived from a power which he claimed of dispensing with the laws of the land, yet, instead of bearing testimony against this toleration, the great body of the Presbyterian ministers throughout the kingdom thankfully accepted of it.

The national apostasy was also accompanied with a grievous persecution. The witnesses for the cause of Christ became a prey, especially in Scotland, to the greatest tyranny and cruelty. They were not only subjected to the spoiling of their goods, to imprisonment, to banishment, and to the most cruel tortures, but their blood was shed in our principal cities under colour of law, and also in the high places of the field without any legal process. Thus, in our skirts is to be found the blood of those who suffered for the testimony of Jesus, which is crying to Heaven for vengeance to this very day.

As the beautiful order, and scriptural government and discipline of God's house were overturned, so in this period of treading down in the valley of vision, the doctrines of religion were perverted by a great influx of Arminian and other errors. This was followed by a course of irreligious profaneness and oppression among all ranks, which has seldom been exemplified in any country. Judgment was turned away backward, justice stood afar off, truth failed, and he who departed from evil made himself a prey, till the Lord saw it, and his arm brought salvation.

While we desire to acknowledge with gratitude the great deliverance the Lord wrought for us in these lands, at the memorable Revolution in the year 1688, by freeing us from the yoke of tyranny and arbitrary government under which we then groaned, yet we have to confess with sorrow, that we have not, to this day, rendered to Him according to the benefits that we have received. We understood not his wonderful works nor remembered the multitude of his mercies; and instead of waiting for his counsel, we have fol-

lowed the counsels of flesh and blood. We turned not to him with the whole heart, by a free confession of our numerous transgressions, and by the renovation of our solemn covenant engagements.

When we consider the evils themselves, and their baneful consequences as to religion to this day, we have deeply to deplore, that, in the year 1690, the Parliament of Scotland, at their first meeting, settled Presbyterian Church-government, according to its establishment in the year 1592, overlooking all the steps of reformation attained to in the covenanting period between 1638 and 1650, and leaving untouched all that was done against a covenanted reformation in the first session of Parliament after the Restoration. Particularly the infamous act called Rescissory, which declared null and void all the acts and deeds of the covenanting period, remains unrepealed; and that impious and wicked act declaring null and void the proceedings of that faithful Assembly at Glasgow in the year 1638, stands in the body of our Scottish law to this day. Thus, that great work which the Lord wrought, with an outstretched arm, in the days of our fathers, lies buried under several Parliamentary acts and deeds,—an iniquity which continues loudly to testify against us.

And as the Estates of the nation shewed no disposition to return to the Lord, so when the General Assembly of this church met the same year, they sat down under the above civil establishment, without remonstrating against what was defective in it. Though, in an act for a national fast, they enumerated the heights to which the supremacy had been advanced, the introduction of prelacy, the general compliance with it, and the persecutions which followed, among the grounds of humiliation; yet they did not, by any formal act, assert the divine right of Presbytery, nor the intrinsic power of the church to call her national assemblies, which are two special branches of the Redeemer's glorious headship over his people. They did not expressly approve our covenanted reformation, attained between the years 1638 and 1650; nor plainly justify the faithful contendings, testimonies, and sufferings of the Lord's witnesses in the late persecuting times. They did not, by any particular act of Assembly, assert the obligation of our Covenants, National and Solemn League, and their binding force upon posterity; nor did they particularly condemn the sinful oaths, declarations and bonds, formerly mentioned; and they admitted some into ministerial communion, many into the office of elders, and multitudes into full communion with the church, who had taken these oaths and bonds, and who were deeply involved in the guilt of persecu-

tion, and the defections of that period of apostasy, without requiring any evidence of their repentance.

Our public guilt was increased by the Treaty of Union with England, [by which, in opposition to our covenant-union with it, the maintenance of the hierarchy and ceremonies of the Church of England, is made a fundamental and essential article of the Union of the two kingdoms; and thus that antichristian form of government and superstitious worship in the neighbouring country has all the security which human laws can give it, and that with the consent of Scotland, in direct violation of our solemn covenant engagements. At a later period the consent of Scotland was a second time given to the perpetual establishment of Episcopacy, by the incorporating union between Great Britain and Ireland; which sealed the public apostasy of these lands.

