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A BRIEF

STATEMENT

AND

DECLARATION

OF THE GENUINE

PRINCIPLES OF SECEDERS,

RESPECTING

CIVIL GOVERNMENT;
THE DUTY OF SUBJECTS;
AND NATIONAL REFORMATION:

AND A

VINDICATION

OF THEIR CONDUCT

IN REFERENCE TO

SOME LATE PLANS AND SOCIETIES FOR POLITICAL REFORM;

AND THE PUBLIC DISSENTIONS OF THE TIME.

Propoſed and Read in a Meeting of the General Aſſociate Synod in Scotland.

WITH AN APPENDIX,
Containing an Account of the Synods Procedure on this Buſineſs.

By A. BRUCE,
Miniſter of the Goſpel, at Whitburn.

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A Present from the Author

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PREFACE.

AT a time, when ſeveral nations of Europe were ſhaken in the ſtorm of public revolution, and all the world was engaged, either in applauding, or reprobating, the new ſchemes of policy, or the new application of the principles of the old, when our own kingdoms were greatly agitated by domeſtic controverſies, and about to be deeply involved in foreign wars, by taking an active part in the conteſts, the uncommon ſituation of affairs, called forth from almoſt all public bodies of men, ſecular or religious, ſome declaration of their ſentiments, and of their dutiful diſpoſition towards the intereſts of the nation, and its government. At this time, when queſtions were revived, and meaſures debated, that had a near relation to the eccleſiaſtical, as well as civil ſtate of the Britiſh empire, and when the minds of the people at large were toſſed between the conflicting waves, and in no ſmall danger of being impelled to dangerous extremes, on the one hand or the other, a motion was made in the Provincial Synod of Edinburgh, ſubordinate to the General Aſſociate Synod in Scotland, for preparing an Addreſs to the people belonging to their body, to direct their conduct amidſt the ſnares and dangers of that critical time, to remind them of their duty to thoſe in authority, and to inculcate peaceable behaviour in ſociety

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ty, agreeably to their Chriſtian profeſſion, and on grounds not inconſiſtent with the principles and engagements adopted in their religious aſſociation. At the ſame time, it was propoſed to ſtate and declare anew, theſe leading principles which they, as a ſociety, had adopted, in regard to civil government, the Britiſh in particular; and, to ſhew that their adherence to a religious teſtimony, covenants, and contendings for reformation as not inconſiſtent with ſuch a dutiful attachment to it as they had all along in practice maintained. This laſt was reckoned peculiarly needful and ſeaſonable, when all popular aſſociations, having a reform for their object, were ready to fall under indiſcriminate condemnation or proſcription; and, as they, among others, had been particularly marked out, through the ignorance or malevolence of ſome, as abettors of ſedition, and as friendly to the principles and meaſures that turned the world upſide down. It was thought that they owed ſomething to the world, and to themſelves, at ſuch a time; and that, inſtead of declining to avow their principles, or explain their views, 'they, as being loudly called to it, ſhould alſo ſhew their opinion,' in reference to public evils, and exhibit without diſguiſe their wiſhes and plan for reformation, that all might judge how far they agree, and how much they differ from thoſe which have raiſed ſuch a ferment in the world.

An Addreſs, anſwering in particular to the deſign of the former part of the motion, was accordingly prepared by one of a committe appointed for that purpoſe: though from the diſtance of the members of that committee

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from one another (one of them reſiding in England) with other circumſtances, prevented their having a meeting to deliberate upon it, previous to the next meeting of the General Synod, to which, overtures of a ſimilar nature, in whole or in part, were preſented from other quarters, to which alſo, the overture of the Provincial Synod of Edinburgh was, by agreement, tranſmitted. After converſation on the ſubject, the General Synod expreſſed a deſire to take ſome ſtep, if it were practicable, at that very meeting, for carrying theſe overtures into effect. The ſtep taken by the Provincial Synod, was reported, and the Addreſs, above-mentioned, was produced, and read. Without having entered into a particular judicial diſcuſſion or correction of it, the general tenor and contents of it, received approbation, ſo far as it went, and it was thought, that a publication of it by the Writer of it, or by a committee, though without ſynodical ſanction, might be uſeful. Nothing however, was enacted: and the reverend Brother, who drew up that paper of advices, has hitherto ſeen meet to with-hold it from the public; nor has any thing, to the ſame purpoſe, in name of the Synod, ever yet appeared, if we except a late act, cautioning their people on the head of certain reduplicating and enſnaring oaths.

It was obſerved, when the Addreſs was under conſideration, however well adapted it was to ſerious people in communion with the Seceſſion, that the ſecond part of the overture, that relates to the exhibition of the principles and vindication of the conduct of the Aſſociate-body, eſpecially in regard to ſome recent diſputes, for the ſatisfaction of thoſe *who are without*,

or

or who may be disposed to misrepresent them, was not so particularly attended to in it as seemed to be needful; it was therefore by the Synod recommended to the same committee, to prepare something more full and explicite upon that subject against the next meeting. It was in consequence of this appointment, that the following paper was written, and presented to the meeting, in April, 1798, by the original proposer of the motion. The same reasons, however, that had prevented the discussion of the former, in a committee previous to the meeting of Synod, prevented it also as to this. But to avoid, as much as possible, unnecessary delays, it was submitted to judgment in the state in which it then was, the same, as to any material alteration, with that in which it is here published, excepting some additions pointed out below †. It was admitted, as the other had been, to be read, in two different *Sederunts*. and the objection from the want of this desirable formality, though made, was over-ruled; ---as the labours of committees, however helpful, are not essential, nor always conducive, to the dispatch of business in court.

Some account of the determinations of Synod upon this paper, and upon the whole of this interesting business, will be subjoined in the Appendix.

† The Additions, are the Explicatory Paragraph, beginning in P. 6;——the concluding Paragraphs of Part I. beginning near the Foot of P. 35; and the latter part of Part II. from P. 50 to the end. Though the conclusion was not transcribed, the writer was desirous to have the resolution of Court upon the substance of the Overture, the first opportunity, by which his conduct as to the sequel might be regulated.

CONTENTS.

Reasons for this Declaration. P. 1——4.

PART I. *The* PRINCIPLES OF SECEDERS *not inimical to government, or society.*

Reformers, and Dissenters from an established religion, liable to be charged with disaffection. p. 5—— Seceders not Dissenters, either from the civil authority, or reformed religion of their country. p. 6.—Christianity friendly to just government, order and peace. p. 7.—The Protestant Reformation, adopted by Seceders, recognized the rights of princes against papal usurpation, and turbulent fanaties. p. 8.

Their principles as to obedience to the British government early and explicitely declared, and settled as a term of communion with them. p. 9.

Their principles on this subject not changed, and so not more dangerous than at first. p. 11.

Their leading principle as to lawful government, and the reason of obedience, adopted by all free nations, and maintained by the most eminent political writers. p. 13.

Civil government God's ordinance, though founded on principles natural and common to men. p. 14.

Different forms of it lawful, and affect not the duty of obedience. p. 15.

Seceders have vindicated the title and authority of kings; and acknowledged the comparative excellence of the civil constitution of Great Britain. p. 17.

The doctrines of compact, right of defence, resistance, &c. admitted by them, not new, nor peculiar to them. p. 18.—Improved by them in argument only in favour of the British government, and duly limited. p. 20.

Subjection

Subjection to Rulers enjoined, notwithſtanding defects, diverſity of religion or apoſtacy. p. 22.——Not inconſiſtent, with a teſtimony againſt what is wrong, or proſecuting the deſign of reformation, p. 24.

A ſpirit of innovation and haſty change condemned. p 27.

The right, and regular manner of public reformation. p. 27.

Enumeration and reprehenſion of all public ſins, in church acts, not inconſiſtent with dutiful ſubordination, p. 28.

Eccleſiaſtical authority, and civil, may reſpect the ſame objects, yet in a manner entirely diſtinct. p 31.

No reaſon for reſtraining the due freedom of Eccleſiaſtical courts, or Miniſters. p. 33.

The calumnious charges of treaſon and ſedition, brought againſt the principles and proceedings of our Covenanting anceſtors, long ſince refuted. p. 35.

Acts of the Legiſlature implying theſe, expreſsly, or virtually annulled, by the revolution ſettlement and ſubſequent laws. p. 37.

PART II. *Of the late* CONDUCT OF SECEDERS.

General reflections on the public diſſentions, and on the ſpirit, and meaſures relative to the late aſſociations for reform. p. 40.

To the criminal principles and deſigns imputed to theſe ſocieties Seceders total ſtrangers. p. 42.

They had no particular activity in forming or promoting theſe ſocieties. p. 42.

Their terms, object, and ſpecific plan very different from thoſe of the Seceſſion. p. 45.

No peculiar advantage to the Seceſſion cauſe, could have been expected from the parliamentary reform propoſed, p. 46.——Nor from a change of monarchy into a republic, p. 47.——Much leſs from general anarchy, and the deſtruction of all government, p. 49.

The good that may eventually reſult from public convulſions, and calamities, to the church, no reaſon for promoting them, P. 49.

To ſeek the reform of public evils, is ſtill the intereſt and duty of all. P. 51.

In

All national reforms, whether merely political or eccleſiaſtico-political, in the general principle, right, and regular mode of promoting them, ſimilar: No conſiſtent Proteſtant could abſolutely condemn either, without condemning both. p. 52.

Reform in Britain not neceſſarily connected with a deſtruction of its government, or the horrors of a French revolution. p. 57.

Sentiments and conduct of Seceders in reference to the French revolution and war. p. 58.—Alarms of plots. p. 63.—Royal faſts, promulgation of edicts on Sabbath. p. 64.—Counter aſſociations and addreſſes. p. 65.—Public oaths and teſts. p. 67. Clandeſtine ſocieties. p. 70.—Schemes of philoſophical reformers, and the political ſyſtem of modern infidels. p. 72.

The flagrant corruptions of the old conſtitutions of Europe, made reform or deſtruction neceſſary and unavoidable. p. 75.

Beſt ſecurity againſt apprehended dangers of reform and revolution. p. 79.

The uſe to be made of revolutionary events and wars abroad. p. 81.

APPENDIX. p. 85.

ERRATA.

Pref. p. 4. l. 10. for *as* read was.
ib. 6. l. 9. for 1798, read 1795.
Declar. 1. l. 10. from the foot, for *hitherto* read long.
-- 3. from the foot, for *enjoining* read enjoying.
15. 7. after *or* insert do.
17. 20. for *as* read so.
30. 18. after *especially* insert at.
36. 1. after *well* add as.
— 19. for *notional* read national.
37. 2. from the foot, for *Secession*, read Seceders in their.
53. 12. read ecclesiastico-political.
69. last line, read aspiring.
75. 9. for *approved* read opposed.
79. 28. insert the *to* before *such*.
— 9. for add read and.

A

DECLARATION.

SENSIBLE of the preſent critical and alarming ſtate of affairs in theſe kingdoms, and knowing the ſituation in which the miniſters and people aſſociated in a ſtate of ſeceſſion from the eſtabliſhed churches ſtand in reference to the ruling powers, and the greater body of the people therein, the General Aſſociate Synod cannot but be impreſſed with the delicacy of the ſubject of the preſent declaration, which nothing but the preſſure of neceſſity, and the vindication of themſelves and their principles from aſperſions, could have engaged them to make. Though a fair and open declaration of their principles is what they have never ſhunned, nor have any cauſe to be aſhamed of at any time, yet to be obliged to offer any thing like an apology, or even explication of their ſentiments and conduct in reference to the preſent civil government under which Providence hath placed them, or to addreſs the public about matters which may appear connected with political diſputes, and civil diſſentions which at preſent divide the nation, is a neceſſity which they cannot but regret, as it impoſes a taſk upon them rather new, and hitherto deemed unneceſſary; and which, at ſuch a time as this, when party-prejudices operate ſo ſtrongly, and when jealouſies are ſo much awake, muſt be attended with uncommon difficulty.

Deſirous of beſtowing their chief attention on the immediate objects and duties of their religious profeſſion, and ſatisfying themſelves with enjoining and exerciſing, in common with other ſubjects, their own freedom of judgment about all public occurrences, or diſputes of

another kind, at home or abroad, they were diſpoſed, ſo far as regard to ſtational and relative duties, and a keeping clear of other men's ſins would permit, to obſerve ſilence in all eccleſiaſtical adminiſtrations as to theſe mournful differences and animoſities, which for ſome time paſt have ſo greatly agitated men's minds, interrupted the internal as well as external peace of the country, and ſo much alienated people from the mutual confidence and affection, and thoſe reciprocal duties they owe to each other in civil ſociety. This part they would ſtill have choſen: but the ſpirit of the times, the miſrepreſentations that are ſo common---the unbounded licence of accuſation and calumny, together with the haſty credulity of many, will no longer permit them to uſe the ſame reſerve and ſilence. Beſides theſe diſputes having gradually come to involve queſtions of the greateſt magnitude to public weal---as they touch ſome general and leading principles relating to authority and obedience, as they ſeem at leaſt indirectly to affect the ſubject of eccleſiaſtical reformation, and religious liberties as well as civil, as they are likely to produce the moſt extenſive, ſerious and laſting conſequences---even altho' the keenneſs with which they have been proſecuted had not rendered it almoſt impoſſible for any claſs of people to remain altogether neutral in regard to them, the nature of them is ſuch as may ſeem to forbid ſuch ſupineneſs.

When it is farther conſidered, how many declarations have for years paſt been emitted from public ſocieties, and various claſſes of men of almoſt every deſcription, religious as well as ſecular, their very ſilence is liable to miſconſtruction; more eſpecially after the ſurmiſes and inſinuations tending to render their loyalty and peaceableneſs ſuſpected, which are to be found in a late publication, circulated with uncommon induſtry, and marks of public countenance, through all the land;---wherein it is affirmed, that the part ſome Diſſenters both in England and Scotland have acted, has brought "an odium upon the diſſenting intereſt, in the eyes of Government and its adherents, which will not be eaſily wiped off."---And "that at this time, there are not a few who conſider Seceders, influenced by the peculiar principles of their ſociety, as ringleaders of that party who avowedly ſet themſelves to oppoſe the meaſures of Government,

to

to embaraſs its motions, and to overturn it, if poſſible, from the foundation *;"——while, at the ſame time, no due care is taken to vindicate them or their principles from ſuch a reproach, except as to thoſe of them who may peradventure coincide in their views with that writer on the ſeveral ſubjects of debate, or may conſider diſſenting and feceſſion principles exactly in the ſame light with him.——Had this been done by a ſtranger to them, or one avowedly hoſtile to their cauſe, it might perhaps have been ſuffered to paſs without particular animadverſion: but when ſuch a heavy charge comes thus to be retailed and circulated by *one of their own number*, the danger is greater of its making unfavourable impreſſions upon the public mind, and of meeting with a ready reception.

The charge indeed draws deep, were there any proper ground for it. If Seceders were indeed enemies to peace and good order in civil ſociety; were they plotters againſt conſtituted governments, or ſeeking the total ſubverſion of the Britiſh, under which they live;---were they failing in ſuch a principal part of the duty of Chriſtian men and citizens;---were they wantonly to diſcard or trample under foot, ſo many expreſs and ſolemn injunctions on that head;---they might with good reaſon be conſidered as vain pretenders to reformation---as departing from the uniform teſtimony and laudable practice of the Chriſtian church, nay, as men who had in reality denied the faith, and deſerved to be ranked with infidels: Inſtead of meriting the character of witneſſes for truth, they might rather be put into the claſs of the turbulent ſeducers, deſcribed in the apoſtolic page, who were "preſumptuous, ſelf-willed, and not afraid to ſpeak evil of dignities." Inſtead of deſerving countenance from the good, they would juſtly be liable to be puniſhed by the civil ſword, as well as to periſh by the judgments of God, "in the gainſaying of Korah."

But before a charge of this import be brought or admitted againſt any body of men profeſſing reſpect to the authority and intereſts of Jeſus Chriſt, juſtice requires that the evidence ſhould be very clear, if not indubitable. Confident of the total want of any ſuch evidence, that can be ſuppoſed to affect the Seceſſion body; they might content themſelves with a direct denial of the truth of the

* Eſſays on Government, &c. p. 3, 4.

the allegation, pronouncing it to be before God and men, a moſt malicious and atrocious calumny. But as they are not at preſent ſtanding "at Cæſar's judgment-ſeat," after the manner of thoſe who are obliged to anſwer only to the production of legal evidence to criminate them; without availing ourſelves of ſuch a ſummary defence, or ſeeking to evade the narroweſt ſcrutiny of our principles and conduct on the ſubject in queſtion, and without making uſe in this caſe of the common and eaſy expedient of expreſſing in a few general and ambiguous phraſes, our loyalty and attachment to Government, and our abhorrence of all ſeditious practices, we decline not the trouble, of a cloſer inveſtigation, of theſe particulars, which may ſeem to afford any colouring for ſuch an imputation, and which may be looked upon by ſuperficial obſervers, or raſh and prejudiced partizans of the preſent day, as ſufficient to condemn them. Nor do we want, from any ſelfiſh or political conſiderations, to conceal, that after the manner which has ſo often been declared by the oppreſſors and perſecutors of the reformed church of Scotland, to be ſeditious, and which ſome may yet be pleaſed to reckon ſuch, ſo have we adopted and maintained the teſtimony of Preſbyterians---and ſo we continue "to worſhip the God of our fathers."

If any degree of diſaffection to civil government regularly conſtituted, be imputable to the Aſſociated body, it muſt either ariſe from the nature and tendency of their religious principles, or elſe from ſome part of their public conduct---ſome proceedings publicly countenanced or allowed among them of this import, though not flowing from or warranted by their principles, but implying a deviation from them. But whether the charge reſt upon the one or the other of theſe grounds, we hope it will be no difficult matter to remove it.

PART FIRST.

Firſt; As to their Principles. If this charge be brought againſt either the complex ſyſtem of their principles, or thoſe which have been commonly received among them more immediately relating to Government, it muſt proceed from one who is but little acquainted with them; or from thoſe who on other accounts may be engaged in a ſtate of oppoſition to them. From any of our own body it cannot with any conſiſtency come;

as ſuch would only hereby be bringing forward their own condemnation, or would act a ſimilar part to treacherous Judas, by delivering up a cauſe which they themſelves had eſpouſed, and all who conſcientiouſly adhere to it, as criminal, into the hands of chief prieſts and rulers.——It hath not come to our knowledge that any continuing in connexion with our ſociety have acted ſuch an inconſiſtent part as expreſsly to arraign their principles as guilty either of rebellion or ſedition. The writer above referred to, however he may have miſ-ſtated, or otherwiſe injured them, yet has not alledged that the principles themſelves, which are ſtill avowed as his own profeſſion, are in fault, but the conduct of thoſe who have adopted them, but in this reſpect violate them, ſhould wholly bear the blame. But while ignorance of, or inattention to theſe principles ſo generally prevails, and while prejudice and miſrepreſentation of them on this head is become it ſeems with others not uncommon, a brief ſtatement, or ſummary of the leading articles relating to this matter, may be needful, after we have made the few following general obſervations, accompanied with a ſhort hiſtorical detail.