Immediately after the Union between England and Scotland, our land was brought under a load of guilt, by the imposition of unlawful oaths. The oath of Abjuration was appointed to be taken, first, by all in civil and military trust, and afterwards by the ministers of the church of Scotland; which oath we acknowledge as one of our national sins, in so far as the united constitution, repugnant to our covenant-union, is thereby acknowledged and approved. In like manner, the Sacramental Test, or receiving the Lord's Supper according to the superstitious usage of the Church of England, was imposed on the inhabitants of Scotland, when serving the supreme magistrate in England, which has long continued to be a national sin and snare; and though this test has been recently superseded, yet the legislature, in their act repealing it, have renewed and increased the securities formerly given for the perpetual preservation of the episcopal church. A superstitious form of swearing was also introduced, by laying the hands upon and kissing the gospels. Moreover, the sinful practice was at that time introduced, of repeatedly administering oaths to persons, even on the same day, to qualify them for different offices, by which the name of the Great God is profaned, and the impression which a solemn oath is calculated to make upon the consciences of men, is in danger of being worn off.

Our provocations were greatly increased by the deep injury done to many precious and important truths contained in the Scriptures, and stated in our Confession of Faith; and that not by individuals only, but also by the judicatories of the Established Church.

Particularly, in a process brought before these judicatories,

it was clearly proved that the Professor of Divinity* in one of our universities, had taught a number of dangerous errors: Among others, that “nothing is to be admitted in religion but what is agreeable to reason, and determined by reason to be so;” and that “there was not a proper covenant made with Adam and his posterity.” But this process the Assembly dismissed without any censure inflicted upon that teacher, and without any particular and express testimony against his dangerous errors. In the righteous judgment of God, the same teacher was permitted in a few years to impugn the Deity of the great God our Saviour; for, in another process against him, it was found proved at the Bar of the Assembly that he had taught that “our Lord Jesus Christ is not necessarily existent;” and that “the terms Necessary Existence, Supreme Deity, and the title of the Only True God, may be taken in a sense that includes the personal property of the Father, and so not belonging to the Son;” yet the judicatories of the National Church neither inflicted any other censure upon the teacher of these errors, but a mere suspension, nor expressly condemned the errors themselves as contrary to the word of God, nor asserted the truth in opposition to the terms in which it had been impugned and denied.

In another university, one of the professors* was convicted at the bar of the judicatories of having vented errors, by which the supernatural operations of the Holy Spirit were indirectly traduced, and the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, as well as the fundamental principles of natural religion, were subverted;—and particularly of having taught that “self-love, interest, or pleasure, is the sole and universal motive to virtuous actions;”—yet the General Assembly dismissed this teacher without any censure.

At a period considerably later, another minister of the Established Church † published a book, in which Christ is represented as a person of our own order, the necessity and reality of the atonement made by his death are denied, repentance is taught to be the proper atonement for past transgressions, and faith and sincere obedience made the foundation of the hope of future happiness; and in another publication, he made a violent attack upon Confessions of Faith, as subordinate standards of orthodoxy. But though this cause was brought before the Presbytery to which the author of these books belonged, and also before the Synod and General Assembly, he was dismissed without any censure, merely upon his confessing that “there are in his publications ideas which may appear

* Mr Simson.

† Mr Campbell.

‡ Dr Macgill.

improper, and modes of expression, with respect to some things, ambiguous and unguarded, which he disclaims, and for which he is heartily sorry.”

Our iniquities have also increased by the conduct of the established judicatories, in exercising a lordly power and authority over the heritage of God, and in grossly perverting the ordinance of discipline. The right of presentation to vacant churches, claimed by patrons, and abolished at the Revolution, was, in the year 1712, again restored by act of Parliament; and though patronage is contrary to the word of God, and the principles of the reformed church of Scotland, yet the judicatories of the National Church began, not many years after, to countenance and support that antichristian usurpation, by intruding presentees upon reclaiming congregations. Not satisfied with enforcing the law of patronage, the Assembly violated the rights of the people, in cases where they were left at complete liberty, as appears from their act 1732, respecting the settlement of parishes in which patrons did not exercise the right of presentation; and although this act was afterwards repealed, on account of its informality, yet the church courts persevered in their violent measures, till, at length, the opposition, at first made to them both by ministers and people, gradually died away. When a number of ministers, being driven by the tyrannical proceedings of the judicatories from the communion of the Established Church, had formed themselves into a Presbytery, and published a Testimony against these and other corruptions, the General Assembly, instead of being reclaimed, condemned that Testimony, and proceeded against the ministers to deposition, by which they declared their determination not only to persist in their course of defection, but also, by perverted authority, to suppress all opposition to it.