It is nothing new, and need not appear ſurprizing, that a religious profeſſion while not generally adopted by a nation, or receiving countenance from the civil authority, eſpecially when directed againſt many things in the ſyſtem of religion legally ſettled, ſhould expoſe thoſe who maintain it, to the invidious reproach of diſaffection or diſobedience to that authority, however dutiful they may be in their diſpoſition and whole conduct in reference to it. In ſuch a caſe it becomes almoſt unavoidable; the artful, the ſpiteful, or intereſted enemies of that profeſſion and of religious reformation, in order to prevent its progreſs, make uſe of that ſpecious pretext, and traduce them to the people and their governors, as movers of ſedition, and both the unthinking multitude, and jealous rulers, have been too ready to liſten to the accuſation: though the real cauſe of it may be the hatred men bear to religion and reformation, and not any principles of diſloyalty, or ſeditious practices. Even our Lord, and his Apoſtles, were not exempted from the invidious charge.——The beſt of men, and the beſt of cauſes, have not eſcaped it:—Not the much commended primitive Chriſtians;—not the famous Waldenſes and Albigenſes

Albigenſes abroad; or the Wickliffites or Lollards in Britain before the Reformation: Not the Proteſtant reformers in any nation in Europe while ſtruggling againſt the prevailing torrent of iniquity, and the adverſe tide of power. And has not every act of violence and ſpecies of perſecution always proceeded on this pretence.—— What elſe produced that ſeries of oppreſſive laws, and cruel treatment in England againſt thoſe called Puritans? What but this gave birth and continuance to the unjuſt and barbarous laws under which Preſbyterians in Scotland ſo long ſuffered?——Believe the religious adverſaries of both, and they will loudly declare, that they procured all theſe to themſelves by their diſloyal principles, and ſeditious ſpirit or practices: while no dutifulneſs on their part could ſtill the clamour, unleſs they had, along with the debt of civil obedience, and ſacrifices for peace, alſo renounced their religion and a good conſcience toward God. This conſideration ſhould teach all who wiſh to avoid the guilt of raſhneſs and injuſtice, to be very wary of employing or entertaining ſuch a topic of common-place ſcandal, eſpecially in ſuch a time as the preſent, when along with religious diſſentions, the rancour of civil faction prevails to ſuch a degree.

While we thus mention the native and common effect ariſing from diverſity of religion in a nation, and ſuppoſe that ſomething of this kind may be expected to follow upon the religious ſeparation of Seceders from the National Church of Scotland, yet, whatever appearance of hoſtility to the eccleſiaſtical and legal conſtitution of that church, it may wear, or in whatever light it may be ſometimes repreſented, it is not meant, as if they hereby had really afforded ground for charging them with adopting a religion different from the Reformed Church of Scotland, contained in her public ſtandards, ratified often by her national vows, as well as ſanctioned, in former times, by many public laws. The truth is, the profeſſion of the church of Scotland, and the public laws by which it hath been authorized, have greatly varied, and in ſome inſtances been contradictory, at different times. It is from the late defection from the national religion, as above expreſſed, by the judicatories, or ruling majority of that church, that they have ſeceded: and it is againſt

that

that contradiction in the profeſſions, and the public laws, in reference to this matter, that they proteſt. They profeſs invariable adherence and relation to the true Preſbyterian Church in Britain: they plead a preferable title to the genuine conſtitution and principles of that church, to that prevailing party who for a long time of late have laid claim to them, however the civil adminiſtration, and forms of law, may countenance that claim. The queſtion, which of them are beſt founded in their pretenſions, can only be determined by an impartial examination, and ſcrutiny into facts. While the Aſſociate Body continne to make ſuch a profeſſion, they ſtand not on the footing of enemies to the reformed religion of their country, or even of diſſenters from it. They are rather complainers upon the acts of violation of it, whether flowing from church or ſtate:—they plead not for the aboliſhing of the national religion, and the introduction of a new, but for the reformation and greater ſtability of it. Much leſs can they be juſtly viewed, on account of ſuch a ſeparation, as inimical to the civil conſtitution or authority of laws, even in their co-operation with the National Church; ſtill leſs in other matters of common good and utility.

Neither will it admit of a reaſonable doubt, that where the Chriſtian religion is beſt underſtood, and where the true principles of it have greateſt influence, there all lawful authority will meet with the moſt conſcientious reſpect, and the public peace be moſt effectually ſecured. Theſe principles are ſo far from having any tendency to ſubvert, aboliſh, diſturb, weaken, or unduly limit the rights and functions of civil government among any people, they very much ſtrengthen and enforce, as well as improve it. It is eſſential indeed to that religion, that it reſerves the power of legiſlation over conſciences to God alone, and permits none to ſin under pretence of obeying human authority, but makes it a rule to all, that the will of God made known, and his authority expreſſed in his word, is to be obeyed in all things, before and againſt any other authority whatſoever—a principle which is eſſential to all religion and morality, and which can operate only as a ſalutary check upon the lawleſs luſts of governors, that they abuſe not their power to evil. In all beſides it leaves perſons and nations at full liberty to

provide

provide for their temporal and civil intereſts, to inſtitute and conform themſelves to ſuch modes of policy, and obſerve ſuch laws and cuſtoms as may be conducive to public good and order in ſociety, and in nothing contrary to juſtice and religion. Hence the principal duties and rights both of rulers and ſubjects are clearly recognized in the doctrines and embodied in the laws of that religion: Chriſtians, though called to the higheſt freedom in Chriſt, are not hereby ſet free from the common obligations of other men, but more ſtrictly bound to civil ſubjection, peace, and obedience to laws, as well as every other duty. Theſe are enjoined upon them "for the Lord's ſake," and becauſe it is the expreſs will of God. Loyalty and peaceableneſs are made characteriſtic marks of godlineſs: *the fear of God*, and *the honour of kings*, are exhibited in the cloſeſt conjunction in the ſacred volume.

Accordingly the Proteſtant Reformation, tho' principally concerned to reſtore true Chriſtianity, and rectify the many abuſes which the wicked policy of Rome had introduced into religion through ſeveral ages, did not overlook this important part of reform: it tended alſo to reſtore and ſecure the rights of princes, long violated, and to promote the welfare of particular kingdoms, and the liberty of mankind, by ſettling the authority of magiſtracy on juſt foundations. Among other things in controverſy with their adverſaries, the reformers with unanimity declared againſt papal encroachments on civil power; the confounding of juriſdictions; the exemption of certain claſſes of men from the laws; the ſubjection of ſubjects to a foreign head, claiming power to tax them, or abſolve them from allegiance, at his pleaſure; whereby they approved themſelves better ſubjects and patriots, as well as Chriſtians, than the ſlaves of Rome. They alſo, with one voice, declared againſt the wild and enthuſiaſtic opinions of ſome perſons pretending reformation, the levelling ſchemes of Anabaptiſts, and the tumultuous inſurrections of the Boors in Germany, which were all invidiouſly charged by their adverſaries upon the principles and cauſe of the Reformers, though they could derive no countenance from theſe but by their perverſion and abuſe. The oppoſition alſo managed to the Proteſtants by the civil powers under which they lived, in many places, afforded another occaſion and call to them

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to assert and manifest to the world their loyal and peaceable subordination, in all points wherein obedience to human authority and laws could warrantably be claimed.—They accordingly took care, while asserting and exercising their natural or religious rights, and in explaining the due limits of authority and obedience, to avoid any thing that might look like a refusal to give due allegiance even to the rulers who were inimical to their religion, or as if they were men delighting in anarchy and *Belialism*.—Their public apologies and confessions, as well as private writings, contained assertions and language sufficiently explicite and strong upon these points; as may be seen, among other monuments, in the passages relating to them in the Augsburgh, the Helvetian, the French, and Scottish Confessions. Their personal practice and public proceedings accorded with these professions, unless when open tyranny compelled them to use the common right of self-defence and resistance.

The Associate Body while they have endeavoured to draw their principles from the same divine source, so they have freely expressed their approbation of what is contained in these confessions on this subject, in the sense, and with the limitations, expressed in the "Declaration and defence of their principles, on the head of civil government, subjoined to the answers of the Associate Presbytery to Mr. Nairn." Having thus declared their agreement with other Christian and Protestant churches in this part of their profession—they have never sought out any new and unbeaten tracts. They cannot be reputed followers of upstart theorists, nor the pupils of infidel philosophers; though they never supposed, that the principles of true philosophy and religion were at variance on this subject; nor did they ever judge it improper for men who are Christians to avail themselves of any light or aids that philosophy can furnish, or the lessons which experience may teach, in matters that fall properly within their province.

It is farther to be observed, as a circumstance favourable in this case to the Associate Body of Seceders, that the great object of their association, and the leading principles and terms of it, have long ago been ascertained and settled. Very soon after it was formed, when they

had deliberately declared their principles with regard to religious reformation, and were ſettling the particulars of their own eccleſiaſtical communion and diſcipline, an occaſion aroſe which in a manner obliged them to explain themſelves more fully than other churches have uſually done, on the head of civil government and obedience in general, and as to the duty of people engaged in eccleſiaſtical reformation in reference to the corruptions of a body politic to which they may belong. This neceſſity aroſe not from any extrinſic attack upon them on the head of loyalty, but from one of their own number refuſing to acquieſce in ſome part of their principles and deciſions, as favouring too much the authority of the Britiſh government, and as virtually homologating its corruptions. The difference terminated in the expulſion of that miniſter, who diſowned the authority, which they had reſolved inviolably to acknowledge, from their communion, and in fixing a ſtanding rule for the time to come, that none ſhould be admitted into any office among them, but ſuch as ſhould be agreed with them in this matter. On this occaſion, to vindicate their procedure, and for the information of the world at large, they publiſhed the *Declaration* and *Defence* above referred to. This was done, without any view or deſire of meddling with politics, or pretending to frame new conſtitutions of government, but in proſecuting the line of their eccleſiaſtical duty;—without being moved thereto by the ſtate of political parties, or queſtions, that were either ſubſiſting at that time, or that may have ſince ariſen; without any deſign of procuring ſtate-favours on the one hand, and without being influenced by apprehenſions or dangers from the actual government, on the other.

Whatever theſe principles therefore may be, they cannot be ſuppoſed to originate from any recent ſpirit of ſedition ſaid to prevail, or to have been adopted by Seceders for the purpoſe of oppoſing any late meaſures of Government or Adminiſtration, or promoting any late condemned plans and aſſociations for political reform. If they have not changed them for ſuch a purpoſe, thoſe who continue to hold them may ſtill do ſo, without being involved in ſuch deſigns or connections; as thoſe did who firſt ſtated, and formerly adhered to them, without

without any thought or previous knowledge of thoſe things.

If the principles of Seceders have not been altered, on this head, they muſt either be ſuſtained as ſafe and innocent at this moment, or they muſt have been culpable and dangerous from the beginning. To ſay the latter, even ſetting aſide the intrinſic evidence ariſing from them, would be to ſuppoſe that the whole Britiſh nation has been either very blind or very ſupine; and that the civil guardians of the public welfare have been very unfaithful to their truſt, not only at the firſt public declaration of their principles, but for half a century back, while no law or ſtate-proceeding has ever criminated them, or indicated ſo much as a ſuſpicion of criminality. It would alſo imply the abſurdity, that a ſyſtem of ſeditious principles has avowedly been embraced, and practically maintained, by a numerous body of people, without any hurtful effect, and that a plot has been carrying on for ſo long a time without any real danger reſulting from it.

The Seceſſion in its riſe and progreſs had a number of intereſted obſervers, and acute adverſaries, who wanted not inclination to make a rigorous ſcrutiny into every opinion or ſtep which might aſſume the appearance of a fault; and ſome of them, while they traduced them to the world, appear to have been ſufficiently diſpoſed, if matter could be found, to have lodged an accuſation againſt the leaders of it before the ruling powers: and in the heat of party-diſputes, inſinuations of this kind were not ſpared: But unhappily for the ſucceſs of any ſuch attempt, at that time, the nation was then too warmly attached to the cauſe of Britiſh liberty, and the principles which had ſeated a race of Proteſtant princes on the throne, to lend a patient ear to ſuch a charge againſt men ſo well known to be among their moſt zealous friends and advocates. At that period too, and for a long time after, miniſters of the eſtabliſhed church, eſpecially thoſe moſt diſtinguiſhed for their talents and liberal knowledge, were generally ſo friendly to the principles of a free government aſſerted at the Revolution, and to the Proteſtant Succeſſion, of which there are many undoubted proofs ſtill remaining, ſeriouſly to differ with the principles profeſſed by Seceders on that head, or to

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give countenance to any ſuch charge againſt them: So that theſe envenomed arrows ſhot againſt them were eaſily repelled, or fell of their own accord to the ground, without making any diſadvantageous impreſſion on the better part of the nation: nor did "the ſpirit of the rulers riſe up" againſt them, to ſecond the zeal of ſome violent clergymen: nor have they ever had cauſe, it is preſumed, to repent this exerciſe of their political wiſdom, juſtice, and moderation. As often as any ſince have recurred to this abandoned point of attack, or attempted to put in motion the formidable engine againſt them, inſtead of doing any execution, it has rather recoiled upon thoſe who employed it. Indeed a few angry words, elaborate arguments, and ſtrained conſequences, flowing from diſputants, can hardly be ſuppoſed to gain general credit, at leaſt for any long time, with a diſcerning public, while experience and practical conduct, the beſt teſt of the tendency of any ſyſtem of principles, uniformly plead in favour of the accuſed party, as it evidently did in the preſent caſe. Their loyal attachments, and their regular and peaceable behaviour, their very enemies might witneſs. In theſe they remained firm and immoveable, amidſt all the heats and confuſions of religious diviſion; amidſt all the changes of adminiſtration, and jarrings of parties, in the ſtate;—amidſt wars abroad, and broils, nay, an actual rebellion at home, in which not one individual of their number was found to be engaged, but for the ſuppreſſion of which not a few of them voluntarily performed ſome active ſervices, at the hazard, and ſome of them with the loſs, of their lives, as well as the ſpoiling of their goods. All thoſe miniſters who firſt aſſociated, and were immediately concerned in ſtating and defending theſe principles, together with the firſt generation of people who adhered to them, have now left the mortal ſtage, and generally, in no leſs eſtimation, among thoſe who knew them, as peaceable ſubjects and cordial friends to the reigning family, than for godlineſs, and uſefulneſs, in the church. The firſt heats have in a great meaſure ſubſided: and after a long interval of years, the temper of the nation and the liberality of the age, ſeemed to promiſe and enſure a cooler and more equitable judgment of their cauſe.

But

But when all were pleaſing themſelves with the thought, that this temper and ſtate of things would have been permanent, the new animoſities that have unhappily ariſen, have again embroiled the ſcene, rankled the ſpirits of men, and with the other evils attendant on contention, have awaked many groundleſs jealouſies, and revived many obſolete and illiberal prejudices.

But a ſhort review of theſe principles, as propoſed, will be ſufficient to refute the charge; at leaſt to ſuch as are capable of judging with impartiality and candour. We ſhall here point out ſome of the leading ſentiments, in regard of the ignorance that prevails with many about them, and as few are at due pains deliberately to conſult the original papers.

The great leading principle, and the ſum of the whole is, "That all in a nation, whatever differences may ſubſiſt in religion, or in other ſentiments, are under indiſpenſible obligation from the law of God, to conform to that form of civil government, and to obey theſe rulers that are appointed and continued by the will of the nation, or that are generally acknowledged by it, in all lawfull commands." And this general doctrine they have expreſsly applied to the Britiſh government. Such a lawful civil conſtitution, notwithſtanding many things defective and blameable in it, and ſuch an order of rulers, as are to be conſidered as moral powers, notwithſtanding many inſtances of mal-adminiſtration, they declared at that time to be actually exiſting, and ſtill ſuppoſe them to be continuing in Great-Britain; to which accordingly the ſcriptural injunctions to give honour, fear, ſubjection and tribute, are to be applied, and to which they conſider themſelves, in common with all other orders in the nation, to be in conſcience bound. This practical obligation they avow not only in oppoſition to the pretenſions of an exiled family, ſo long adhered to, but alſo in contradiſtinction to mere ideal forms of government, more perfect conſtitutions, or to any other ſet of rulers, which any party in the nation, might think preferable, while not really admitted or conſtituted in the manner above defined.

In the illuſtration and defence of theſe leading poſitions, it may be found that they have not employed any other

other doctrines or arguments than ſuch as are contained in the law of nature, and divine revelation; and which have been reduced to practice by all enlightened and free nations: So that they can with no ſhadow of juſtice be charged with a fondneſs for innovation, either in religion or politics, or with adopting wild impracticable theories, or notions, tending to diſturb the eſtabliſhed order of ſociety, the tranquillity of ſtates—whereby kings may be dethroned, or wantonly reſiſted, and all government, the Britiſh in particular, ſubverted. Their views and reaſonings will be found in the main, to be the ſame with the moſt approved writers, who have endeavoured to ſettle the authority of rulers, and the policy and peace of kingdoms, on their firmeſt baſis; particularly thoſe who have been long eſteemed in Britian as the beſt and moſt ſucceſsful defenders of the limited Britiſh monarchy, and the rights and liberties of the people. And by the conceſſion of all who think reaſonably on the ſubject, no ſyſtem of government can ever be uſeful, or ſecure, in which power and right are not combined; and in which the reciprocal privileges and duties of rulers and people, are not duly balanced and eſtabliſhed: Whoever ſeek to enlarge and exalt the rights of the one, to the ſubverſion of the other, on whatever ſide they err, may juſtly be accounted the moſt dangerous incendiaries, and the greateſt enemies of public good.

In particular, they have acknowledged, in the words of the old Scots Confeſſion, "that empires, kingdoms, dominions and cities, are diſtinCted and ordained by God; the power and authority in the ſame, be it of emperors in their empires, or kings in their realms, dukes and princes in their dominions, and of other magiſtrates in their cities, to be God's holy ordinance; ordained for the manifeſtation of his own glory, and for the ſingular profit and commodity of mankind: So that whoſoever goeth about to take away or confound the whole ſtate of civil policies, now long eſtabliſhed; we affirm the ſame men, not only to be enemies to mankind, but wickedly to fight againſt God's expreſſed will." They alſo confeſs with the Helvetians, "that *every kind* of magiſtracy is inſtituted by God for the peace and happineſs of man. And all ſubjects ſhould own the goodneſs of God in the inſtitution

inſtitution of a magiſtrate, by honouring him as the miniſter of God."——They alſo join the Proteſtants of France, who ſaid, "We believe that God deſigned the world ſhould be governed by laws and polity, and kept in order by this means: that he has therefore appointed kingdoms, commonwealths, and the other forms of government, whether they do or not deſcend by hereditary right."

When it is aſſerted, that civil policy and magiſtrates are ordained by God for all nations, it is not meant, either that the inſtitution is founded in the revealed will of God contained in the ſcriptures, or that any of its particular forms, or the perſons inveſted with authority, can claim any divine inſtitution, either by the natural or revealed law of God, ſo as to poſſeſs a ſuperior and excluſive right of obligation, independent of human will, and the right reſulting from ſocial compact. They admit the inſtitution, in general, to be founded in the common principles and law of nature; while the particular forms, and the authority of the particular governors, are determined by the will, and continued, or altered, by the choice, or tacit conſent, of the people, for whoſe benefit they are appointed

As the neceſſity of civil government is common to all people, ſo muſt alſo be the right of conſtituting it. No wickedneſs of a people can exempt them from the obligation, or deprive them of this right. By the dictates of right reaſon, and regard to common advantage, may all be directed and regulated in the exerciſe of this right; and though they may greatly abuſe it, this is no reaſon for diveſting them of it. In ſuch caſes their errors and the conſequences of them will fall chiefly on themſelves. Though ſome nations have their reaſon more improved, and ſome enjoy, by the ſpecial favour of God, in addition to natural diſcoveries, a ſupernatural revelation giving a clear and fuller diſcovery of common duties, as well as of the true religion, yet whether accompanied with or deprived of theſe ſuperior advantages, the nature, and general ends, of civil government, and the right and duties of rulers and ſubjects, among all people, are eſſentially the ſame. Different modifications of them only ariſe from the diverſified circumſtances, cuſ-

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toms, compacts, and regulations of particular nations. In the exercise of the same essential rights, and the prosecution of the necessary end, according to the principles and lights afforded men, all the various modes of civil society, the very different constitutions of government, in different nations, or in the same nation successively, at different times, whatever degrees of excellency may belong to them, or to the individual persons entrusted with the functions thereof, so far as they are calculated, in some competent measure, to gain the end, and while they are voluntarily appointed or submitted to by the body politic, they are all equally obligatory, and may all be said to be ordained by the authority of God. As such obedience is due to any of them, when not requiring any thing beyond the limits of duty. In such cases, " the ordinance of man," coincides with " the ordinance of God," and is the ordinary medium and rule for discovering it to all the individuals of a community :---and whatever is agreeable to the natural law, or right reason, which derives its origin from God, and is expresly sanctioned in his written law, it may with certainty be said to be the will of God.

According to these principles, they must necessarily consider it as absurd to confine the epithets of *lawful* or *regular* government, to one or other of the particular forms under which it may be settled by the discretionary will of particular nations, when speaking of lawful government in the abstract : for it is not to be supposed, that what is essential to the preservation of men, to the dispensing of justice, and the maintenance of common order and peace in society, can be so restricted either of right or in fact. They have been and may be found, in some degree, under the several forms. Yet the establishment of a form of government in a particular nation, may be a sufficient reason for accounting it, exclusively, while approved by a people, the lawful and regular government of that nation.——But the right of one nation cannot preclude the equal right of other nations in that respect. By the above principles, the authority of all principalities, the safety of all states, as well as the interests of all people, are fixed on the broadest base, whether they be Jewish or Pagan, Christian or Infidel, Popish

or

or Proteſtant, Regal or Republican. They have no tendency to break, or relax, the bond of obedience to conſtituted governors in any land, whether they be better or worſe: nor can they excite diſcontents with that particular government under which people live, or warrant diſorderly attempts to change it, whether it be more or leſs convenient, more or leſs free, more or leſs favourable to religious reformation. So it is expreſsly declared, "that as the different forms of civil government agree in their general nature, and as none of them has any inſtitution excluſive of others, ſo the general rule of duty towards the ſupreme legiſlative power under any of theſe forms, anſwers as well under them all *."

But tho' they are far from the extravagance of thoſe who think that all authority was annexed to the title, or is reſident in the perſons of kings—though they ſuppoſe the ſame ſupremacy of power, good government, and order, with rights internal and external equally ſacred, may belong to republics as well as to monarchies; yet they are as far from encouraging any hatred to the office, or contempt of the perſons or title of kings, that they have in expreſs terms vindicated theſe from the inſult of ſuch as hold them as a curſe to a people. Speaking of the Jewiſh government, they ſay, "though the body politic did ſin very grievouſly, in the manner, time and circumſtances of deſiring that their government ſhould be changed into a monarchical form—and though they were condemned for not conſulting the Lord in making choice of their kings, (Hoſ. viii. 4.)—yet it would be dreadful to infer from theſe paſſages, that kingly government itſelf, in the form and authority thereof, was condemned, or inflicted as a judgment:"—for different reaſons there aſſigned.

Of the mixed form of the Britiſh conſtitution, as ſettled in a King, temporal Lords, and Commons, and of the character and adminiſtration of the princes of the reigning family, they have on various occaſions ſpoken in terms of high approbation. On occaſion of the acceſſion of his preſent Majeſty, on the 16th of April,

* Declaration and Defence, &c. in Mr. Gib's Diſplay of Seceſſion-Teſtimony, v. i. p. 194.

1761, they expreſs themſelves thus :——'The ſynod do 'hereby agree in declaring, that they can yield to none 'of their fellow-ſubjects in prizing the civil government 'under which they live, as the beſt modelled govern-'ment throughout the known world; in reſpect to the 'memory of our late ſovereign King George II. as one 'of the beſt of kings, of the mildeſt adminiſtration, who 'ruled over us as the common father of his people; in 'thankfulneſs for the peaceable acceſſion of our preſent 'ſovereign King George III. to the throne of theſe 'kingdoms, in a firm reſolution to ſupport and live du-'tifully under his government, in our ſeveral ſtations 'and capacities, according to the word of God, and our 'received and known principles founded thereon, to 'which we are bound by ſolemn covenant; in an invio-'lable attachment to the Proteſtant ſucceſſion, in the 'illuſtrious family of Hanover; and in a full purpoſe 'ſtill to maintain theſe principles among the people un-'der their inſpection.'

But whoever attempts a particular explanation of the principles of government, whether the extent and rights of authority be chiefly inſiſted on, or the inherent power, and reſerved privileges of the people, according to the purpoſe he may be purſuing, can hardly avoid employing ſome expreſſions, or aſſuming ſome poſitions, which may afford ſpecious matter for cavil or miſrepreſentation, to ſuch as are diſpoſed to wire-draw and torture them: and when detached from the other parts, and the tenor of the diſcourſe, they may appear with a ſuſpicious or cenſurable air: at one time perhaps they will ſeem to confer exceſſive prerogatives or abſolute power on rulers; at another they will cauſe alarm as favouring the cauſe of anarchy, and popular licentiouſneſs.——So it fared with the doctrine of philoſophers and divines in paſt time: So it has happened to every noted ſyſtem, or treatiſe on free government, previous to this æra. No wonder though there may be aſſertions of this kind found interſperſed through the writings referred to;—ſentences which taken ſeparately, and in an unqualified ſenſe, may be preſſed into the ſervice of licentious demagogues.—Some of the doctrines they have taken for granted, and applied in the courſe of argument, in proſecution of

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their main design, have indeed been keenly disputed, and treated as the most odious and dangerous hypotheses by a numerous tribe of men: Of this kind are—the radical power and inherent right of the people at large to establish, limit, or alter their government and governors;—the idea of a compact, tacit or express, between rulers and subjects, in order to a legal government;—the right of every man to judge of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of every command by human authority;—the right of self-defence against the power of tyrants, and of deposing those who tyrannically abuse their power, by the general voice of a nation;—the right of individuals or a minor part of a nation to testify against public corruption, and to use means to have a government reformed, and of a major part or body politic to settle a deed of constitution suitable to their circumstances, civil or religious---and to oblige every one admitted to the exercise of authority to conform unto it. But these are not the peculiar tenets of any religious party in this land. Nor are they peculiar to any nation, but have been known wherever a rational system of liberty has prevailed.—— They were familiar to the ears and minds of the inhabitants of Britain: There could be no just ground of offence in Seceders appealing to principles, not only reasonable in themselves, but also generally admitted; especially after some of them that may appear most obnoxious, had been more than once sanctioned by the practice and public authority of the nation, established in the constitution, and involved in the validity of the title of the reigning family to the throne; and as Seceders did not first introduce, so neither can it be pretended that they carried these doctrines to an undue extent or dangerous extreme, or that they applied them to any unwarrantable purpose. Some of these, as the doctrine of resistance, and deposition of governors, which may be reckoned unsafe when unwarily taught to the people, it is evident, they have mentioned, not with the remotest view to a practical application of them to the legal government, for a century past established in Great-britain, or to the present circumstances of the people, to which they are declared to be totally inapplicable; but in order to shew that such natural and speculative rights were

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no way inconſiſtent with the peaceable and conſcientious ſubjection pled for, nor with the dutiful manner in which the Seceding Church had determined to maintain its religious teſtimony, and to proſecute a deſired reformation.

In general, where any thing of this kind is introduced, it will be found accompanied with ſuch limitations and cautions, and ſo guarded, as that none but ſuch as ſeek occaſion, can be in danger of miſtaking what is ſaid, or of deriving any countenance from thence to dangerous attempts, either on religious or civil accounts. Thus, while they declare, that tyrants and mere uſurpers have no right to obedience, and that when the adminiſtration of any government degenerates into habitual tyranny, or when princes refuſe to fulfil their obligations, then they may be ſet aſide, or their authority diſowned: they add, 'In order to render one a habitual tyrant, it is at leaſt, 'neceſſary, that he leave ruling by juſt laws; and that 'he be engaged in war againſt the lives, or invading and 'and overthrowing the avowed liberties and privileges 'of the nation, civil and religious; or all of theſe; as 'was the caſe in perſecuting times before the Revolu-'tion:——However quietly and orderly one may be 'obliged to live under mere uſurpers or habitual tyrants, 'yet there ſhould be no acknowledgment of their autho-'rity as binding upon conſcience: But if any ſhould 'have the face to alledge, that our preſent rulers do any 'way deſerve theſe characters, it is quite needleſs to rea-'ſon with them *(a)*.'

While they teach, that the principle of ſubjection, as taught in ſcripture and admitted by them, is not 'at all 'inconſiſtent with any ſelf-defence that is neceſſary, law-'ful and expedient, according to the word of God, and 'right reaſon, ſuch as our worthy anceſtors endeavoured 'at Pentland and Bothwell;——Yea, that there is no 'manner of inconſiſtency, between a poſture of ſelf-de-'fence againſt particular injuries offered by a magiſtrate, 'and an owning, at the ſame time, his title and autho-'rity in what lawful commands he may impoſe;'—— They have alſo maintained, 'that the powers which they '(our ſuffering anceſtors) rejected, did differ, not only 'as

(a) Diſplay, p. 290.

'as to their adminiſtration, but as to their office and 'kind, from any we have now ado with;'---and that they 'were in a quite different ſituation from any in this pe-'riod. Not only as they were tyrannically impoſed up-'on, to give expreſs acknowledgment of the then autho-'rity; but as they were actually caſt out from under 'the wings of all government, denied all benefit of law, 'and devoted unto deſtruction:----So that they by no 'means proceeded ultroneouſly in their rejecting the ci-'vil government (*b*).'———They declare alſo, that the ſtate of their teſtimony, in rejecting the civil government, was entirely different from what ſome were taking up, on a religious account: as they 'owned that they neither did, nor could reject the magiſtrate, merely for differing from them in religion.'

The only uſe to which they have applied theſe doctrines is, the laudable one of enforcing the duty of all, and of religious diſſenters in particular, to continue ſtedfaſt in their loyalty to civil rulers, not only when they are of a different religion, but even may be uſing them injuriouſly, on account of their profeſſion, by ſhewing, that ſuch difference or ill uſage, ſo far from warranting them in flying to the extreme and extraordinary mean of reſiſtance, cannot even be a juſt ground for with-holding honour and ſubjection for conſcience-ſake. The great ſcope of the reaſonings, in the tract expreſsly written on this ſubject, tends to this point. Thus, in explaining the precept of Solomon; "If the ſpirit of the ruler riſe againſt thee, leave not thy place, for yielding pacifieth great offences;" they ſay, 'Upon ſuppoſition 'of a ruler's being ſo corrupt, as, without juſt ground, to 'diſcountenance, diſcourage or diſtreſs the ſubject, upon 'perſonal or religious accounts, the ſubject muſt not, in 'the mean time, repay him evil for evil: but while he 'is bound to uſe lawful endeavours, as his calling gives 'acceſs, for ſelf-preſervation, for vindicating his inno-'cency and the cauſe for which he ſuffers, and for hav-'ing the government reformed; he muſt, at the ſame 'time, continue in ſubjection and obedience to the ruler 'in lawful matters, while the civil ſtate continues to 'acknowledge him." And farther, 'When the ſpirit 'of

(*b*) Diſplay, p. 290, 341.

'of the ruler riſeth up unjuſtly againſt the ſubject, cor-
'rupt nature is ready to manage a ſelfiſh oppoſition, in
'retaliating the ruler, by tranſgreſſing alſo the rule of
'duty toward him---but this yielding pacifieth great of-
'fences---as the ſubject's ſtanding to his duty, is both an
'habile mean for convincing the ruler of his error, and
'for extinguiſhing the offence he has taken---and for
'preventing farther evils and extremes which both the
'ruler and the ſubject may afterwards be driven to, if
'once the ſubject leave his place: for the beginning of
'ſtrife is as when one letteth out water; therefore (ſaith
'the Lord) leave off contention, before it be meddled
'with (*c*).'

Whatever rights they aſcribe to a people over their magiſtrates, or in conſtituting, altering, or reforming their civil conſtitution, they expreſsly limit to the people collectively, or the body politic. 'Superiority,' they ſay, 'muſt in the order of nature be before ſubjection,
'the king before the ſubjects; but the body politic is in
'the order of nature before the king, giving riſe to the
'king, and ſo cannot be ſubject to the king. The po-
'litic body is a party voluntarily contracting with the
'king; and their continued concern with him is anent
'the obſervation of a contract, not anent the yielding of
'ſubjection.——It is a principle inſeparable from the
'true doctrine of liberty, that upon a king's not fulfil-
'ling his obligation, and refuſing to be reformed, the
'people collectively conſidered, or as a body politic, are
'warranted to lay him aſide.' At the ſame time they have entered this caveat; 'That no argument concerning
'the obligations or rights of the people collectively con-
'ſidered, as a body politic, touches the queſtion anent
'the duties or rights of the people ſeparately conſidered
'as ſubjects, and that no inference can be drawn from
'the one to the other (*d*).'

Again, while they maintain that it is deſirable, and the duty of all people to take care that the magiſtrates admitted to rule over them be good, both in a moral and religious view; while they allow, that a due meaſure of ſcriptural qualifications are neceſſary to the well-being, or

(*c*) Diſplay, p. 298, 299. (*d*) Ibid. p. 275.

or better discharge of the office, yet they plead and have largely proved, that these are not absolutely necessary to the being of the office. Consequently that the duty of subjection is not made to depend on their personal characters, or on the measure of religious qualifications which they possess or want, while they are put in lawful possession of ruling power, and continue to use it with the common consent, and are possessed of such ordinary capacity and qualifications as every society of reasonable men will consider as indispensibly needful, and which may serve to gain in any competent degree the ends of government. Hence they affirm, that the kings of the Heathen nations of old, were as really moral powers to whom obedience was due, as the kings in Judah were;—that the Jewish people were not condemned for yielding obedience in matters lawful to the worst of these kings that reigned over them, whether in their own land or elsewhere (*e*); and that the doctrine of the Apostle to the Romans, ch. xiii. 1—7. enjoined civil subjection in its full latitude, and all its parts, upon the Christians then at Rome, toward the rulers then in the Roman empire, but in such a way as still left full room for disapproving every thing evil cleaving to the laws or the persons of these rulers (*f*). According to them, the Apostle there speaks of rulers as such, abstracting from every other view of them, either good or bad: for every thing he says of them was truly and only verified in their civil office and administration. 'He says not a word of 'their personal characters or qualifications, moral or 'religious; tho' undoubtedly there was, at least, much 'evil about them in this respect;—he takes no manner 'of notice of their mal-administrations, either in a way 'of omission or commission: though yet it was certain 'that there never were nor could be any magistrates, 'either wholly or near wholly free of these: He speaks 'of them allenarly as rulers; or as in the lawful pos-'session of ruling power, and in so far as truly exer-'cising the same.——Though there were many things 'different, odious and opposite to be seen about them; 'yet he does not pursue his present consideration of 'them any farther, than as they were truly wearing, and 'found

(*e*) Display, p. 328. (*f*) Ibid. 329.

'found walking within the proper compaſs and limits of 'magiſtracy. Their practice did not always anſwer 'theſe things; their actual attendance thereunto was 'far from being continual; but their civil power, ſo far 'as truly exerciſed, was altogether confined thereunto.' At the ſame time it is added, 'that the manner of the 'Apoſtle's argument was calculated for diſcovering un-'to the Romans, the whole caſes wherein they had 'any concern with magiſtrates by way of ſubjection; 'namely, in ſo far only as they anſwer the characters 'here given; and it was farther calculated, for caution-'ing the Romans againſt carrying ſubjection the length 'of any ſinful compliance with them; whatever perſo-'nal evils they were chargeable with, whether in their 'private character or conduct, or in their mal-admini-'ſtrations---all theſe they were to oppoſe, contend and 'teſtify againſt, according to their callings, knowledge, 'and acceſs (*g*)' And all this, the Aſſociate Body affirmed with reſpect to the preſent Civil Government.

As to the difference in point of religion, and the want of certain religious qualifications, either through the defect or apoſtacy of ſuch rulers, or the neglect and defection of the people conſtituting them, care is taken to inſtruct the minds of people, that theſe muſt not be allowed to mingle in the queſtion about any civil relations, or interfere with the duty of allegiance. Though they hold, that rulers and people are equally bound to profeſs, and, in their ſtations, to maintain and promote the true religion revealed in the word of God; and that it is deſirable, in the language of the former laws of Scotland, 'that prince and people be of one perfect religion;' yet they alſo adopt the doctrine of the National Confeſſion, that 'Infidelity, or difference in religion, doth not make void the magiſtrate's juſt and legal authority, nor free the people from their due obedience to him; from which eccleſiaſtical perſons are not exempted (*b*).'——And while it is acknowledged, 'there are in ſcripture ſeveral promiſes of good, reformed, reforming magiſtrates, and of deliverance to the Lord's people from any grievance they preſently ly under, in the want thereof---yet

(*g*) Diſplay, p. 314, 315. (*b*) Conf. ch. 23. 4.

yet theſe promiſes can never belong to the rule of duty. A promiſe of the greateſt future good, can be no warrant for ſpurning at the leaſt preſent good: yea, the cheriſhing any good which is preſently beſtowed, is the ready way of attaining all the good that is promiſed.---- Wherefore no promiſe anent magiſtrates to come, can poſſibly interfere with the duty of ſubjecting to any thing lawful in the adminiſtration of magiſtrates that preſently are (*i*).' Though they believe, 'that it is peculiarly incumbent upon every civil ſtate, whereinto Chriſtianity is introduced, to ſtudy and bring to paſs, that civil government among them, in all the appurtenances of its conſtitution and adminiſtration, run in an agreeableneſs to the word of God; be ſubſervient unto the ſpiritual kingdom of Jeſus Chriſt, and to the intereſts of the true religion and reformation of the church; without which they cannot truly proſper in their civil concerns, nor be enriched by the bleſſings of the goſpel;' Yet they are careful to warn their people againſt confounding the civil conſtitution with ſuch a religious form or reformation of it; and as civil authority is eſſentially the ſame, before and after the introduction of ſuch a reform, therefore the validity of it, or the proper grounds of civil obedience, cannot be affected by this difference; nor by any changes or apoſtacy in reſpect of ſuch a reformation, can they be invalidated or aboliſhed. While they approve of public oaths and covenants, entered into by all ranks of men in Britain, in order to promote and maintain reformation in religion and manners;---while they farther acknowledge, 'that the profeſſion, defence 'and maintenance of the true religion, in doctrine, wor-'ſhip, diſcipline and Preſbyterial church government, 'agreeable unto and founded on the word of God, was 'ſecured by the fundamental conſtitution of the civil 'government, in our reforming periods; which deed of 'conſtitution, in all moral reſpects, is morally unalter-'able, becauſe of its agreeableneſs to the Divine will re-'vealed in the word, and becauſe it was attained to and 'fixed in purſuance of our Solemn Covenants: Yet they 'at the ſame time, maintain it as a principle, founded

(*i*) Diſplay, p. 314.