Although we consider ourselves called upon gratefully to acknowledge the kindness of God to the ministers who were forced to make a Secession from the judicatories of the National Church, and who erected themselves first into a Presbytery, and afterwards into a Synod,—in giving countenance to their labours, and support to the Testimony which they published, and particularly in bringing them forward to the Renovation of our Covenants in a Bond suited to their circumstances; yet it is matter of deep lamentation that the seeds of contention were early sown in the Secession. They had no sooner formed themselves into a Synod than they found it necessary to take under consideration the religious clause of some burgess oaths, the swearing of which was judged inconsistent with a state of secession from the Established Church, as the swearer re-

cognised the religion presently professed within this realm, and authorised by the laws thereof, as the true religion. A mournful dispute ensued, which issued in the rupture of the Synod. It is also to be deeply lamented, that, by the late union between the two great branches of the Secession, this hurt of the daughter of Zion has been healed slightly ; that, instead of candidly meeting the question, or making provision for preventing the taking of an oath, when still imposed, which, as sworn by Seceders, had all along been viewed by one of the parties as sinful, they consigned the whole controversy to oblivion ; and that, along with this, they dropped a testimony for the proper and continued obligation of our covenants, and some other principles connected with the work of reformation in our native land, which had hitherto been considered by the Reformed Church of Scotland, and particularly in the Secession, as belonging to the word of Christ's patience.

It is to be lamented that the unfaithful and corrupt managements of the established judicatories have been followed by a flood of errors, by which the Lord's name is dreadfully dishonoured,—the doctrine of justification by grace is wofully corrupted—the proper imputation of the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ for our justification before God is denied, thousands of precious souls are destroyed, and wide steps taken towards Popery and Paganism. More particularly, we have to lament a dreadful prevalence of DEISM, by which all revealed religion is rejected, and the light of corrupt nature is exalted in its room ; of ARIANISM, by which the true and supreme Deity of the Son of God, and of the Holy Spirit, is denied ; of SOCINIANISM, by which Christ is represented as a mere man, and his atonement for sin is denied ; and of ARMINIANISM, by which it is maintained, that God's act of election and reprobation depends on his foresight of the good or evil works of men ; that Jesus Christ, by his death, has merited grace for all mankind ; that, notwithstanding the fall, man retains a freedom of will to that which is spiritually good ; that the grace of God is not irresistible and efficacious of itself ; and that believers in Christ may fall totally and finally away from a state of grace.

It is further to be lamented, that some who formerly distinguished themselves by zeal for our reformation and covenanted principles, have turned aside to latitudinarian, independent and sectarian extremes, whereby the unity of the true Catholic Church is denied, and the Presbyterial order and government, the only government which Christ has instituted in his house, is subverted ;—the warrantableness of Confessions of Faith and Catechisms, as tests

of soundness in the faith, is denied, and a wide door is opened for the admission of all sorts of error and heresy into the church, under the specious pretence of liberty of conscience;—and, under a pretence of catholic love, a scheme is laid for uniting parties of all denominations in church communion, in a way destructive of any faithful testimony for the declarative glory of Immanuel, as King and Head of Zion, and for the covenanted uniformity in religion according to our standards.

To these public evils we have to add a fearful increase of wickedness, which has spread over the whole kingdom. All classes of men have corrupted their ways. Our nobility and gentry have, for the most part, burst the Lord's bands asunder, and cast away his cords; our ministers, burgesses, and commons of all sorts, have turned away backward, and forsaken the Holy One of Israel. Many heinous sins and provocations, both against the first and second table of the moral law, are to be found among us; such as gross ignorance of God, atheism, infidelity, profane mockings at the mysteries of religion, and employing some of the sublimest passages of Scripture for the purpose of musical entertainment. The errors and abominations of Popery are spreading; Popish chapels are erected in the principal towns and cities of the country; the idolatrous mass is openly frequented; public countenance has been given in a number of instances by the government of the country to the man of sin, and the clamorous and pertinacious demand of his followers to be admitted to all places of power and trust under the Crown, so dangerous to the civil and religious liberties of these realms, is strenuously defended by many who call themselves Protestants, both in and out of parliament. The name of God is profaned, by rash and ordinary swearing in common conversation; and by perjury and false swearing, especially in trade and commerce. The Lord's day is profaned, even by those in public authority and high station, in many different ways, particularly by frequent and unnecessary travelling, and by public entertainments and amusements. Many are without natural affection, unruly, disobedient. The land is also defiled with murders, drunkenness, prodigality and vanity in dress, foolish jestings, rioting and wantonness, and even with undisguised adulteries and uncleanness of all kinds; and some profane and sinful customs, which were little known and practised in former times, are countenanced and encouraged, both at court and in many places of the country; as the profane diversions of the stage, masquerades, lascivious balls and dancings, and other seminaries of lewdness and dissipation. Fraud and injustice, in deal-

ings between man and man, are to be found among us, together with oppression, lying, envy, malice, evil-speaking, backbiting, falsehood, dissimulation, and covetousness which is idolatry.