'in the word of God, and agreeable to the Confeſſions 'of all the Reformed Churches, that as the defection of 'a nation from attained-to reformation doth not deprive 'them of a right to chooſe civil magiſtrates for them-'ſelves, and that as ſubjection to them and obedience 'to their lawful commands, continues a duty incumbent 'upon the minority who adhere to the covenanted refor-'mation; ſo alſo, that theſe civil rights of the nation 'and their magiſtrates, did neither ariſe from, nor were 'innovated by the reformation once attained to. True 'religion is not only the church's bleſſing, but her very 'ſubſtance; ſo that true religion and a true church can-'not be divided. Now, if true religion became a part 'of the civil conſtitution, it inevitably follows, that the 'church becomes a part of the ſtate: which doctrine, as 'it is abſurd in itſelf, ſo it lays a plain foundation for 'Eraſtianiſm; overturning the diſtinction betwixt the 'kingdom of our Lord Jeſus, and the kingdoms of this 'world. Moreover, if the true religion (which is ſpi-'ritual and ſupernatural) became a part of the civil con-'ſtitution; then it could no longer remain a civil, but 'became a religious, a ſpiritual, a ſupernatural conſti-'tution.'——Again, 'No human laws can alter the true 'diſtinction of the ſtate from the church, or the true 'nature of magiſtracy, as eſtabliſhed by the eternal and 'unalterable law of God (*k*).'

Though the Aſſociate Body have all along deeply regreted and condemned the national apoſtacy from the ſaid Reformation, and have enumerated a variety of inſtances and gradations of it, both in reſpect of the civil and eccleſiaſtic authority, as well as the great body of people in the nation, which, as relating to the object of religion and deeply affecting its intereſts, they conſider as entering with propriety into the matter of a religious teſtimony, and into confeſſions of ſins and engagements to duty, by whomſoever the guilt of defection was contracted, or is ſtill continued; though they hold themſelves, and all others, in whatever ſtation they act, under a moral and unalterable obligation to abſtain from active ſupport or approbation of any of theſe ſinful acts or corruptions which involve the guilt of that apoſtacy, and alſo

(*k*) Diſplay, p. 274, 275.

alſo as in conſcience bound to ſeek, in a dutiful and peaceable manner the removal of obſtructions in the way of a like reformation, and by all methods competent, to plead for and promote it; yet all this they view as conſiſtent with maintaining the proper rights of rulers inviolate; with preſerving the form, ſtability and integrity of the mere civil conſtitution; the diſtinct ranks, orders, and callings, with the due peace and ſubordinations of ſociety; without allowing either of violent methods of reformation, new principles or modes of civil polity, or letting looſe the dangerous ſpirit of turbulent fanaticiſm, or the luſt and rage of boundleſs change. They know that the due performance of one duty is never incompatible with, nor weakens the obligation to any other. They enjoin every one to confine himſelf to this place, and proper calling, in endeavouring religious reformation, and to employ only the means which religion allows. They never inſinuated, that it was the buſineſs of private people individually, or of the minor part of a nation, to encroach on legiſlative authority, to dictate laws, or to alter and reform the civil conſtitution; and that it is leaſt of all the part of a religious body, or eccleſiaſtical courts, however diſtinct in their religious capacity, to ſeparate themſelves from the common authority and unity of the common-wealth in civil matters, or to preſcribe forms of polity, or to change eſtabliſhed laws.

Where a conſtitution is once eſtabliſhed, and a regular government exerciſed, even a nation collectively are not warranted on ſlight grounds or ſmaller injuries, to exerciſe the power of alteration. Even where there may be great evils in a conſtitution, and the higheſt reaſons for reform or revolution, yet all are warned of the danger of haſty change, and of removing or deſtroying what is good, along with the abuſes to be rectified. While they have inculcated the admonition of Solomon, "to fear the Lord and the king," they have not forgotten the warning ſubjoined, *Meddle not with them that are given to change;* which ſuppoſes, 'that there will readily be ſome 'men given to change; men of a reſtleſs ſpirit, of a 'double mind, and of an unſtable conduct; men ad-'dicted to novelties; and who particularly will depart 'out of the old road of duty toward civil ſuperiors, upon 'new

'new pretences; while, at the same time, it is here 'implied, that even the children of God are in danger 'of meddling with such persons, and have special need 'to be on their guard against them (*l*).'

As to any change in the civil constitution, or existing laws, in those particulars wherein they declare a reformation to be needful, none can say, that they have ever dictated to the legislature, or attempted to controul the will of those in power, having never so much as presented a petition to them on the subject. While they know, that no acts or proceedings of theirs, as a church, representatively or collectively, can or ought to have any influence, directly and formally, in altering political laws, or directing civil management, they have contented themselves with pointing out the duty in general, and the regular manner in which it may, through the help of God, be effected: 'First, they say, the whole people, adjoin-'ing themselves to the true church, should approve 'themselves to be true members thereof; by serious, 'several and mutual endeavours to promote the true re-'ligion and reformation of the church, privately, pub-'licly, universally, in their several places and callings. 'Secondly, this people, considered in their conjunct and 'politic capacity (as thus only the matter is competent 'to them) should by their deed of civil constitution, pro-'vide, that their magistrates be obliged to concur in the 'same true religion and reformation; and to rule them 'by laws no way prejudicial, but serviceable thereunto: 'As, moreover, they ought to obey, encourage and sup-'port their magistrates in that way; and effectually to 'endeavour their information and reformation, where 'deficient or corrupt (*m*).'

If any should object, that they have taken unwarrantable freedoms in condemning many supposed evils in the constitution, and in state acts and proceedings, of which a particular and long enumeration is made in the Judicial Testimony, the Acknowledgment of Sins, and other papers, the principal of which are also recapitulated and engrossed in the Defence of the Authority of the British Government. If it should be insinuated, that this has a tendency to alienate the minds of people from it, and from

(*l*) Display, p. 297. (*m*) Ibid, p. 280.

from their governors, to bring contempt and odium upon them, to weaken the principle of ſubjection and reverence among the lower ranks, and to prompt them to irregular and ſeditious attempts to reform;—the objection would be groundleſs, if not impious. If theſe evils really exiſt; if they be chargeable upon a Chriſtian nation before God, and expoſe all claſſes of men in it to the ſevereſt judgments, it muſt be a needful duty, and a public ſervice, to have them pointed out: How elſe could they be removed, and the nation preſerved? The moſt ſalutary deſigns, and the moſt dutiful attempts, may ſome times have a contrary operation to what might be expected, and effects may incidentally ariſe from them to which they have no tendency. The enumeration of public as well as private corruptions, ſuch as that referred to, for the purpoſe and in the manner in which it is done, can be no evidence of diſreſpect to lawful authority, or to the perſons and dignity of rulers, nor can it juſtly render them odious or contemptible. It is iniquity perſiſted in that brings odium and diſhonour: ſin unrepented of becomes the reproach of any perſon or people; not the declaration or cenſure of it; much leſs ſerious humiliation and repentance for it before the Lord. Before him, and his impartial law, none may claim privilege, but all are on a level. It was no preſumption in Daniel to ſpecify to the monarch of Babylon ſome of his heinous ſins, as well as of his predeceſſors, and to reprove the pride, obduracy, idolatry, ſacrilege, and other vices reigning in the palace and among his nobles, or to read out in plain terms the writing of judgment on that account: nor did he ſurely mean to diſparage the majeſty of Nebuchadnezzar the great, or the peace of his kingdom, when he tendered him his counſel, when an awful doom was pronounced from heaven againſt him: "Wherefore, O king, let my counſel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy ſins by righteouſneſs, and thine iniquities by ſhewing mercy to the poor, if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity *." When the prophets cried againſt the altar, the high places of Bethel, and called men from the worſhip of the golden calves, which a wicked policy had ſet up, and continued; when they pointed

* Chap. iv. 27.

pointed out the guilt and dangerous consequences of "the statutes of Omri that were kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab," were they enemies to royalty, or the public weal of Israel? King Ahab said to Elijah, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?—Art thou he that troublest Israel?" But he answered, "I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim †"

The ministers and people of the Secession, when associating for religious reformation, conformed to the approved example of the church of God in every period, when they traced down the remarkable steps of public defection, and confessed the evils in respect of which they and the nation were called to return. Such an enumeration or confession is in vain attempted, if it be not free and impartial. These made in the reforming times in Judah, especially the remarkable restoration of the ruinous temple, mention very explicitly the trespass of their kings, princes, priests, and rulers: Particularly, there are striking precedents of this in the church of Scotland in her best times, and by the most faithful men therein. But this is never done with a view to degrade authority, or the higher orders of society, in the eyes of inferior people, or to humiliate one class of men by fixing blame upon them, exclusive of others; but that a sense of common guilt and danger may be produced in all: not that one may glory over or upbraid others, as the Pharisee did in the temple; but that all may be brought to contrition in the sight of God, and give glory unto him. If a share of blame lie upon rulers, as to the public deformation, this is not charged on them in contradistinction to the great body of the people: all of them in their stations, from the least to the greatest, being, in one shape or other, involved in the trespass; and those who draw up the indictment willingly become the first examples of taking shame to themselves. To impress men with a fear of God, and a sense and detestation of sin, to awaken the sentiments and movements of true repentance, and make them jointly acknowledge their allegiance to the Most High; to remove every "accursed thing,

† 1 Kings xviii. 17, 18.

thing, that troubles the camp of Iſrael,"—is not the way to awaken animoſities, or produce alienation from one another. This carefulneſs, this holy indignation, and zeal, this revenge, when moſt fervently excited, tend to the firmeſt union, and the moſt cordial love. Such was the tendency of the reprehenſions and calls to repentance addreſſed to all claſſes of men by John Baptiſt, when the axe was laid to the root of the tree: "He ſhall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the diſobedient to the wiſdom of the juſt, leſt," ſaid Jehovah, "I come and ſmite the earth with a curſe *."

If any ſhall ſtill inſiſt, and ſay, that ſuch a free diſcuſſion of public affairs in church and ſtate, ſuch cenſure of ſome things in political conſtitutions, the ſyſtem of laws, or in the conduct and adminiſtration of thoſe who fill the ſeveral offices of civil ſociety, with whatever view it be done, is to depart from the line of eccleſiaſtical duty, and the proper buſineſs of men or of a ſociety devoted to religion;—to what hath been already obſerved for obviating this, we may add, that the office of teaching and applying the laws of God in all the latitude of them, and to all perſons, to explain the qualifications, and enforce the ſeveral duties, which true religion, and the better regulation and happineſs of ſociety may require, in perſons who occupy the ſeveral relations and offices of life, public as well as private, civil as well as religious, and to condemn in them whatever the moral law and the word of God condemn, and to inculcate univerſal reformation—undoubtedly belongs to the church of Chriſt, and its miniſters, while the power of making and executing human laws and conſtituting civil policies, belong wholly to others. As the laws of God and our Redeemer have authority over all claſſes of men and in all ſorts of acts, be they natural, civil or religious, ſo the religious power of giving effect to theſe laws, and of uſing moral and ſpiritual means for rectifying abuſes againſt them, in reference to all ſorts of perſons and in all kinds of acts, may be claimed and exerciſed by religious ſocieties, or their officers, without confounding the due diſtinction of powers, or duties, and without encroachment upon civil rights.——Whatever the objects may

* Mat. iii.

may be about which their power may be employed, whether political, commercial, military, or any other, it cannot on that account be called political, &c. though it be objectively ſo, while only employed about them in a religious manner, and for a ſpiritual end. As the civil authority claims, and exerciſes a right of determining in ſome caſes relating to religious ſocieties, and enacts laws for their protection, reſtraint, good order, external revenues, and the like, without ceaſing, on that account, to be properly and wholly civil: with equal reaſon the eccleſiaſtical may be allowed to have a like latitude, objectively conſidered, without any incroachment or interference. The exerciſe of both about the ſame things, in a manner diſtinct and peculiar, doth not neceſſarily imply any contrariety of claims, or competition of juriſdiction. And where there may be danger of interference and encroachment, two ſocieties in their nature diſtinct and independent, muſt be on an equality, as to the power of aſcertaining their own conſtitution, of judging the nature, object, and extent of their own powers, and in the right of maintaining them, each in their own manner, againſt extrinſic reſtraints and undue invaſion; otherwiſe the one would be rendered dependent upon the other. The rule by which to determine their own powers, and the limits of their juriſdiction, muſt be the original charter of their inſtitution.

We may further ſay, though civil and eccleſiaſtical ſociety, and the offices belonging to each, ought never to be confounded, and though the advantages reſulting from revealed religion be not eſſential to civil polity, yet none who are acquainted with it, can doubt but that its wholeſome doctrines and ſalutary influence ſhould have a free courſe, as among all nations, ſo alſo among all ranks of men;—that they ſhould diſtribute their ſtreams thro' all the various channels of human relations and duties? As this is entirely conſiſtent with the nature of religion, and the deſign of its author—correſpondent to the inſtitutions and examples of the New Teſtament, and the predictions of the Old, ſo it muſt ever prove highly conducive to the benefit and melioration of all theſe departments of ſociety, as well as individuals. Nothing ſo effectual to baniſh all that is noxious and pernicious;—

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to check rifing crimes, and combat and repel daring iniquity: nothing fo fit to enfure fidelity, juftice, obedience, and good order, or to cherifh every good principle, and whatever is lovely and defirable among men. Thus the waters of the fanctuary, in the prophetic vifion, go forth toward the dead fea, and hereby its waters are healed, and the vales and banks, wherever they flow, become beautiful and fruitful. In all directions, and in all feafons, without interruption, "the living waters from Jerufalem," it is faid, "fhall go forth, part of them toward the former fea, and part of them toward the hinder fea, in fummer and in winter fhall it be."

Let us fearch the whole fcripture, and fee, if the fins of wicked princes, corrupt governments, and privileged orders, were at any time fpared in divine adminiftrations: Or when was public repentance and reformation preached, or attained, while thefe flourifhed uncontrouled? What fort of evils are thefe againft which the divine meffengers did ufually lift up their voice?—Were not many of them fuch as would be deemed, in modern ftile, political or civil affairs?—the arrogance and impiety of princes, unjuft leagues and wars, acts of corrupt judges, the wickednefs of eftablifhed prieftfhood; unrighteous decrees, oppreffion, deceit, breach of covenants, perjury, bribery, riot, luxury, covetoufnefs, frauds, and difhoneft gains, contemning and enflaving the poor;—and all the crimes that lay waffe fociety, as well as violate the laws of religion. Did the faithful reprovers or reformers miftake their duty, and exceed their line, when they meddled with fuch matters? Our Lord aflumed no civil authority when on earth, but made himfelf a fervant of rulers; Did he then tranfgrefs in his reprehenfion of fcribes, prieffs, and princes? Did he encroach on the rights of the high prieft and Roman governor, when he challenged and reprimanded them for their bafe and unjuft apprehenfion of him, and of the illegal treatment he met with in his trial and judgment? Did he fail in due refpect, or invite to infurrection, when he told his judge, that both he and thofe who delivered him into his hands were guilty of a heinous fin? No: he never did violence, nor was any fault found in his lips. Did the Apoftle of the circumcifion afterwards mif-

take the limits of his commiſſion, or ſeditiouſly arraign the legal authority and deciſions of his nation, when he told the people, with their rulers, that "they had been the betrayers and murderers of the Holy One and the Juſt?" Or when he applied part of the ſecond Pſalm to the wicked convention of Herod, Pilate, and the rulers? Or when he refuſed to ſubmit to the ſentence of ſuſpenſion from his office intimated to him by the Jewiſh council? Or when he invoked the divine power in oppoſition to their threats, "that with all boldneſs," notwithſtanding theſe, "they might ſpeak the divine word* ?"—Once more, was Paul acting unſuitably to his ſpiritual character, or that of a dutiful citizen, when he brings forth in an epiſtle, and enters on record to poſterity, ſuch a heavy charge as this againſt the proceedings of his nation?—"Who both killed the Lord Jeſus, and their own prophets, and have perſecuted us; and they pleaſe not God, and are contrary unto all men: forbidding us to ſpeak to the Gentiles, that they might be ſaved, to fill up their ſins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermoſt †."

Therefore, why ſhould the princes and judges of the earth uſually appear ſo jealous of encroachments on their prerogatives, by the free exerciſe of the functions he hath appointed in his kingdom, which is not of this world? Why ſhould any wiſh to muzzle the mouths of miniſters, or to reſtrain the freedom of ſpiritual courts, whoſe aim is only to ſuppreſs iniquity, and reform the hearts and manners of men? Why do the wicked Amaziahs, that haunt the court of princes, infuſe jealouſies into their mind, and procure orders to baniſh liberty of prophefying, from the vicinity of the king's courts and chapels? Why ſhould the Herods of the earth wax wroth, and impriſon and behead faithful reprovers? Why ſhould corrupt ſanhedrims ſo abuſe their power, and forget their intereſt, as to ſit in council together, "plotting againſt the Lord and his anointed?"—and charge the meſſengers of the Prince of Peace ſo ſternly and ſo ſtraitly, "not to ſpeak any more in that name?" *They know not what they do:* Why, what evil have they done; or what diſaſters do they threaten?—They covet no man's ſilver or gold. They

* Acts, ch. iii. and iv. † 1 Theſſ. ii. 15, 16.

They ſeek no poſts of honour in your kingdom. They are neither robbers of temples, nor blaſphemers of lawful dignities. They offer to draw forth no ſword from its ſheath: they call for no fire from heaven to burn up infidel or ſchiſmatical cities! They ſound no trumpet of revolt or rebellion: They will ſhed no rivers of blood. They wear no concealed poniards in their boſom: they are followed with no executioners with axes, nor bring in their train, racks, or wheels, or gullotines, to torture or to kill. Their hearts would ſmite them if they ſhould injuriouſly aſſault the meaneſt mortal on earth; and how ſhould they ſtretch forth their hands againſt thoſe who are called gods.——If they ſaw an enemy hunger, they would feed him; if thirſty, they would give him drink, inſtead of ſeeking his life. Like their heavenly Maſter, they come not to deſtroy mens lives, or to fill higher the bitter cup of human woes, but to ſave and to conſole. The meſſage of peace is in their mouth, and the law of kindneſs is in their heart. Such is every true goſpel miniſter; and ſuch every genuine ſubject of the goſpel.—Such would even every ſociety of men be, if the goſpel were univerſally diffuſed, and the grace of the Redeemer felt among the nations, bringing every thought to the obedience of Chriſt. Then waſting and deſtruction would no more be heard in the abodes of men. "The wolf and the lamb would dwell together, the leopard would lie down with the kid, and the cow and the bear would feed, their young ones ſhould lie down together; and the lion ſhould eat ſtraw like the ox. Nothing would hurt or deſtroy in all the holy mountain;—when the earth ſhould be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the ſea *."

In this brief ſtatement and exculpation of the Seceſſion on the head of their principles, it will not be reckoned needful that we ſhould recur to former times, and attempt to vindicate the ſyſtem adopted by our forefathers, who began, promoted, and ſettled the former reformation, although we have all along expreſſed, with ſome few exceptions, a hearty approbation of it, and avow a coincidence with them in their main principles and deſign. We know well that ſome doctrines taught by

* Iſ. xi.

by the Reformers of Scotland, as well thoſe maintained by the ſufferers of the laſt age, about the rights of a people in reference to oppreſſive governments, and their intereſt and duty in attempting and maintaining reformation, where rulers may be neglecting to interfere, or may be actively oppoſing, have been greatly exclaimed againſt by a certain ſet of men and writers, both at home and abroad. And the whole of their proceedings, while the ſupreme power was not concurring with them, have been grievouſly calumniated, as irregular, illegal, ſeditious, particularly their holding meetings without warrant for religious worſhip, or for conſulting about common meaſures; their aſſociating for defending the liberty of the profeſſors of the goſpel, and its miniſters, and ſupporting the intrinſic right of eccleſiaſtical judicatories, when attacked and about to be cruſhed by the ſovereign, under the influence of evil counſel, ſometimes equally againſt the goſpel and the notional laws. Innumerable libels were written, many large volumes compiled, and ſtatute-books ſwelled with acts, repreſenting theſe meaſures, and the public bonds and oaths whereby they were conſolidated, as the blackeſt treaſon. The repelling the Marian tyranny and the French faction ſupporting it, by the Lords and people of the congregation;—the ſtruggles of the miniſtry and ſome church-aſſemblies in James the Firſt's time, have been ſo deſcribed. Even preſbytery from the beginning, and all along, has been by many denounced, as a mover of ſedition, a friend and cheriſher of democracy, but inconſiſtent with the rights of monarchy The troubles in the beginning, and the conventions and whole proceedings in behalf of popular liberty and reformation during the civil wars, have been a thouſand times ſtigmatized with the ſame odious names. The neceſſary reſiſtance then made, though ſanctioned by the parliaments of both kingdoms, ſtands recorded in the annals and ſome famed hiſtories of theſe times as the *Grand Rebellion*.——The Covenanters have been compared to the Popiſh leaguers, and Preſbyterians claſſed with Anabaptiſts, regicides, levellers, &c.——But who were the men, and what were their views, who have thus traduced them? None but a popiſh and malignant faction, avowed ene-

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mies to the liberties, and many of them to the religion, of Proteſtants.——Court ſycophants, penſioners on the ſmiles, or expectants of the favours of arbitrary princes; patrons of abſolute, uncontroulable will in kings, and of paſſive obedience and non-reſiſtance in ſubjects. What tongues or pens were they, but thoſe of royal chaplains, or ſpiteful depoſed prelates—of Oxfordian and Aberdonian doctors devoted to a deſpotic court, ſupporters equally of the divine inſtitution of monarchy and prelacy? Who but the Spottiſwoods, the Maxwells, the M'Kenzies, the Heylins, the L'Eſtranges, the Fowlifes, the Clarendons, the Walkers, the Hickes, the Leſlies, and the men of their ſtamp?——We hope it will not be required of us, at this advanced æra of Britiſh liberty, to produce a defence of the general principles and conduct of our Reformers againſt ſuch attacks, or to wipe off the aſperſions thrown from ſuch envenomed pens. Beſides what has been written to this effect ſince the Revolution, this was often and ſatisfactorily done, nearer the time of theſe tranſactions, by the pens of a Buchanan, a Knox, a Calderwood, a Baillie, a Rutherford, a Brown, a Stirling, (to name only thoſe of our own nation) and many more. The moſt religious as well as the moſt patriotic pens were formerly engaged in behalf of this cauſe: and for a conſiderable time, through the force of truth, and the bleſſing of God upon their cauſe, all calumny on this head, along with baffled tyranny, was obliged as aſhamed, for a time, to ſhut its mouth: though afterwards it was permitted again to raiſe its voice, and of late it ſeems to be once more reviving.

In the courſe of the two diſmal reigns that immediately preceded the Britiſh Revolution, not only the views of the prince and his council were hoſtile to the principles and proceedings of the former period, but parliaments and every department of government were brought over to co-operate with them, whereby all the former changes were again legally condemned, every act that had been paſſed in behalf of liberty and eccleſiaſtical reform was repealed, and all ſuch principles and proceedings were declared by the legiſlature to be utterly unlawful or treaſonable. The Seceſſion Teſtimony, it is true, have not only declared themſelves friendly in the main to the deſigns

ſigns and procedure thus condemned, though without extending their approbation to every ſtep, but alſo have marked out theſe acts reſciſſory and other public deeds following, as ſources of national guilt and permanent calamity to the churches in Britain and Ireland, while they are at the ſame time conſidered as deſtructive to liberty and good government. But it is well known that the worſt and moſt inveterate tyranny, in different ages, has been often carried into effect under the ſhadow of ſome popular forms, and been maintained by the ſanction of the nominal or real repreſentatives of a people: nor is it leſs pernicious or deteſtable in this ſhape, than when managed ſolely in the name of an arbitrary individual; nor is it leſs conſiſtent with duty, either in a civil or religious view, to expreſs diſapprobation of wicked acts, made in the moſt legal form, and by the moſt regular authority, than of others void of ſuch a ſanction. Neither doth the crime of ſedition, diſobedience, or unlawful reſiſtance, ariſe only from the nature of the form of government, or the legality of the authority enacting. In all queſtions of morality and religion, the ſuperior obligations laid on men and Chriſtians, can never be invalidated by any authority, however, or by whomſoever, it may be exerciſed.

It ſhould alſo be remembered, that the greater part of theſe cenſured acts, have, in Scotland, received the ſtigma of national opprobrium, and legal condemnation. The Revolution Parliament formally repealed a great part of them, and by other acts diſarmed others of all force and operation. The principles on which the Revolution proceeded, and the general ſpirit and tenor of its laws, condemned a number more. The ſevere acts againſt conventions, conventicles, voluntary aſſociations, attempting any change in church and ſtate, &c. that hung up the bloody ſtag of perſecution, if they were not all by name, at that time or ſince, cancelled from the ſtatute-book, they were practically abrogated, and ſhould, now and in all time coming, be held, both in law and right, as dead.

PART

PART SECOND.

Of the CONDUCT of SECEDERS, in reference to ſome late POLITICAL DISSENTIONS, and the SOCIETIES for REFORM.

IF no relevant charge can be brought againſt the General Aſſociate Synod, or its adherents, on the head of principles, it may next be proper to enquire, whether any can be fixed upon them, with greater juſtice, on account of the part they have acted in the late public ferment, and in reference to the ſocieties and meaſures for political reform. It may be poſſible that, in ſome unguarded hour, they may have forgotten their place and duty in civil ſociety, and even in oppoſition to their better principles, may have failed in their reſpect to lawful authority. But we hope it will not be more difficult to wipe off this aſperſion, in the eyes of the impartial, than the former. As to the general tenor of their conduct, in this view, at the commencement, and during the former period of their ſeceſſion, ſomething has already been occaſionally noticed. Except in the matters of their God, in no particular inſtances or facts, have they been found worthy of blame: As their own conſciences bore witneſs to the ſincerity of their loyal profeſſions, ſo they have been enabled, for a long courſe of time, to deport themſelves in ſuch a manner, as to draw down no particular ſeverity, public cenſure, or even ſuſpicion, ſo far as we know, from thoſe who had the greateſt intereſt, and the moſt immediate concern, in ſuperintending their behaviour. It would be ſomewhat ſtrange if they had now all at once forgotten both their duty and prudence, and made themſelves tranſgreſſors.

It is only in reference to the part they have acted in ſome late political diſſentions, either in a way of omiſſion or commiſſion, that their conduct is now particularly arraigned, and for which their loyalty or peaceableneſs, by ſome it ſeems, is brought into queſtion. The remarks we propoſe farther to make, will therefore be confined chiefly to theſe heads. The popular ſocieties lately formed, and the plans and reſolutions adopted by them, with a view to obtain a reform in ſome departments of the government or civil conſtitution, having been ſo deeply criminal-

criminated, the charges primarily brought againſt theſe, have gradually been extended to all, who took any active ſhare therein, or had concurrence therewith, or were even ſuppoſed to look upon them and their proceedings with a favourable eye: and thus Seceders are brought in for their liberal ſhare, in order to make both together, in this connection, appear more odious.——Hence we ſuppoſe came the broad hints, in the publication above referred to, of oppoſing the meaſures of government, and engaging in plots and conſpiracies, "to ſubvert the conſtitution †," &c.

Though all ſubjected to ſuch general indiſcriminate charges, and intemperate reflections, if the matter of them be neither obvious nor proved, may have cauſe to complain of ſuch unfair and injurious procedure, yet as they are meant to operate againſt a religious ſociety of people, ſituated as the Seceders long have been, for conſcience ſake—devoid of ſecular influence or patronage of any kind, removed from any immediate intercourſe with government or men of power, which might give them a favourable opportunity of vindicating themſelves, they appear doubly malevolent and injurious. Beſides their ordinary character, and temporal intereſts in ſociety, which, in common with thoſe of others, may be affected thereby, they have more precious intereſts at ſtake, which they ought to account dearer to them than all others in the world. But a few words may ſuffice with the cool and candid, to remove the imputation of guilt and ſhame from their body in this matter, to fall on the head of their accuſers.

It is not our intention, nor is it at all neceſſary, or competent to us, to enter into any particular enquiry into the merits of the general cauſe, between theſe ſocieties and their accuſers, as we wiſh carefully to avoid all political diſcuſſion; and whatever might be our own private ſentiments on ſuch a ſubject, it would be equally improper for us to criminate them on the one hand, or attempt a formal vindication of them, or any aſſociated with them, on the other, ſeeing they have already been made reſponſible for their conduct, and are in a capacity, and poſſeſſed of ability, for vindicating themſelves, if injured.

† Eſſays, p. 54.

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On a ſubject however that has ſo much engaged public attention, we hope we may be indulged in the following brief reflexions; which, we doubt not, a calmer review, and mature experience will juſtify:. We have, from the beginning, conſidered it as matter of regret, and a ſign of divine diſpleaſure againſt the nation, that ſuch a ſpirit of accuſation and recrimination, has had ſuch unbounded ſcope; particularly, that charges of total diſaffection to a Britiſh ſovereign, and of hoſtile deſigns againſt the whole conſtitution, ſhould have been ſo aſſiduouſly circulated, and ſo readily entertained, by one part of the nation againſt another—even againſt whole bodies and aſſociations of men, without the cleareſt evidence appearing, while all were agreed ſtill in profeſſing the warmeſt attachment to the form and great principles of the civil government ſettled among us, in paying the readieſt ſubjection to legal authority, and regard to the order and peace of ſociety:—That without due diſcrimination or examination, on account of ſome individuals who may have adopted other ſentiments and views, ſo many, who, from their general character and tenor of conduct, might have been ſtill ranked among the ſober, the well-principled, and well-affected part of the community, ſhould all at once have been involved in the charge, becauſe of certain opinions or countenancing particular meaſures which they ſaw to be of no ſuch import, diſclaiming all ſuch odious conſequences drawn from them:—That this charge ſhould have been perſiſted in, through the heat of party, as if it had been clear and undoubted, even in oppoſition to the avowed declarations, and moſt ſolemn proteſtations, of people, hitherto approved as loyal and peaceable, and who had not utterly forfeited all claim to veracity; that men of this deſcription (which we were diſpoſed to believe included the greater body of thoſe who took part in theſe ſocieties, and favoured their general deſign) ſhould have been made reſponſible either for what the haſty imputations and ſtrained inferences of their accuſers laid upon them, or for the extravagant notions, or dangerous ſchemes of ſome individuals who had mixed with them, while openly diſavowed by them—we knew not how to reconcile to the law of Chriſtian charity or common equity. Nor

did this ſeem to be the mode beſt adapted to maintain public tranquillity, and prevent farther exceſſes; but treatment of this ſort natively tended to make the beſt ſubjects really diſaffected. Without attempting to cenſure the legiſlative or judicial deciſions, we could not but bewail this as a ſtriking inſtance, wherein national wiſdom and good policy failed in our land, and as a leading error in point of procedure in reference to the recent diſputes; which was both a preſage of the approach of a day of public confuſion and calamity, and, in our humble opinion, a mean of haſtening it forward: and to this the dangerous ferment, and manifold miſchiefs, which have ariſen, or may ariſe, in the courſe of theſe contentions, may be viſibly traced.

But whether all or any, of theſe political ſocieties for Parliamentary Reform, or any embodied with them, were really chargeable with ſuch dangerous principles, or ſeditious proceedings, as have been imputed to them, or not,—neither the principles of the Seceſſion-body, which they have not changed, nor their loyal conduct, can juſtly be impeached, or in the leaſt affected thereby; while as a religious ſociety they profeſs no knowledge nor connection with any ſuch men. Could any be pointed out to whom ſuch evil deſigns and practices are applicable, they would not ſcruple inſtantly to put away from among them ſuch wicked perſons. Nor in that capacity are they reſponſible for any of the principles or proceedings of theſe ſocieties, farther than as theſe may coincide with the principles or meaſures which had formerly been adopted and generally approven in proſecution of religious reformation: Neither in their firſt formation, or plans of procedure, had they any peculiar activity or intereſt.

As to the riſe of theſe ſocieties, is well known, that the deſign was firſt formed and promoted by a number of men, not in the lower rank of life, but men converſant with the ſtate of public affairs; and ſome of them beſide their diſtinguiſhed rank and political knowledge, poſſeſſing a place, by the choice of their country, in the national legiſlature. Theſe, as they declared, from a ſenſe they entertained of prevailing corruption and abuſes, and the degree to which they had riſen, thought it their duty

duty to call the people at large to declare their ſentiments; and not in a clandeſtine plotting manner, but after a public notification of the deſign to parliament.

It may readily be ſuppoſed, that there would be a difference of ſentiments both among the miniſters and people of our communion, as there were among all other claſſes of men, about the object and views of theſe new aſſociations, and about ſome public meaſures of the preſent adminiſtration, of great conſequence to the intereſts of this nation and of Europe; as uſually has been the caſe as to ſimilar political queſtions and variable meaſures of former adminiſtrations: but they never apprehended this to be a neceſſary indication of a ſeditious diſpoſition, or a ſymptom of diſaffection. If the private ſentiments of a majority of them might perhaps incline to that ſide which profeſſed at leaſt to aim at the correction of ſome acknowledged evils, and to deſire the cultivation of public peace; in this were they to be blamed, if they purſued neither of theſe deſirable objects by any irregular or illegal means? As they did not in conſequence proceed to make any alteration in their own religious conſtitution, or to declare any new principles on the ſubject of government, popular rights, or eccleſiaſtic reform, ſo neither did they forſake the uſual line of eccleſiaſtical buſineſs, by bringing theſe ſocieties, or the political queſtions diſcuſſed by them, to be ſubject of deliberation in any Synods or Preſbyteries, ſo as to paſs any public judgment about them whatever.——Neither did they think themſelves at liberty, upon theſe new incidents ariſing, in the zeal of jarring factions, to renounce any principles, formerly declared, or any privileges formerly pled, on any of the foregoing heads, to court the favour, or avoid the obloquy, of either party.

Individuals of their body in different parts of the country, either from a conviction that the reform propoſed was needful, and conducive to public good, either in itſelf, or as it might facilitate the way for a readier removal of ſome eccleſiaſtic grievances of more importance in their view—and from a perſuaſion that the means propoſed for attaining it were dutiful and peaceable;—or from the influence of the ſudden blaze of popular fervor and apparent patriotiſm, from the heedleſs impulſe of the

the day, or from whatever motive, doubtleſs took a part with others in ſuch ſocieties. But this they did entirely of their own accord, without miniſterial authority interpoſed either to excite or to diſſuade them: and this they did, in the exerciſe of a common right, belonging to them as members of ſociety, as well as other ſubjects;—a right which they did not derive from religious ſociety, and which no authority in it could juſtly deprive them of.——Few of theſe, it may be ſuppoſed, were duly reflecting upon the import of that in which they were engaging in concurrence with others; few of them might be capable of taking in its full extent and tendency, or the probable conſequences that might ariſe from it, more than to foreſee the train of difficulties into which their perſeverance in it, (if they had had the reſolution to perſevere) might have involved them. With ſome the general idea or deſign of a reform, without any particular attention, or predilection for, the ſpecific plan propoſed, or modes of proſecuting it, might be ſufficient to allure them. Had there been indeed deep plots and treaſonable deſigns formed by the prime movers or conductors of the buſineſs, while theſe were far from being obvious, theſe people, being ſo little acquainted with political manœvres, or party-fineſſe, and having ſo little acceſs to be intimately inſtructed in the views of their leaders, had they been really ſeduced, what was ſaid of ſome of the multitude who were unawares drawn into Abſalom's revolt, might well be pled in their behalf;—"They went in their ſimplicity, and they knew not any thing *."—— But even though there had been criminal intentions, and criminal actions too, found and proved to have prevailed among them, would it be juſt, for the raſhneſs, or guilt of a few individuals, acting in that caſe, in no concert with the religious body to which they belonged, to criminate the whole ſociety?

It doth not appear, that the number of thoſe who took any active part in theſe ſocieties, in connection with the General Aſſociate Synod, bore any conſiderable proportion to the whole; or that there was a greater proportion from the people of that communion, than from other religious denominations in the land. But if it had been otherwiſe,

* 2 Sam. xv. 11.

otherwiſe, that circumſtance could not have been imputed to any ſpecial intereſt they could have in the deſign propoſed, or attributed to any immediate relation that the ſpecific plan of reform pled for by theſe ſocieties, bore to that which was the great object of the teſtimony and aſſociation of Seceders. If any of them conſidered them as coincident, or neceſſarily connected together, a ſmall degree of reflection might have ſerved to convince them of their miſtake.——The ſole object to which the former confined their attention was very foreign to the deſign of a church-aſſociation. They directly propoſed no reform of the corruptions in the eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhments in either kingdom. Moſt of them in the terms of their aſſociation, and in reſolutions publiſhed by them, admitted ſuch general, ambiguous, or unlimited profeſſions of approbation of the Britiſh conſtitution and laws, as did not conſiſt with the conſtant caution, and ſtated objection, maintained by the latter, as to any oaths or unqualified declarations on that head, leſt they ſhould be found approving, and engaging to perpetuate, even many of theſe evils which by their religious teſtimony they had ſpecified as needing reform. Seceders, who underſtood their principles, and abhorred either deceit or inconſiſtency, found, in theſe unlimited profeſſions, where admitted, ſufficient ground of ſcruple, and an inſuperable bar laid in their way of enrolling themſelves in theſe ſocieties, however well-diſpoſed they might otherwiſe be to the general deſign, and many of them alſo to the particular plan of reform. Neither could it eſcape their obſervation, that many who moſt heartily and zealouſly promoted theſe aſſociations, were perſons of a very different ſpirit and principles from religious reformers; who were as far from being friendly to the truths of the goſpel, and as unlikely to contend in earneſt for any church-reform, from a real love to it, as any of thoſe perhaps on the other ſide, who were keenly defending the eſtabliſhed ſyſtem. Among the number might have been diſcovered, beſides abundance of Socinians and Deiſts, many thoughtleſs and indifferent, many totally unacquainted with ſuch matters, and many wholly diſaffected and averſe to any ſuch change. As for the reſt, who might be ſober, intelligent, and well-affected towards

wards such a design, though we should grant them to have been the major part, it is evident that, either from a persuasion that any explicit proposal of ecclesiastical reform would, at that juncture, have been unseasonable, impracticable, or unfavourable, to the design immediately in view, or from the diversity of sentiments that would have arisen, and of plans that might have been proposed, among persons so divided from one another in respect of religion, or from whatever other cause—they also readily concurred in the general resolution to meddle with no matters of this kind: and thus on all hands, this design, which every true witness for Christ will have above all things at heart, was abandoned, buried in silence, and by some of the leading societies, at last formally and totally disavowed †. This being the case, it would have been strange inconsiderateness, and blind precipitation, if the Associate Body had considered that cause as identified with their own, or as standing in any peculiar connection with it: or if they had considered it as having any immediate claim upon them, or call to them, as a religious body, for their zealous support.