We desire, through grace, to turn our eyes inward to our own hearts, to search and try our ways, to declare our iniquity, to be sorry for our sin, and to turn again to the Lord. For, "who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? Did not the Lord? he against whom we have sinned," by our unbelief, selfishness, formality, earthliness, carnal security, and falling from first love,—by want of tenderness, watchfulness, and spirituality, in the frame and disposition of our heart, and in our walk and conversation.

We desire, in a particular manner, to be humbled before God, for our unbelief, which we acknowledge to be our greatest sin, and the chief ground of the Lord's controversy with the land in which we live. We have not suitably profited by the glorious gospel of the Son of God, either as the ministration of righteousness for our justification, or as the ministration of the Spirit for our sanctification. We have not obeyed the voice, nor received correction; we have not trusted in the Lord, nor drawn near to our God. We have been obstinate; our neck has been an iron sinew, and our brow brass. We have dealt very treacherously, and have been called transgressors from the womb. We confess our ignorance, and great deficiency in the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord, his person, offices, and benefits,—of the covenant of grace, as made and ratified with him,—and of the way of deriving spiritual benefit from both.

We desire to be humbled for undervaluing Christ, his spiritual benefits, and communion with him. We have often preferred other things to him and his interests, and have not given him the pre-eminence in our hearts. We have been little exercised in meditation, searching the Scriptures, self-examination, fervent and frequent prayer—these means of secret communion and fellowship with him. We have not been duly concerned to receive him into our hearts, nor to look to him, as we ought, for those purposes for which he is exhibited in the gospel, nor to improve him by faith, for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. We have not suitably rested upon his righteousness, as the sole ground of our justification; nor have we, as we ought, depended upon him, as made of God unto us sanctification, in all our religious exercises, in the duties common to all christians, or in those of our particular vocations, for direction, reviving, and strength to mortify our corruptions, and to carry us through our Christian course, against all dis-

couragements and temptations ; but have frequently attempted the performance of duty in a legal rather than in an evangelical manner. We have not drawn near to God as our Father, in prayer and supplication, and in thanksgiving, with that humble boldness, and full assurance of faith, which are warranted by the sacrifice and intercession of Christ.

We have not been duly careful to sanctify the Lord's day ; particularly, by avoiding carnal conversation, in our own families, in coming to public worship, during the intervals of it, and in returning to our homes. In attending on the preaching of the gospel, we have not been duly concerned to find communion with the Father and his son Jesus Christ, to taste of his goodness, and to be built up in holiness and comfort, through faith unto salvation. We have not duly prepared our hearts in secret, to draw near with holy fear and reverence, humility, and vehement desire for the kingdom of God and its righteousness, as new-born babes, desiring the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby. We are little acquainted with receiving the word, not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God. We have not, with due frequency and earnestness, applied to the Lord, that he might teach us inwardly, by accompanying the outward means with the effectual operation of his Holy Spirit. We have not mixed the word with faith, as we ought to have done, believing it with our hearts, and applying to ourselves the truths that were delivered ; nor have we been duly careful to lay up the words of Christ in our hearts for our spiritual benefit, to supplicate his Spirit to bring them to remembrance, or to meditate upon them in secret.

We desire to be humbled before the Lord, that we have not duly made use of the Sacraments, as seals of the covenant of grace, and of the promises therein made to us in Christ. In offering our children to the Lord in baptism, we have not been suitably affected with our own and our children's defilement by original guilt and corruption ; we have not duly considered and esteemed the free love and grace of God, which has opened to us, and to our seed, a fountain for sin and uncleanness ; nor been duly concerned that they might be regenerated and united to Christ. We have not suitably applied the covenant and the promises of it to ourselves and to our offspring, nor this sacrament as a seal of it. When present at the administration of this ordinance to others, we have not employed it as we ought, for the confirmation of our faith, and for strengthening the impression of our baptismal engagements, nor have we been duly concerned that God would bless his own ordinance

to the baptised, and receive them into the number of his children in Christ. We have not been duly careful to instruct our children when they came to the years of capacity concerning the nature, use and ends of their baptism, and the obligation which it imposes upon them, as devoted to Christ. Nor have we made a due use of this sacrament, through the course of our life, for encouraging us to take hold of God's covenant, for increasing our faith and comfort in God, as our God and Father in Christ, and for strengthening our resolutions and endeavours, through the grace of Christ, to mortify corruption, and to walk in newness of life. We desire to be humbled, that we have not been at more pains, in preparing for the solemn ordinance of the Lord's Supper, by self-examination, meditation and prayer, and by renewed actings of faith upon the Lord Jesus Christ for righteousness and strength. We have not approached the table of the Lord with a proper degree of spiritual thirst and longing for Christ, and with due contrition of heart. We have not been sufficiently exercised in remembering the Lord's death till he come again; and in deriving virtue from it, for strengthening our graces, and mortifying our corruptions; nor have we walked worthily after communicating.

We have not valued the discipline appointed by our Lord Jesus Christ, as we ought to have done; and when others, by reason of their falls and offences, have become objects of censure, we have not, as we ought, mourned for the dishonour done to God, pitied and prayed for the offenders, and been humbled under a suitable sense of our own sins.

We desire to be humbled for our great formality in prayer, both in secret and in our families; and that we have not been suitably concerned to join with our hearts in public prayers and praises, to offer up all our supplications in the name of Christ, to depend upon the help of his Spirit, to observe these ordinances as a means of communion with God, and of confirming our faith and every other grace, and, when we have addressed our prayers to God, to look up to him for a gracious answer.

We humbly confess that we have not walked as becometh the gospel of Christ, but have greatly failed in our duty both to God and man. In particular, we desire to be humbled for our vain thoughts, our idle words, and our lukewarmness in the matters of God. Our conversation has savoured too much of the earth, and too little of heaven and things above. The impressions of the love of Christ, and of the free grace of God, have not been so lively upon our hearts, as was necessary to keep them watchful and tender,

and zealous for God and his glory. We have often resisted the Spirit of holiness, when he stirred us up to duty ; and have put away his reproofs, which lead to repentance and humiliation. We have often grieved him by undervaluing his presence, refusing his consolations, and slighting his counsel. We have not watched with becoming tenderness against carnal company and conversation, nor have we been studious to recommend religion to others, by a holy, convincing, and edifying behaviour. We have not been duly faithful in watching over and admonishing one another with meekness and love ; but have been too ready to speak of the infirmities and failings of others behind their backs, instead of observing the scripture rule. Nor have we diligently sought and embraced opportunities of religious fellowship, and particularly of social prayer and conference.

All these sins, declensions, and apostasies, are highly aggravated, as having been committed against great gospel-light, and many remarkable appearances of God among us, both in mercy and judgment, in former and in later times, against sacramental vows, and our indispensable engagements, by the National Covenant of Scotland, and the Solemn League and Covenant of the three nations ; while the sins of those belonging to the Secession Body are further aggravated by their being committed against our distinguished profession, and the explicit engagements contracted by that solemn covenanting which has been so long practised among us. We desire, therefore, to confess unto the Lord our iniquities, with all their aggravations ; to be deeply humbled, and to lie down in shame before him, acknowledging that he would be righteous and holy, though he should plead his controversy with us, on account of our apostasy and breach of covenant, by casting us out of his sight for ever. But since the Lord is still waiting to be gracious, we desire to flee to the blood of Jesus for the remission of our sins, and to pray that he may return to us, and heal our spiritual diseases, that glory may yet dwell in our land.

And as it is the duty of a sinning people, not only to confess their iniquities, and be humbled for them, but also, by faith, to take hold of God's gracious covenant revealed to us in the glorious gospel, avouching the Lord to be our God, according to the tenor of this his covenant, devoting ourselves to him as his people, and returning to him from whom we have revolted : And, in the faith of his free mercy through Jesus Christ, and trusting in him for the grace and strength which are promised in his covenant, to engage unto and pursue after reformation and the advancement of his

kingdom, which is in, but not of, this world : And being convinced in our minds, and confessing with our mouths, that as well by the word of God, as by the National Covenant of Scotland, and the Solemn League and Covenant of the three nations, the present and succeeding generations in these lands are bound firmly and constantly to adhere to the doctrine, worship, presbyterial church-government, and discipline of the house of God, as contained in the Holy Scriptures, summed up in our subordinate standards, and sworn to in these solemn covenants :—

THEREFORE, in obedience to the command of God, conformably to the practice of the godly in former times, and according to the laudable example of our worthy and religious progenitors, in the said covenants,

[THE ENGAGEMENT TO DUTIES.]