Had all that was directly proposed in that plan of reform been gained, it doth not appear that they could have reaped any peculiar advantages, or had cause to rejoice more than others. That might have been attained, and yet the special design, and great desired object, of their association, that has lasted for half a century past, might have been as far from being accomplished, and as far removed from view, as ever; either in respect of the public state and management of national affairs, or in regard to the religious disposition and conduct of the people. A civil reform by no means infers, or is necessarily accompanied with one that is religious. The giving a greater degree of influence to the popular interest in the legislature, or increasing the number of votes in the election of representatives, whatever other advantages may be supposed to have arisen from thence, would not have insured this, while the body of the people might remain unenlightened, and corrupt, as well as princes, ministers of state, and the men of higher rank. The introduction of a few more representatives into the British parliament,

† See Horne Tooke's Trial.

parliament, or multiplying popular electors, was a change that wore no peculiar aſpect of favour to them or their cauſe, in the preſent ſpirit and diſpoſition of the times, and while the greater part of the people continue in their ignorance, indifference, or hatred, to the ſpecific plan of religious reform purſued in the Seceſſion, and to the ſyſtem of Preſbyterian principles formerly adopted and ſworn to in theſe nations. Nor could this have produced any greater degree of influence to them, either in the political or eccleſiaſtical ſtate, while none belonging to their body could have any place or voice either in the repreſentation or election, all the old conſtitutional acts, and qualification-oaths, which pronounce upon them an excluſion for conſcience ſake, being ſuppoſed to remain unaltered. All that they could reaſonably have looked for, in ſuch a reformed ſtate of matters, would have been mere protection, and the liberty of maintaining their religious profeſſion: and this is what, in the good providence of God, we have long enjoyed, and hope ſtill to enjoy, with thankfulneſs, under the government even as preſently conſtituted and adminiſtered.

Still leſs could they, or any good man, have expected to find their advantage in the accompliſhment of the extravagant ſchemes, and pernicious deſigns, imputed to theſe ſocieties by their adverſaries. If the total change of the conſtitution, the ſubverſion of all authority, the abolition of all eſtabliſhed religion, and the deſtruction of all order in ſociety were indeed in contemplation, how barren, how gloomy, and how tremendous was the proſpect! Taking the ſcheme at beſt, as intending to change the Britiſh monarchy into a republic---what ſuperior excellencies could be ſeen in the latter, even by the eyes of its fondeſt admirers, ſufficient to counterbalance the hazard and certain dangers in the attempt? What could appear to warrant it, in the eye of prudence or humanity, in oppoſition to the prejudices, inclination, and powerful acting authority of the nation? Particularly, what was in this change ſo much on the ſide of morality or religion, ſo deciſively in favour of a Preſbyterian reform of the church, as to induce the friends of theſe, to forego preſent advantages and ſafety, and embark in ſuch a precarious and perilous adventure? Though ſome forms

forms of civil policy, and modes of public adminiſtration, doubtleſs may have a greater tendency to promote public good, and ſome of them may be better framed either for preventing public grievances, of any kind, or to afford a people who complain of them an eaſier acceſs, and more probable proſpect of ſucceſs, in redreſſing them, than ſome others; yet ſuch a beneficial effect, eſpecially in reference to morality and religion, doth not always attend them, nor is inſeparably attached to the beſt of them. Without men be influenced by the fear of God, and the authority of Jeſus Chriſt, unleſs moral principles take faſt hold of the heart, no change of mere political government, or of any external circumſtances in life, can make them better and more holy. In the event of a more enlarged ſyſtem of liberty, ſucceeding to a government ſevere or tyrannical, it is poſſible that many external barriers may be removed out of the way of religious reformation, by oppreſſive and reſtrictive laws in reference to eccleſiaſtical affairs being aboliſhed: the ſyſtem of external liberty may be enlarged, but the internal principle of religion may be wanting, or evils of another kind, perhaps of a more baneful kind, may ariſe after the other, to prevent the deſired effect.

All the intelligent muſt know, that an irreligious and and unreformed people can never properly exert themſelves in behalf of religion, either in their public acts, or in their private conduct: they muſt know and admit, that the valuable rights of conſcience and eccleſiaſtical liberty may be the object of political jealouſy and popular hatred, where popular influence bears full ſway, as well as where monarchy, ariſtocracy, and tyranny are predominant. They can recollect, that a Socrates was condemned to die, on pretence of alienating the citizens from the worſhip of the gods of his country, by the votes of a popular aſſembly: Nay, that Jeſus Chriſt himſelf was condemned, and crucified, at the inſtance, and repeated clamourous vociferations, of the giddy multitude, as well as by the votes of the Sanhedrim, and through the envy and conſpiracy of high prieſts and corrupt ſtateſmen. They can find, upon ſearch, inſtances of intolerant edicts, and of inquiſitorial courts, committing violence on the conſciences of Chriſtians, and making havoc of

of the church of God, in republican cities and ſtates, as well as in monarchical governments. Preſbyterians in Scotland can yet remember how much the freedom of their eccleſiaſtical meetings ſuffered during the prevalence of a baſtard-republic in the days of Cromwell.

If the friends of religion might ſtill entertain ſuch apprehenſions as to the event of ſuch political changes, even when accompliſhed with greateſt unanimity, and with leaſt commotion, there would be much leſs reaſon for any wiſe or good men to look for advantage from the embroilment of public affairs, a ſtate of general anarchy, the overthrow of governments and the deſolation of nations;—circumſtances and days in which no fleſh can promiſe themſelves ſafety. It would be the higheſt folly for any to expoſe themſelves and common intereſts to certain ſhipwreck, and to part with valuable enjoyments, from the precarious hope of ſaving ſomething out of the general wreck. It is not the diſpoſition of any true ſervants or fearers of the Lord, to deſire the evil day, even from the proſpect of probable deliverance that may ariſe, or of reformation in the church of God, that may ſucceed it. For though public convulſions and calamities may be neceſſary in the plan of divine operations, to bring about ſuch a change, and uſually are employed in it, eſpecially where corruptions have become inveterate, and are ſo deeply rooted in the frame and conſtitution of nations, as that no peaceable and milder methods, when tried, prove ſucceſsful in eradicating them; yet the over-ruling operations of a ſovereign Providence are not the rule of duty to men. He who "ſits on the floods" can rule and compoſe the tempeſt at will: he makes the wrath of man to praiſe him, and the remainder he will reſtrain. He knows how to bring good both out of natural and moral evil. He is moſt holy and juſt in effecting that which it may be unlawful for men to haſten forward by any activity of theirs. Though the deſtruction of the Jewiſh polity, and other public calamities foretold by our Lord, were to be viewed as forerunners of "a day of redemption drawing near" to all faithful Chriſtians; yet he directs them to all lawful and prudent methods to evite them: ſo far from having cauſe to wiſh for ſuch days of vengeance, or to be active in procuring them,

his difciples are enjoined to pray, if not abfolutely for averting them, feeing they were determined, yet for a mitigation of them, in which they are encouraged by the promife, that " for the elect's fake the days fhould be fhortened, or no flefh could be faved." In fuch cafes it becomes them to revere his awful procedure, in patience and in hope to fubmit to all his will; yet they fhould never willingly chufe to be " the men, who are his fword," for executing a work of judgment, much lefs to adopt unlawful means for accomplifhing fuch events. The defign that is holy in the divine hand, may be an accurfed work as managed by its inftruments; as David faid, concerning the perfecution of Saul, " If the Lord hath ftirred thee up againft me, let him accept an offering; but if they be the children of men, curfed be they before the Lord."

Befides, the good that may arife to the church from fuch convulfions is not always vifible, nor fimultaneous. They may prove deftructive not only to individuals, but to a whole generation of degenerate profeffors: and the intereffs of religion, as well as thofe of another kind, may, for a long time, perifh among them; and as to fome particular nations they may do fo finally. For public calamities fometimes, fo far from being medicinal, are vindictive and deadly, terminating in the total overthrow and rejection of a finful people, at leaft for many ages; as Jerufalem was given up to be trodden down of the Gentiles, till the time of the Gentiles fhould be fulfilled; as the Chriftian part of the Roman empire, both in the eaft and weft, was defolated by the inundation of Barbarians; and as the Afian churches loft their freedom, and many of them their very exiftence, under the banner and rapid conqueffs of Mahomet; though there is reafon to think that the great revolutions in thefe latter days will rather tend to bring kingdoms under the reign of Chrift, than to fubject them to the yoke of his enemies; and that the current of the laft waffing plagues, is directed againft the Antichriftian nations, rather than for the ruin of any reformed church retaining its faith and purity.

But fetting afide the alledged plots, and dangerous fchemes, all along difclaimed by the public abettors of

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the reform in queſtion, who will ſay that ſuch a deſign, in a general view of it, was either unlawful in itſelf, or improper for any claſs of men, who might be convinced of the neceſſity of it, to encourage in a dutiful and regular way? Where is the ſociety ſo perfectly conſtituted, or the government ſo wiſely adminiſtered, that may not admit of improvement, or that will not, in proceſs of time, preſent a number of errors and abuſes that may require correction? Though a religious ſociety as ſuch may have no peculiar intereſt in promoting a civil reform, yet to promote it when needful is the intereſt and duty of all. Pure religion, inſtead of reſtraining any from ſuch a deſign, will aid public ſpirit, and make men in every ſtation more zealous for removing evils of every kind, and promoting public weal. If it be true, as has ſo often been aſſerted, and never diſproved, that in Britain corruption, in various branches, has grown to ſuch a ſcandalous height, as to outrage all morality and common honeſty, as well as religion;—if places of public truſt are openly bought and ſold, if the repreſentatives of a nation are rendered mercenary and ſervile by bribery and undue influence; if oaths and perjuries are nothing accounted of; if profuſion, drunkenneſs, riot, and intrigue, are the chief marks of the times for public elections; if intereſt and gain may be allowed to aſſert their claims in oppoſition to the laws of juſtice and morality; if many enormities like theſe prevail, why ſhould any man be condemned, for giving his voice or quota of aſſiſtance for providing a remedy? If any adminiſtration, in a nation where ſuch evils ſhould confeſſedly exiſt, ſhould ſtate an avowed oppoſition to every propoſition and every ſpecies of reform, however limited, or regularly ſought, ſuch men, from that moment, would render themſelves unworthy of public confidence, by becoming open patrons of a ſyſtem of corruption, and declared enemies to the improvement and good of ſociety: they would, inſtead of the countenance, juſtly deſerve the cenſure, of all good men. And if ſuch an unqualified oppoſition to every propoſal of reform, moderate or immoderate, be adopted and adhered to, in a free nation, in contempt of the declared will or general wiſh of the people, it muſt farther imply hoſtility againſt their conſtitutional

ſtitutional rights and liberties, and in that caſe, tyranny would be ſuperinduced to corruption, and employed for its ſupport. Nor can any pretended fear of exceſs, or dangerous conſequences that may occaſionally, though they do not neceſſarily, ariſe from a needful reform, warrant ſuch a determined and unqualified reſolution; becauſe ſuch fears are beſt obviated, and ſuch dangers moſt effectually prevented, by granting what is juſt and reaſonable, and by the ſpeedy abolition of evident evils and cauſes of grievance, rather than by patronizing them: While they are retained, turbulent and ill-deſigning men will be able to carry on their ſchemes with greater plauſibility and effect. A government muſt always acquire greater ſtrength, and national ſafety be more firmly ſecured, againſt the deſigns of either open or ſecret enemies, by ſatisfying the minds and conciliating the affections of the moderate and the good, than by irritating them by unjuſt ſuſpicion and ill-uſage, and thruſting them into the ſame ſcale with the extravagant and miſchievous. And it would be abſurd to ſuppoſe, that any legiſlature can be leſs able to refuſe extravagant propoſitions, if they ſhould afterwards be brought forward, or to combat and cruſh deſtructive ſchemes, if they ſhould ſpring up, by their previouſly adopting thoſe that may be equitable and ſalutary; than they can be at firſt inſtance to refuſe and combat every propoſal of reform, reaſonable or unreaſonable, againſt the general ſenſe of a large body of well-affected ſubjects, and amidſt great diſcontents and complaints ariſing from the refuſal of a redreſs of public grievances.

Beſides, the rejection of every idea of reform, or a condemnation of it on ſuch general grounds as may always be found or pretended for oppoſing any particular plan of it, may juſtly be conſidered as ſtriking equally againſt a religious reformation of a legal eſtabliſhment, as againſt a civil.——Without maintaining the general principle, and contending for the common right, no ſociety can conſiſtently plead for them, or apply them in any particular caſe. For a religious body conſtituted for the expreſs purpoſe of promoting a reform of the former kind, as the Aſſociate Synod is, to abandon the principle, and condemn the right, would be to overthrow the very foun-

foundation of their own conſtitution, to forge and counteract one great deſign of their aſſociation, and to make themſelves tranſgreſſors. The ſame may be ſaid as to the methods and regular means, whereby the deſign of a reform, civil or religious, may be proſecuted, while the government or greater part of a nation may be reluctant or oppoſing; ſuch as meetings, voluntary aſſociations, correſpondence, bonds and engagements to one another, publiſhing declarations, framing petitions, and the like. Theſe may be equally needful and proper, in certain circumſtances, in carrying on the deſign of an eccleſiaſtic-political reform, as well as one of another kind. The right in theſe is not to be relinquiſhed or condemned, though it ſhould ſometimes be employed in a bad cauſe, or in a factious manner. Thoſe who may have formerly availed themſelves of theſe, or who hereafter may have occaſion to have recourſe to them, in promoting a good cauſe, or who would reckon themſelves injured, were they to be reſtrained from doing ſo, would be chargeable with great inconſiſtency, if they condemned that right in others. By ſuch unwary conduct, they would preclude all future reformation, or render it ſtill more arduous, by diſabling themſelves or others from uſing ſuch means as may be needful for proſecuting it, in any caſe whatever.

This may ſufficiently account for the greater part of the miniſters of the General Aſſociate Synod declining to join in the ſevere reprobation of the propoſed reform, in the invectives againſt thoſe who promoted it, or in the cenſures paſſed upon ſocieties formed for petitioning and concerting meaſures in behalf of it, in a dutiful ſubjection to the legiſlature.——As the buſineſs was more immediately of a ſecular nature, they reckoned it as incompetent for them in their eccleſiaſtical capacity, publicly to condemn, as it would have been to promote; though many miniſters and courts of the church ſeem to have conſidered it as excluded from their province only on the ſide of countenance, but not of condemnation. They did not think themſelves juſtifiable in adopting the intemperate language, and venting the abuſe, ſo common for a time: they did not, they durſt not, carry railing accuſations and charges into the ſanctuary itſelf, and

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pour them forth before God and men, while the evidence ſupporting them did not appear ſatisfactory.—— The freedom uſed by too many on this and ſome public topics connected with it, in ſacred adminiſtrations, we are afraid, have tended nothing to the credit of religion or its miniſters, or to the honour of the ſpirit of moderation, ſo much boaſted of in this age. Whatever others might do, they durſt not varniſh over public corruption, and deny the exiſtence of almoſt every grievance. Knowing how rarely a ſpirit of reform can in any cauſe be excited among a people, and with what difficulty it is preſerved alive, however much ſuch a ſpirit might need to be directed and regulated, yet they durſt not declaim againſt a ſudden but feeble attempt of this kind as the greateſt of crimes, or to paint it in ſuch colours as to make the very name odious, ſo that all public iniquity might henceforth boldly lift up its head in triumph. Whatever they might think of the ſpecific plan, they durſt not in that wound the general cauſe of liberty, nor ſhackle the hands of all people ever after who ſhould think fit to aſſume the character of reformers: they would not condemn the common cauſe of reformation, and their own.

The queſtions at iſſue, in their general view and remote tendency, were of a very delicate nature, and of unſpeakable importance. They may be ſaid, to have involved the liberties of nations, and the general cauſe of Proteſtant churches. If the right to reform be raſhly condemned, and the ordinary means by which it hath been promoted, however peaceably uſed, be indiſcriminately cenſured, how could the reformation in moſt of theſe churches, formed on the ſame principle and conducted by ſimilar methods, admit of vindication, or the common calumnies of Papiſts againſt it be effectually wiped off? Are we to condemn theſe churches, in their firſt formation and progreſſive advancement, as ſo many illegal cabals and ſeditious aſſemblies, becauſe they began to reform without public leave, and becauſe they went faſter and farther than the rulers in thoſe times wiſhed? Was there no danger, by ſuch a damnatory ſentence, of reflecting a heavy cenſure in particular on the proceedings in our own land, both in the firſt and ſecond period of eccleſiaſtical reform? Could thoſe, who had

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all along borne such an honourable testimony to that cause, as a work accomplished under the Spirit and by the mighty hand of God, voluntarily say or do any thing, that might seem again to consign it over to all that ignominy which its inveterate enemies have always thrown upon it, on account of the measures which, history informs us, they were obliged to take for promoting it, while the court was disapproving or opposing? Were they thus to use lightness, in the matter of their religious profession, and accommodate their language and sentiments to the changeable mode of the time? Or could they forget that they themselves had associated on a similar design, and sworn by the great name of God, "that, by all means which are lawful and warrantable, they should, in their several places and callings, endeavour the reformation of religion in England 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;—and to encourage and strengthen one another's hands, in pursuing the end and design of this their solemn oath and covenant." After they had thus opened their mouth to the Lord, were they to draw back either for the fear or favour of men? Or were they, at least virtually and indirectly, to represent all such designs as a contempt and conspiracy against lawful authority, and all engagements of this kind, as bonds of iniquity?

It is quite obvious, that every person who believes the reformed religion as received by the Presbyterian church of Scotland to be conform to the institutions of Christ, and who, from the conviction of the beneficial tendency of that system, from a sense of the divine authority, or of the obligation of former vows, shall engage for endeavour to have England and Ireland reformed according to it, must express disapprobation of many things sanctioned by authority, and seek an alteration of the established constitution and laws in so far, and in one way or another. But who will say, that all endeavours of this kind must cease, and that it must even be unlawful for any to meet to deliberate on any grievance in church or state, till it shall please those in authority, of their own accord, to make the alteration? Or who will say, that such endeavours

deavours may not be uſed and perſiſted in by ſubjects, and even the deſign effected at laſt, without force or tumult, as Paul was found performing his vow of purification in the temple, till the band of perſecuting Jews firſt excited them, and then charged the riot on the innocent and peaceable?