WE all and every one of us, though sensible of the deceitfulness and unbelief of our own hearts, and frequently perplexed with doubts and fears about our actual believing ; yet, desiring in the Lord's strength, and in obedience to his command, to glorify God, by believing his word of grace, contained in his covenant of promise, and in the faith of his promise, to devote ourselves to the Lord in a Covenant of Duty : WE DO, with our hands lifted up to the MOST HIGH GOD, hereby profess, and, before God, angels, and men, solemnly declare, That, through the grace of God, and according to the measure of his grace given unto us, we desire, with our whole hearts, to take hold of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, as the only propitiation for our sins ; his Righteousness, as the only foundation of our access to God, and acceptance with him ; his Covenant of free and rich promises, as our only charter for the heavenly inheritance ; his Word, for our perfect and only rule of faith and practice ; his SPIRIT for our sole guide, to lead us into all truth revealed in his Holy Word, to which nothing is at any time to be added, either by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. We avouch the LORD to be OUR GOD ; and, in the strength of his promised grace, we *promise* and

swear, by the GREAT NAME OF THE LORD OUR GOD, That we shall walk in his way, keep his judgments and commandments, and hearken to his voice; and, particularly, that we shall, by the Lord's grace, continue and abide in the profession, faith, and obedience of the true reformed religion, in doctrine, worship, presbyterial church-government and discipline; and that we shall, according to our several stations, places, and callings, and according to the measure of our knowledge, contend and testify against all contrary evils, errors, and corruptions; particularly Popery, Deism, Socinianism, Arianism, Arminianism, and every error, subversive of the doctrine of grace, as also Prelacy, Independency, Latitudinarian tenets, and the other evils mentioned in the preceding Acknowledgment of Sins.

In like manner we *promise* and *swear*, That, by all means which are lawful and warrantable for us, according to the word of God, the approved and received standards of the reformed Church of Scotland, and our known principles, we shall, in our several stations and callings, and according to our opportunities in Providence, endeavour the reformation of religion in Britain and Ireland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, according to the word of God; and to promote and advance our covenanted conjunction and uniformity in religion, Confession of Faith and Catechisms, Form of Church-government, and Directory for Worship, as these were received by this Church. We likewise engage, by all lawful means, and according as a door may be opened to us in Providence, to promote the genuine interests of the kingdom of Christ in every part of the world.

And in regard we are taught by the word of God, and bound by our covenants, National and Solemn League, to live together in the fear of God, and in love one to another, and to encourage one another in the work and cause of the Lord; and that, denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this pre-

sent world: Therefore, in dependence upon the Lord's grace and strength, We, in the same manner, do *promise* and *swear*, That we shall, in our several places and callings, encourage and strengthen one another, in pursuing the end and design of this our solemn Oath and Covenant; and shall endeavour a life and conversation becoming the gospel of Christ: And, in our personal callings and particular families, we shall study to be good examples to one another of godliness and righteousness, and of every duty which we owe to God and man: And that we shall not give up ourselves to a detestable indifference and neutrality in the cause of God; but, denying ourselves and our own things, we shall seek first the honour of God, and the good of his cause and people: And that, through grace, forsaking the counsels of flesh and blood, and not leaning upon carnal confidence, we shall endeavour to depend upon the Lord, to walk by the rule of his word, and to hearken to his voice in the dispensation of the gospel. In all which, professing our own weakness, we earnestly pray to GOD, who is the Father of Mercies, through his Son JESUS CHRIST, to be merciful unto us, and enable us by the power of his HOLY SPIRIT, that we may do our duty, unto the praise of his grace in the Churches. Amen,

FORMULA OF QUESTIONS,

AGREED TO BY THE

Associate Synod of Original Seceders,

FOR BEING PUT AT THE

ORDINATION OF MINISTERS AND ELDERS;

AS ALSO AT THE

LICENSING OF YOUNG MEN TO PREACH THE GOSPEL.

FOR MINISTERS, PROBATIONERS, AND ELDERS.

QUESTION I.

+ Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the Word of God, and the only rule of faith and manners?

QUESTION II.

+ Do you sincerely own and believe the whole doctrine contained in the Confession of Faith, compiled by the Assembly of Divines who met at Westminster, with Commissioners from the Church of Scotland;—as the said Confession was received and approved by the Assembly of that Church in the year 1647; and likewise the whole doctrine contained in the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, compiled by the said Westminster Assembly;—to be founded upon the word of God: And do you acknowledge the said Confession as the confession of your faith; and will you, through grace, firmly and constantly adhere to,—and, to the utmost of your power,

assert, maintain and defend the doctrine of,—the said Confession and Catechisms, against all Deistical, Popish, Arian, Socinian, Arminian, Neonomian, Antinomian, and other doctrines, tenets and opinions whatsoever, contrary to, or inconsistent with, the said Confession and Catechisms ?

QUESTION III.

† Are you persuaded that the Lord Jesus Christ, the alone King and Head of his Church, hath appointed a particular form of government to take place therein,—distinct from Civil Government, and not subordinate to the same ; and that Presbyterial Church-government, without any superiority of office above a teaching Presbyter, in due subordination of Judicatories (such as of Kirk-sessions to Presbyteries, of Presbyteries to Provincial Synods, and of Provincial Synods to General Assemblies), is the only form of government laid down and appointed by the Lord Jesus Christ in his Word, to continue in his Church to the end of the world unalterable ;—which, accordingly, has been owned and received by the Church of Scotland, as the only government of divine institution and appointment ; as is evident from the Second Book of Discipline, and from the Propositions concerning Church-government, as the said Propositions were received and approved by an act of Assembly 1645, session 16 : And do you promise to submit to the said government and discipline,—and never to endeavour, directly or indirectly, the prejudice or subversion thereof ; but that you will, to the utmost of your power in your station, during all the days of your life, maintain, support, and defend the same ; together with the purity of worship received and practised in this Church, against all Erastian, Prelatic, Sectarian, or other tenets, opinions, or forms of worship and government whatsoever,—contrary to, or inconsistent with, the said worship, government and discipline,—sworn to in our Covenants, National and Solemn League ?

QUESTION IV.

† Do you own and acknowledge the morality of Public Covenanting : And do you own and acknowledge the perpetual obligation of the National Covenant, frequently sworn by persons of all ranks in Scotland, and particularly as explained by the General Assembly 1638, to abjure the hierarchy and five articles of Perth : And

also the perpetual obligation of the Solemn League and Covenant, for maintaining and carrying on a work of Reformation in the three kingdoms, sworn and subscribed by all ranks in Scotland and England in the year 1643, and particularly as renewed in Scotland in the year 1648: And do you promise, through grace, to adhere to these Covenants, and, according to your station and opportunities, to prosecute the ends of them: And do you likewise acknowledge that the renewing of these Covenants, in a bond suited to our circumstances, is a duty seasonable at the present time?

QUESTION V.

* Do you approve of the Testimony enacted and emitted by the Associate Synod of Original Seceders, as a suitable and seasonable Testimony for the Doctrine, Worship, Discipline and Government of the Reformed Church of Scotland; and do you, in your judgment, disapprove of the several steps of defection, both in former and present times, condemned in the said Testimony; as contrary to the word of God, the Confession of Faith, and our Solemn Covenants?

QUESTION VI.

FOR MINISTERS AND PROBATIONERS.

Do you promise that you will submit yourself willingly and humbly, in the spirit of meekness,—unto the admonitions of the brethren of this Presbytery, agreeable to the Word of God; and be subject to them in the Lord, and to the other Presbyteries of the Association, as the Lord in his Providence shall cast your lot, and to the Associate Synod: And do you promise that you will maintain the spiritual unity and peace of, and that you will follow no divisive course from, the reformed and covenanted Church of Scotland; either by falling in with the defections of the times, or by giving yourself up to a detestable indifferency and neutrality in the foresaid covenanted cause;—and this you promise, through grace, notwithstanding whatever trouble or persecution you may meet with, in essaying the faithful discharge of your duty herein?

FOR ELDERS.

Do you promise that you will submit yourself willingly and humbly, in the spirit of meekness, unto the admonitions of the brethren of the Session in this Congregation ; and do you promise that you will maintain the spiritual unity and peace of, and that you will follow no divisive course from, the reformed and covenanted Church of Scotland ; either by falling in with the defections of the times, or by giving yourself up to a detestable indifferency and neutrality in the foresaid covenanted cause ;—and this you promise, through grace, notwithstanding whatever trouble or persecution you may meet with, in essaying the faithful discharge of your duty herein ?

QUESTION VII.

FOR MINISTERS.