If the doctrine and meaſures, which ſome have pled for of late, in oppoſition to propoſals and peaceable modes of civil reform, were to be admitted and applied to an eccleſiaſtical one wherein ſecular laws and authority may be concerned, not only are former reformations branded with infamy, but every proſpect of farther reformation in any ſtate or kingdom where it has not yet been attained, or where it has by the laws been left imperfect, is virtually excluded. Of conſequence all eccleſiaſtic evils and abuſes, however enormous, however ruinous to the intereſts of religion, or other intereſts of men, muſt continue from age to age, as they are already ſettled, or preſently ſupported by an exiſting adminiſtration in any land, at leaſt till civil rulers be pleaſed to change their mind, and move their hand to the work of reform. If the doctrine be good in one land or period, it muſt be ſo in another. According to it then, not only muſt an Eraſtian ſupremacy, or what ſome have fitly termed a Cæſarean Popery, be ſilently and tamely allowed to rule with abſolute ſway in Proteſtant churches; not only muſt the old conſtitution of popiſh kingdoms, and every title and prerogative beſtowed on their princes or prelates, remain for ever unqueſtioned, but along with theſe, the ſupremacy of the Czar and of the Grand Signior, in matters of religion, muſt be held inviolable. Together with the laws of the Inquiſition, thoſe of Brama, and of the governments of China and Japan, muſt be revered to perpetuity: no perſons individually, or in aſſociated bodies, may attempt, in the ſpirit and according to the rules of Chriſtianity, to bring about a change, without the concurrence of the men, whoſe hand is chief in the treſpaſs, and whoſe intereſt lies in ſupporting the ancient abuſes. What is this, but to exalt civil rulers to an unlimited ſovereignty, over, not only the bodies and outward eſtate of men, but alſo their faith and conſciences; and to ſacrifice all the intereſts of the Redeemer and the liberties

liberties of the Chriſtian church to their abſolute will. Thoſe who love either religion or liberty—thoſe who profeſs themſelves admirers and imitators of the ſteps of the glorious band of reformers and martyrs—and who have ſolemnly devoted themſelves to the promoting of a Chriſtian reformation through theſe kingdoms, and every other, according to the ſmall degree of their influence, may well be excuſed, if they tremble to ſubſcribe to any doctrines or meaſures that may involve in them ſuch conſequences, or that may ſeem, in the remoteſt manner, to approach to them.

But the cauſe of public reform in Britain, and all who profeſſedly befriend it, has, it ſeems, of late years, ſuffered and aſſumed, in the eyes of certain politicians, its moſt criminal colouring, from the neceſſary connection it is ſuppoſed to have with the Revolution of France: All who have aſſociated for ſuch a deſign, or look friendly upon it, are concluded to be approvers of the late change of government there: not only ſo, but to be friends to all the anarchy, ferocity, and ſcenes of blood, that accompanied it: and farther ſtill, that they muſt be perſons who meditate as entire a change and ſubverſion of the Britiſh civil conſtitution, and are determined on accompliſhing it by ſimilar means. But neither have Seceders, it is hoped, any peculiar intereſt in this charge, more than in the preceding Their aſſociation, and the reform it propoſes, was neither formed in concert with France, nor with any view to what has recently happened in it. The Convention or foreign clubs have never ſo much as heard publicly the name of our Aſſociate-body, in this cauſe; much leſs have they had addreſſes or congratulations tranſmitted from them. They ſtand therefore only upon the ſame common ground with myriads of other ſubjects in this reſpect, who may have occaſionally diſcovered ſentiments more favourable to the great deſign and general principles avowed in that revolution, than the governing adminiſtration in Britain ſaw meet at laſt to adopt. That men who love the cauſe of liberty, in one nation, ſhould love the appearance and progreſs of it in every other; or that the inhabitants of a nation, glorying in its own dearly acquired freedom, as Britain long hath done, ſhould feel ſome intereſt in the ſtruggle

againſt deſpotiſm, and rejoice in the ſucceſs of it, in their neighbours in France, ſo long deemed a nation of ſlaves, needs not be accounted ſtrange. Were a number of individuals among us to avow the heart-felt ſatisfaction they had, in common with ſuch a large proportion of the nation, at the view of the wonderful change in its connection with the general cauſe of liberty, and the happineſs of multitudes, or if they had even carried their ſatisfaction the length of public congratulation, they would only be avowing ſentiments and emotions, of which they had no reaſon, either as men or Chriſtians, to be afraid or aſhamed. But if any ſhould thence infer the above concluſions, they could only pity their judgment, or lament the perverſion of their reaſon by prejudice, paſſion, or falſe policy But waving here the topics of defence which ſuch might plead in common with others on this ſubject, and paſſing in ſilent contempt and indignation ſuch abſurd and ill-connected conſequences, it may be only needful to point out, in few words, what grounds thoſe who had adopted the principles relative to civil government formerly declared, had to reſtrain them from openly joining in the invectives and reſentment expreſſed againſt that neighbouring nation, or in the unqualified reprobation of their new form of government, or in giving ſanction to deſtroy it: and the additional reaſons they had, as Proteſtants, for declining to act ſuch a part, from the connection this revolution had with eccleſiaſtical affairs.

If they had acknowledged an original and indefeaſible right in every people to conſtitute, reform, or alter their government, how could they deny it to that people? Or after theſe had by general conſent ſo conſtituted or altered it, how could they, who as aliens had no right whatever to decide for them, pretend to give a negative to their choice, or perſiſt in denying the validity of it? If, in their own land, they knew no other or ſurer rule for judging what was the lawful government to which obedience was due for conſcience ſake, than the choice or conſent of the nation, what other criterion were they to apply for determining the ſame point in another land? If authority ſo conſtituted and recognized, becomes the ordinance of God, both in reſpect of its internal obligation

tion, and in its external relation to other people, how can any treat it with the utmoſt ſcurrility and abuſe, incite a minor part of the nation who are under it to deny it all ſubjection, or teach all other people to abhor it, or hold it as a non-entity, without contemning the great principle and foundation of lawful government, and without ſupporting the cauſe of diſobedience, faction, and diſorder? May not dignities be reviled, and the ordinance of God and man be inſulted abroad as well as at home, and by the language and conduct of one nation towards another, as well as by ſome ſubjects in reference to their own particular government? If obedience and reſpect be equally due, for the Lord's ſake, to any particular form of government thus appointed, can a change from abſolute to mixed monarchy, or from that to a republic, affect the grounds of ſubjection, or diſſolve the bonds of amity and peace with neighbouring nations?—If, when a body politic change their conſtitution from better to worſe, and recede from reformation, its claim remains valid, ſhould its rights be completely loſt, when it advances from deſpotiſm to liberty, and propoſes no other end than the good of the people, and the maintenance of general juſtice and peace?

But though no conſiderations of this kind had deterred them, had they not, as friends to the Proteſtant intereſt, abundant reaſon to view the progreſs of the late revolution with wonder, and to be aware of condemning and outrageouſly oppoſing a ſignal work of God, inflicting vengeance on the Antichriſtian hierarchy, and an idolatrous eſtabliſhment, that had ſo long proved a yoke of iron to the oppreſſed church of Chriſt? Was it to be a ſmall matter in their eyes, or lamented as a formidable evil, that the King of kings, by ſuch men and means as his infinite wiſdom ſaw meet to employ, ſhould ſhake the throne of the eldeſt ſon of Rome and other perſecuting deſpots of Europe, that he ſhould avenge the blood of his ſaints at their hand, and hear the long-continued prayers of the Proteſtant churches for bringing down the houſes of Auſtria and Bourbon;—that he ſhould have aboliſhed a corrupt prieſthood, laid waſte the habitations of monks and nuns, overthrown the images and altars of idols, abrogated papal, regal and prelatical patronage,

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in any land; and proclaimed liberty for men to worſhip the true God according to their own conſciences without fear? Were they, who have been taught to pray and wait for ſuch ſtupendous changes, the vengeance of God's temple, and the year of his releaſe, to join in the alarming outcry when they beheld their approach? Was it to be grievous to them, that a proſpect was opening for emancipating nations from the ſhackles of ignorance, ſuperſtition, and impoſing prieſtcraft; that the doors of the Inquiſition were about to be ſet open, or that Rome was tottering to her foundation, that her pleaſant things were laid waſte, and that trembling and wailing began to fill all her proud palaces and temples, throughout all her extenſive territories? Did it not rather become thoſe who were maintaining the teſtimony of Jeſus, to join the voice of holy Apoſtles and Prophets rejoicing at their fall, and to cry with the choir of ſaints and angels, at the ſight of her calamities, "True and righteous are thy judgments!" *Amen.* HALLELUJAH!——Can they be the ſervants of Jeſus Chriſt, and not rather the miniſters of Satan, and the avowed friends of his kingdom of darkneſs and tyranny in the earth, who grieve, and fret, and rage, becauſe the Lord Almighty hath judged thus? Inſtead of joining the helliſh howl of lamentation and execration, on ſuch a memorable occaſion, was there not rather cauſe to be aſtoniſhed at the blindneſs and infatuation that had ſeized ſo many profeſſed Proteſtants, who did not know the counſel or the judgments of the Lord, nor the things that belonged to their peace?—— To ſuch a people, in ſuch a time, was there not great reaſon to apply anew what is written in the Prophets; "Behold ye deſpiſers, and wonder, and periſh; for I work a work in your days, which a man will not believe though it were told him?"

It may be matter of juſt ſurprize, if times are ſo much changed in Britain, as that any for ſuch cauſes as theſe—for retaining the true ſentiments and feelings of Proteſtants, ſhould be ſuſpected of diſaffection to a Proteſtant government, or held forth as enemies to all authority, order and religion in the world. If we are appointed to have a ſhare in this injurious uſage, we will bear it patiently as part of the reproach of Chriſt, and pray that the

the men who are buſy in propagating ſuch calumnies, and in producing ſuch falſe and diſtorted views of things, whoever they be, may be forgiven, "for they know not what they do." The ſame remarks may be applied to the ſubject of the war entered into by Britain, in conjunction with other powers, for defeating the deſigns of the French Revolution, for reſtoring aboliſhed monarchy, and repairing the ruins of the eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment in France and in other places. If the majority of the Aſſociate-body could not approve the principle or object of ſuch a combination—if they had not freedom to call for war and vengeance, with others, in ſuch a cauſe—if they ſcrupled the lawfulneſs of ruſhing into hoſtilities againſt a people, long galled with a cruel yoke, while ſuing for friendſhip and earneſtly inſiſting on peaceable negociation, eſpecially in behalf of intereſts which the Lord abhors, and againſt which his wrath muſt ever burn—they had the ſame weighty reaſons to plead; and theſe operating with increaſed force in this caſe. And under theſe impreſſions, and with theſe views of the great national quarrel, or rather the great quarrel and deciſive conflict of nations, it may be eaſier to vindicate the Synod from the charge of having ſpoken or done too much, than to free them from blame in not having done all that they might and ought to have done as a religious body, at ſuch a remarkable criſis.

Every good man, and every friend of humanity, will ever deplore the neceſſity of ſhedding blood: the horrors of war in any caſe may well fill their breaſts with averſion. As every ſtate had need with good advice, and on the ſureſt grounds, to proceed in trying this terrible expedient; ſo all in every ſtation of life ought to keep their conſciences free, and their hands clean, from the guilt of raſh and unjuſt wars. The approved citizen of Zion is one who ſhutteth even his ears from hearing of blood. The miniſters of the goſpel of peace above all others have reaſon to ſtand at a diſtance from bloody councils, and all participation in ſcenes of violence and cruelty, either by direct activity, or by approbation and connivance. But beſides the ordinary reaſons for caution and fear, conſcientious miniſters and Chriſtians might ſee, in this caſe, from the complex nature and circumſtances

cumſtances of the quarrel, unuſual cauſe of ſcruple or averſion. Had they no reaſon to dread, leſt they ſhould thereby accelerate a day of public calamity, foreign and domeſtic? Or leſt they ſhould greatly increaſe national guilt, as well as public diſſentions and burdens, by a haſty and unprovoked aggreſſion?—Leſt they ſhould be acceſſary to the whole deſigns and cauſe of thoſe who had firſt begun hoſtilities, for the purpoſe of reſtoring the former deſpotiſm, and abrogated eccleſiaſtical juriſdiction, ſuch as had been declared by the claim of right in our own land, an intolerable grievance, and ſuch as had been aboliſhed in part in every reformed nation?—Leſt they ſhould be found, not merely to condemn, but to fight againſt the general right and principles of reformation, civil or eccleſiaſtical, as the fertile ſource of anarchy, rebellion, and every evil? Nay, had they no reaſon to be afraid, leſt they ſhould be found herein fighting againſt God, and plotting againſt the ſure decree and predicted work of his Anointed—leſt they ſhould be found ſtanding in his way in the execution of his fearful work of vengeance, on his Antichriſtian enemies and perſecutors, in theſe laſt days, when he muſt tread the wine-preſs and deſtroy the kings of the earth, and their armies gathered together againſt him? Was there no danger to be apprehended, in a Proteſtant nation again joining in affinity with the people of theſe abominations—of their becoming partakers of Babylon's ſins, and reſponſible for the blood of ſaints and murdered ſouls that is in her ſkirts, and ſo of receiving of her plagues?—By plunging into the midſt of this war, under pretence of bridling the violence and puniſhing the audacity of turbulent men, or of reſtraining the exceſſes of a licentious populace, was there no danger of a Proteſtant people loſing views of the ſteps of their Redeemer and of his holy and adorable deſigns, amidſt the doings and blind conflicts of men, employed in the active ſcene; and in the heat and hurry of a national quarrel, forgetting the great public intereſts of the church and of mankind, and all proper exerciſe about theſe ſtupendous providences, in a tranſport of indiſcriminate reſentment and revenge againſt the human inſtruments, the men who were God's ſword, when marked out for enemies, never to meet with clemency or forgiveneſs. Was there no

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danger, from a partial and selfish view of things, of misstating the public cause, and bewildering the minds of men? By injudicious vehement declamations and exaggeration, was there no danger of awakening every dark and malignant passion, that thinketh nothing but evil to its neighbour, and breathing nothing but unrelenting destruction, and eternal enmity? Have not many shown themselves but too great masters in these arts, and proved too successful in them. If the fruits have been honourable to religion or beneficial to mankind, let them rejoice in them: but as for us, we will rather glory in having never come into the secret of such men; nor taken up their language into our lips. We have never contaminated the house of God, and prostituted the ordinances of religion, for such purposes as these. We confess we have not fasted for kindling such strife and debate, or to smite with the fist of wickedness, or to awake the sword of violence. Our prayer is pure from such unhallowed fire: we never presumed to invoke the God of battles to go forth with our armies, and to crown them with success in this enterprize: nor could we in faith request his blessing on interests pronounced by him long ago accursed, or in attempting to associate the true God with idols. But will it follow, that we act in concert with the enemy, are plotters against the authority we live under, and wish no good to the prosperity and peace of our nation? We are sufficiently justified on this head, in the approbation and continued peace of our own mind; and the time will come, we doubt not, when we will also be acquitted in the judgment of our country, when the perverse spirit that is now mingled in the midst of it shall cease, and when even the people who delight in war, and are now so loud and liberal in their accusations, shall, by the over-ruling operations of an angry Providence, and from the feeling of the ruinous effects of their error, be brought to a better mind.

We have not alarmed the ears of our people in religious assemblies with the noise of plots and conspiracies ready to break out, to overthrow all government, and fill the land with assassination and massacre, nor durst we libel certain descriptions and societies of men before the Lord, as hatching or patronizing such shocking crimes,

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even when the voice of authority might ſeem to point that way. When the evidence doth not appear ſatisfactory, thoſe who are not haſty to take up an ill report againſt their neighbour, and who are reſtrained by the awe of the divine omniſcient Majeſty from uttering lies and calumnies, or even doubtful ſurmiſes before him, will reckon it much more conſiſtent with charity and religion, in ſuch caſes, to forbear. Neither the vulgar rumour of the time, nor the voice of authority, is a ſufficient warrant to the conſciences of miniſters or Chriſtians in ſuch acts, when they cannot be perſuaded in their own mind. We recollect what ſome faithful miniſters ſuffered in Scotland, under James VI. for ſcrupling to keep an anniverſary thankſgiving, and to re-echo from their pulpits the language of the court in the dark and much conteſted matter of the Gowry conſpiracy.

We have read no royal proclamations in our churches, preſcribing the ſentiments and ſtrain of public prayers in reference to the ſtate of public affairs in this turbulent period: but neither has this been done on any former occaſion, as a free judgment as to cauſes of humiliation, about prevailing ſins and dangers, and the conducting of religious worſhip, has always been conſidered by us, as a privilege belonging to the church. We have taken, in our diſtinct religious capacity, no active ſhare in military enrolments or levies: miniſters have not ſpent any part of the ſabbath in publiſhing or enforcing edicts, or citations for ſuch purpoſes: for though it were a cauſe in which they had freedom to take an active part, they would ſtill conſider ſuch matters as altogether foreign to the ſacred office, and the deſign of Chriſtian aſſemblies.

Seceding congregations form no diſtinct department of the civil ſtate: they cannot be legally conſidered as forming any part of it at all: the official adminiſtrations in them are not ſo much as acknowledged to exiſt: it would then be abſurd to ſuppoſe that they owe any peculiar and ſeparate acts of obedience and ſervice, as a body, to government; or that their miniſters, whatever others may be ſuppoſed to be, can lie under any legal obligation to make ſuch publications. And while no law of God or man obliged them, and while the decorum of their character and the nature of their office, as well

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as well as due regard to the ſpiritual edification of their flocks, and to the religious obſervance of the Sabbath forbad them, thus to confound affairs and offices ſo very diſtinct, had they of their own accord ruſhed forward to ſuch ſervices, to act the part of civil officers, military heralds, or recruiting ſergeants,——had they at ſuch a time, and in ſuch a cauſe, either ſeized the ſword, and appeared in military array themſelves, or blown the warlike trumpet to excite others to do ſo, or even to preſent their voluntary oblations to the altars dedicated to relentleſs carnage; or had they proſtituted the authority and rewards of religion, as ſome have notoriouſly done, by holding out celeſtial crowns of glory, even ſuperior to thoſe of religious martyrs, as the certain portion of all who ſhould loſe their lives in this warfare, would they not have expoſed themſelves to a ſeverer rebuke from their Lord than that once given to the diſciple, who, in raſh and intemperate zeal, drew the ſword to ſmite? By ſuch means would not their miniſtry have been juſtly blamed? Inſteadof acting of in the ſpirit of the goſpel, and ſpeaking the words of truth and ſoberneſs, would they not have reſembled the fanatical prieſtly incendiaries in the ancient and modern cruſades of Rome, or the bloody Vizirs and furious Imans of the falſe prophet, who, in their bluſtering and impious rodomontade, promiſe nothing leſs than the delights of Paradiſe, to the deluded victims who follow their ſuppoſed holy banners?