Are not zeal for the honour and glory of God, love to the Lord Jesus Christ, and desire of being instrumental in edifying and saving souls,—your great motives and chief inducements to enter into the function of the Holy Ministry ; and not any selfish views, or worldly designs or interest ?

FOR PROBATIONERS.

Are not zeal for the honour and glory of God, love to the Lord Jesus Christ, and desire of being instrumental in edifying and saving souls,—your great motives and chief inducements to accept of a Licence to Preach the Gospel as a Probationer for the Holy Ministry ; and not any selfish views, or worldly designs or interest ?

FOR ELDERS.

Are not zeal for the honour and glory of God, love to the Lord Jesus Christ, and desire of being instrumental in the edification of his body,—your great motives and chief inducements to enter into the office of Eldership in this Congregation ; and not any selfish views, or worldly designs or interest ?

QUESTION VIII.

FOR MINISTERS.

Have you used any undue methods, either by yourself or others, in procuring this call to the Ministry ?

FOR ELDERS.

✕ Have you used any undue methods, either by yourself or others, in procuring your call to the office of Eldership in this Congregation ?

QUESTION IX.

FOR MINISTERS.

Do you engage, in the strength and grace of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, to rule well your own family [if it shall please the Lord to give you one *]; and to live an holy and circumspect life,—following after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness: And do you engage in the strength of the same grace,—faithfully, diligently and cheerfully, to discharge all the parts of the ministerial work, to the edification of the body of Christ ?

FOR PROBATIONERS.

Do you engage, in the strength and grace of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, to live an holy and circumspect life,—following after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness; and to preach the Gospel, wherever you shall be called, faithfully and honestly,—not with the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the purity and simplicity thereof, not ceasing to declare the whole counsel of God;—as also to catechise the people and visit the sick, as you shall have access and opportunity: And to perform whatever other duties are incumbent on you from the word of God, as a Probationer for the Holy Ministry; in order to the convincing and reclaiming of sinners, and the edifying and building up of the body of Christ ?

* The inclosed words are to be used as there is occasion.

FOR ELDERS.

Do you engage [each of you *] in the strength and grace of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, to rule well your own family, [and you—if it shall please the Lord to give you one *]; and to live an holy and circumspect life,—following after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness?

QUESTION X.

FOR MINISTERS.

Do you accept of and close with the call to be Pastor of this Associate Congregation; and promise, through grace, to perform all the duties of a faithful Minister of the Gospel among this people,—in preaching the Gospel among them, not with the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the purity and simplicity thereof,—not ceasing to declare unto them the whole counsel of God; as also in catechising, exhorting from house to house, visiting the sick, and performing whatever other duties or means are incumbent on you from the word of God, as a faithful minister of Jesus Christ—for the convincing and reclaiming of sinners, and for the edifying and building up of the body of Christ?

FOR ELDERS.

Do you accept of and close with your call to the office of Eldership in this congregation: And do you engage, through grace, diligently and cheerfully to discharge all the parts of the office of Eldership; as to whatever duties or means are incumbent upon and competent unto you in that office, for the edifying and building up of the body of Christ in this Congregation?

QUESTION XI.

FOR MINISTERS, PROBATIONERS, AND ELDERS.

Are you satisfied with, and do you purpose to adhere unto, and maintain, the principles about the present Civil Government, which are declared and maintained in the Associate Presbytery's Answers

* The inclosed words are to be used as there is occasion.

to Mr Nairn's Reasons of Dissent, with the Defence thereto subjoined ?

QUESTION XII.

x Do you acknowledge and promise subjection to *this Presbytery, in subordination to the Associate Synod*, [as to Elders it runs,—*the Session of this Congregation, in subordination to the Associate Presbytery of* , *and to the Associate Synod*], as presently constituted in a way of testifying against the sinful management of the prevailing party in the Synod, at some of the first diets of their meeting at Edinburgh in April 1747; *or other Presbyteries in that subordination, as you shall be regularly called*, [This clause is omitted as to Elders]; and do you approve of, and purpose to adhere unto, and maintain, the said testimony, in your station and capacity; and do you approve of, and purpose to adhere unto, and maintain, the sentence of Synod in April 1746, concerning the religious clause of some Burgess oaths, and that in opposition to all tenets and practices to the contrary.

x And all these things you promise and engage unto, through grace, as you will be answerable at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, with all his saints; and as you would desire to be found among that happy company at his glorious appearing?

Extracted by

P. M'DERMENT, *Syn. Clk.*

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