Perhaps too, the people of their connection may not have ſhown great forwardneſs to ſubſcribe their names, along with their ſuperiors, to city or county declarations, addreſſes, or aſſociations, framed in oppoſition to the plans of reform, and expreſſive of full confidence in the wiſdom and rectitude of adminiſtration. But while theſe were of a voluntary nature, required by no legal authority, ſurely declining to engage in them could not be imputed to any as a crime; nor need the backwardneſs of common people, in ſuch caſes, appear any thing ſtrange, even though the vague and unlimited profeſſions of attachment to the Britiſh conſtitution and complex ſyſtem of laws, the reprobation of ideas of reform, and the approbation of particular meaſure

which ſtate-miniſters were promoting or projecting at home or abroad (uſually contained in the papers referred to,) had furniſhed them with no particular ſcruples. Peaceable and prudent people will always be averſe, to involve themſelves unneceſſarily in public diſputes and political intrigues, and wary of pledging themſelves to meaſures that relate to matters remote from their ſphere of life, and the import and conſequences of which, they may be unable clearly to judge. Profeſſions and engagements of this kind, aſſented to in a noiſy croud, or in drunken meetings, under the influence of ſuperiors, often without judgment, and without meaning, in which the moſt abject or diſſipated are ready to be foremoſt, can be no ſure bond of obedience, or even a certain criterion of popular opinion; though too often they may ſerve the miſchievous purpoſes of emboldening miniſters to carry on their favourite and ruinous ſchemes, with a higher hand. As for thoſe ſocieties, or clubs of gentlemen, whoſe zeal prompted them to deviſe new bonds or oaths, as teſts of loyalty, not preſcribed by the legiſlature, and who endeavoured by threats, and all means in their power, to impoſe them on the people indiſcriminately, or on their own immediate dependents (of which inſtances occurred) they were ſurely guilty of an outrage on the conſtitution of their country, as well as on the rights of their fellow-ſubjects; and if any legal puniſhment was incurred, it was by thoſe who had thus invaded the province of the legiſlature, rather than the people who refuſed compliance with their arbitrary requiſitions, while diſpoſed to live peaceably. It has been obſerved too, that under pretence of ſuch engagements and aſſociations to keep the peace, it was, in many places, remarkably diſturbed; riots, inſults, and diſorders of various kinds, having been the chief and moſt apparent effects.

As for addreſſes to the throne, religious bodies in the ſituation of Seceders, having no ſhare in public managements, receiving no emoluments, and enjoying no direct protection from government, and who are not ſo much as known in law, ſeem to have little call to intrude themſelves, in their diſtinct capacity, upon the courts

courts of princes, or to attend miniſteral levees: and if we are not miſinformed, the eſtabliſhed ceremonial hardly admits of their being received in ſuch a capacity. At any rate, when they have not a view of accommodating themſelves to the wiſhes of a court and adopting its current language, prudence would adviſe to decline ſuch addreſſes, except when the diſcharge of ſome preſſing duty demands them. It may eaſily be conceived, that if they were to ſtep forward, in critical and dangerous times, only to ſpeak free and diſagreeable truths, to offer remonſtrance, or faithful admonition, or were they merely to clog their profeſſion of loyalty and ſervice with unfaſhionable, however needful limitations †, they would be very unwelcome gueſts. Seceders, who never before conſidered it as a neceſſary mode of ſhewing their attachment to the ruling powers, to preſent addreſſes, even on events of the moſt joyful kind, in the height of Britain's proſperity, had little inducement to begin, in ſuch turbulent times, in reference to meaſures or events, that may involve in them not only much public miſery, but much national guilt¶.

In

† When Henry VIII. was ſecuring to himſelf the eccleſiaſtical ſupremacy which he had wreſted from the Pope, the clergy of the Synod of York, in an addreſs, promiſed ſubjection to him as the head of the church, *as far as the laws of Chriſt did permit*; but the anti-chriſtian deſpot, refuſed to admit ſuch a reſtriction, but obliged them to ſubmit themſelves without reſerve.

¶ Since the date of the foregoing Declaration, an Addreſs to his Majeſty, from the Aſſociate Synod, (that commonly called the Burgher) has been publiſhed. It is needful, for the ſake of thoſe who are not well acquainted with the ſtate of the Seceſſion, to notice that there are two Synods in Scotland, who ſtill take the name of the Aſſociate Synod, ever ſince their ſeparation, in the year, 1747: and this they do often without any diſcriminating deſignation, a circumſtance that tends greatly to miſlead the public, and may impoſe on thoſe who come after, as to the real ſentiments and proceedings

In regard to oaths required by legal authority, either as tests of loyalty, or as qualifications for particular offices, none of them have yet been imposed upon the people at large in Britain, and it is hoped, never will: neither have Seceders of late indicated any change of their views or practice as to any of them. Though attached to the civil constitution, they have ever declined to recognize, and engage by the solemnity of an oath to support, all that has been mixed with or appended to it: they could not swear a nullity and abrogation of former

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ceedings of either, as they are in danger of being confounded together. This vindication, the reader may know, applies only to Seceders, so far as they retain, and act in conformity to the genuine principles of the Synod, as originally constituted; which that party, in many instances, have notoriously contravened. Such an address, however, even from that Body, caused not a little surprize, especially when the well-known sentiments, and former conduct of many members of court are considered. Whatever soothing words they may, in return, have received from another quarter, they will hardly expect the hearty gratulations, even of the majority of their own body, on that account. He that looks into these first-fruits of Seceding Addresses, in order to find some re-buddings of the vigorous spirit of the old Whigs and Covenanters of last age,—any appropriate language becoming of a free ecclesiastical court,—any thing pointing to a religious improvement of the strange events of these times,—any, even the most distant hint, that those who sit at the helm of affairs, may possibly be liable to some degree of mistake or blame; —or that all from the throne to the cottage, have the highest reason to dread accumulating guilty and impending judgments,—will be greatly disappointed. Not a word of these; but the common place language of courtly professions, and unqualified approbation,—wishes of good speed in the present career,—pledging all their clerical influence with heaven or earth to advance the sacred cause! Thus they have spontaneously thrust their

mer religious Covenants, nor conſcientiouſly bring themſelves under two oaths, in any points incompatible. Though they are willing, in their ſtation, to co-operate in the neceſſary ſervices for the welfare of the community, while they can be ſatisfied in their own mind that they are in matter, manner, and end, lawful, yet they have not freedom to undertake the diſcharge of inferior offices by ſwearing unlimited active obedience to all the injunctions of ſubordinate magiſtrates, or to a body of laws or regulations, the full extent of which is to them undefined, and unknown. But this ſhould be viewed as ariſing from a conſcientious fear of an oath, and as an inſtance of probity, rather than diſloyalty.——As it cannot be denied, on the one hand, that true allegiance, may, in heart and practice, be maintained, where there may be a ſcruple about the mode and extent in which it may ſometimes be expreſſed, ſo on the contrary, oaths will prove but a ſlender tie where the ſenſe of religion, and attachment from a principle of duty, are wanting. Thoſe who, formerly or more lately, have truſted to impoſed and reiterated oaths, as ſecurity againſt diſloyalty and revolt, have had abundant evidence of the inefficacy of them. The experiment has uſually produced ſcenes of perfidy and horrid profanation; while contradictory oaths have, as occaſion required, been with equal readineſs, ſwallowed by the ſame party.

While Seceders, in ſuch a ſacred act, abhor the doctrine of jeſuitical equivocation, and mental reſervation, they can as little allow the expedient of removing the objections

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their ſhoulders beneath the immenſe load that is ready to cruſh whole kingdoms. But it is no new thing to ſee eccleſiaſtical guides, as well as others, prove "as a bowing wall, or a tottering fence," when the ſtorm blows. Some will not ſcruple to view this as an attempt at the mean arts of political fineſſe or duplicity, or as an over-ſtretch of complaiſance, to which they have unawares been drawn by the blind impulſe of the day; or by the influence of ſome timid, trimming, or ſpiring clergymen among themſelves.

objections of individuals to public oaths, by propoſing ſome private exceptions or explications, with which ſome, under the preſſure of difficult circumſtances, or the influence of threats or cajolment, have ſatisfied themſelves. This they conſider as no proper ſalvo, but rather an inveigling ſnare to conſcience, while no change can be made, either in the terms, or legal conſtruction of the oaths, by any authority inferior to that which enacted them, and while the explications may be at variance with the plain ſenſe of the words, and the avowed deſign of the legiſlature in appointing them; by which means the uſe and chief end of an oath would be defeated.

To a Chriſtian ſociety ſo cautious to avoid ambiguous or enſnaring oaths, though required by acknowledged authority, the terms of confederation and allegiance, adopted in ſome new-modelled governments, wherein the omnipotence of human laws, and a ſupremacy in affairs of religion, and over the conſciences of men, are maintained in as high a tone as ever, cannot appear in a very favourable light; much leſs when the ſolemn rites muſt be performed at altars dedicated to new deities, whoſe very names no good Chriſtian would dare to take up into his mouth, more than thoſe of St. Michael, or Mary, Jupiter or Juno. Nor could any, entertaining ſuch views, connect themſelves with clandeſtine ſocieties, bound together by oaths of ſecrecy, and implicit confidence in one another, or in a few demagogues aſſuming the direction of them, whoſe deſigns and proceedings, ſhunning the light of day, muſt all be carried on under the veil of myſtery. Were even public good, and needful reforms, the object in theſe aſſociations, ſuch methods of purſuing it would deſerve condemnation, as being more ſuitable for the purpoſe of unlawful conſpiracy, and diſhoneſt deeds of darkneſs, than any manly, great and good deſign: except where tyranny domineers, and ſtops up every other avenue to redreſs, and prohibits any regular attempt to meliorate public affairs, ſuch ſecret aſſociations, and underhand meaſures, in a ſtate, muſt not only be puſillanimous and liable to ſuſpicion, but criminal and dangerous,

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ſerving only to expoſe perſons engaging in them to vengeance, without being conducive to any real and effectual advantage. It deſerves to be mentioned as an inſtance of the Aſſociate Synod's care, rigidly to preſerve morality, and the religion of an oath, inviolate, that by ſeveral acts, they prohibited among their connections certain oaths uſed in ſome corporations, trades, or fraternities in which they had reaſon to apprehend, people were in danger of prevarication, or of ſwearing ignorantly, ſuperſtitiouſly or lightly, though at the hazard of their own internal peace, and the diminution of the number of their aſſociates Among others, the rites and oaths practiſed in Maſonic Societies, which have been ſo long fooliſhly honoured and frequented by all ranks of men in Britian, and throughout Europe; for which they ſuffered much illiberal abuſe, at the time, from the idle, the petulant, or profligate, patrons of theſe fraternities. While national rulers, eccleſiaſtical and and civil, ſeemed totally inattentive to either ſin or danger in theſe matters, they ſecluded from communion, thoſe who had raſhly entered into theſe combinations, if they acknowledged not the offence, not only on account of the ſuperſtition and profanity introduced into the ceremonial of initiation, but alſo on account of the oath of ſecrecy and fraternal union, adminiſtered, while all the contents of it were not previouſly diſcloſed. This was long before any alarm was raiſed about dangers to government, morals, and religion, from the midnight cabals, intrigues, and impenetrable myſteries of theſe ſocieties; while none yet dreamed that ſo many of them ſhould actually become the ſeed-plots of ſedition and treaſon, the nurſaries of infidelity, atheiſm and extreme licentiouſneſs, out of which ſhould grow a formed ſyſtem of complicated villanies, fraud, impoſition, doing evil that good may come, anarchy, inceſts, murder, aſſaſination, and other enormities, the diſcloſure of which now aſtoniſhes Europe. It is an error common among men, to overlook the beginnings and lower degrees of evil, and only to take a late alarm when

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wickedneſs ripens into atrocious crimes, and appears in its more ſhocking and deſtructive ſtages.

In fine, though Seceders have formed a religious aſſociation, without immediate warrant from government, for the declared purpoſe of promoting a public as well as private reform in the church, and indirectly, and ſo far as may be neceſſary to this, in the ſtate alſo, yet their principles and views will be found very different from thoſe adopted by many who, have aſſumed the name of Reformers and Enlighteners, whoſe ſchemes realized, along with ſome good, would be productive of much evil. Neither is the reform they ſeek the ſame; nor are the weapons, the acts, and means by which they would attain it, the ſame. In purſuing their object, they have always acted in the moſt open and ingenuous manner: they have diſcloſed to all the world, the nature and extent of their plan, together with the methods they think fit and competent to them for accompliſhing it. It reſerves to every one their place and office in ſociety; is conſiſtent with political peace and ſubordination; it diſclaims the uſe of force, whether by domeſtic armaments, or correſpondence with foreign governments, or invading armies: while they uſe their own rights, they ſeek not to invade thoſe of others. They wiſh to preſerve the life, and revive the ſpirit of old reformations, rather than to attempt one wholly new: they have followed examples long and well-known, and propoſed for a model the beſt they could find. If, along with important matters common to the church, as catholic, they have particularly adverted to the paſt and preſent ſtate of the nations and churches with which they are immediately connected, this is only fulfilling peculiar obligations to which their birth and lot in providence inevitably ſubjects them; and becauſe all reaſonable and practical plans of duty and reform, muſt be accommodated to relative and actual circumſtances, and apply directly to times and objects near. If they have ſanctioned their aſſociation by a ſolemn oath and covenant, they have herein acted agreeably to the dictates and common practice of mankind, in ſimilar caſes, to the precepts

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and examples of holy ſcripture, and to the practice of moſt Proteſtant churches, when the ſpirit of reformation was prevalent; and every article and word of this Covenant is ſubmitted to the inſpection of all; the concernments of ſalvation, pure religion, and morality, are its objects; the amount of it will be found to an additional engagement to perform every duty they owe to God and man: the Supreme Being is the primary party in it, and none may either hinder his ſubjects from paying their homage to him, nor can any on earth diſſolve the obligation when once contracted.

Parties whoſe purpoſes and aims may be widely different, may often profeſs to have one common object, and be agreed in many points. Good and bad deſigns may aſſume the ſame appearance, employ the ſame terms, the ſame pretexts, the ſame expedients. But it is a neceſſary part of wiſdom and of juſtice, to diſcriminate thoſe that are diſtinct. Laſt age, when almoſt all the ſober and reflecting part of the Britiſh people, joined in the cry for redreſs of grievances, men of very oppoſite deſcriptions, for a time acted in concert, as for a common cauſe. Though Preſbyterians, and Conſtitutional Reformers, went hand in hand with Cromwelians, and Sectarian innovators, in checking arbitrary power, and overturning a perſecuting hierarchy, yet it ſoon appeared, when the queſtion of ſettling the nation came on, how oppoſite they were both in their ſchemes of policy and religion. In the convention-parliament, that reſtored Charles II., when a member was declaiming againſt both, and repreſented thoſe who firſt engaged in the war in behalf of national rights, as equally culpable with thoſe who cut off the king's head, he incurred the indignation of the houſe, and was ſeverely reprimanded by the Speaker, on his knees. Nothing can be more unjuſt, or of a more alarming tendency than the predominant diſpoſition of the preſent times, to treat all deſires or plans of reformation of *whatever* kind, with indiſcrimate cenſure or contempt; while along with this, by an unfair mode of arrangement, all the people are thrown into two claſſes, and reckoned, to one of theſe extremes, overlooking a third or middle

clafs, that yet, it is hoped, conſtitutes a numerous, and the ſounder part of the nation. Such a ſpirit and proceedings, if perſiſted in, muſt terminate in utter confuſion and ruin. But, however long falſe zeal, miſtaken politics, and party-prejudices may blind or pervert the judgments of men, the time muſt arrive, when thoſe who preſide in public affairs, as well as others, will be able to diſtinguiſh, in reference to religion in particular, between thoſe who are zealouſly attached to the Chriſtian faith and conſtitutions, received among Proteſtants, in their proſecution of further reformation, and attacks upon eſtabliſhed corruptions, and thoſe who attempt the ſame object, upon the principles of French infidels, German *Illuminati*, or an Iriſh Catholic union. Though the latter may be agreed with the former about many prominent evils that call for abolition, they can ever be at one, in the more important deſign of re-edifying the demoliſhed or defaced fabric: The plan of the latter, when ſucceſsful, will indeed rid the world of corrupt eſtabliſhments and prieſtcraft, that ſo long hath bewitched the nations;——but along with droſs and rubbiſh will ſweep away the golden ore. The fire of their revolutions, not ſatisfied with conſuming *the wood, the hay, and ſtubble*, that men have heaped up for ages, will alſo burn up all that is precious. While it reduces to aſhes the towers and temples of Babel, it will not ſpare the beautiful palaces of Zion. In popiſh, or other idolatrous, deſpotic, or intolerant nations, the operation of theſe principles, may doubtleſs, in the providence of God, remove out of the way an enormous maſs of evils, and ſo remotely prepare for the introduction of a better ſyſtem; but were they to be applied, and reduced to effect, in Proteſtant kingdoms, where a free government, and reformed religion, have previouſly been admitted and ſettled, their operation, in the firſt inſtance, would be unſpeakably miſchievous, and their effects ſo much the more deplorable in proportion to the greater good that would thereby be deſtroyed.

It cannot be ſuppoſed that any real friend of religion, can rejoice at the riſe and progreſs of that ſyſtem of innovation

innovation that hath already produced such unexempled changes abroad, and that yet threatens to shake what is most established in other nations, in any other view than as it was directed against notorious evils, which genuine Christianity, enlightened reason, and good policy, must equally reprobate. As evils are often of a mixed kind, and affect the interests of mankind in different respects, so they may be viewed through a different medium, be approved on different principles, and by different persons in a different manner. The philosopher will attempt reform on his own ideas, the politician on his, and the Christian on principles different from, and superior to both. In the great work of national regeneration, each of these may have their distinct part to act, and their distinct ends to gain, and all of them useful; and to the greater perfection of the work, they must all conspire and act in unison together. Where the Christian hath no share, the work must necessarly be marred, and left unfinished.

But at a period when the old establishments, throughout the greater part of Europe, exhibited marks of incurable and increasing corruption, when the greatest abuses pervaded every order and department; when, at the same time, the means of information and occasions of excitement to change, were become so frequent and powerful, when the slavery of the mind, as well as the body began to be more severely felt than formerly, was it any thing surprising that persons of very different descriptions, of very different moral and religious as well as political principles, should have joined together in the cry for some new order of things? When the *mystery of iniquity*, that had reigned for ages, continued to exert force, without any essential change, when almost all the absurd notions, and superstitious practices, that had so long banished human reason, and religion together, from a great part of the world, which only those who were in the judgment of God given over to strong delusons to believe lies, could ever have embraced, and which were of such a kind as to cause us justly to wonder, how any laying claim to the prerogative of men, could, even in the darkest times, have patiently endured

endured,——when these were ever meeting the eyes of the enlightened in open day, and staring every thinking man in the face,——breaden gods, adorable images,——dead men deified,——sacred relics,——blessed beads, chrism, and crosses, *Corpus Christi* processions, carnivals, lents,——everlasting fasts or feasts,—papal bulls and dispensations,—episcopal consecrations or absolutions,——privileged drones and begging cheats,—saintly miracles old and new,——devoted lands, buildings, vestments, precious vessels,——a hierarchy of priests, with all the attendant apparatus of courts, officers, tithe-gatherers, and canonical lawyers; of all which the public laws, the sceptre, the sword, and the fires, must necessarily be the perpetual guardians and avengers;——when these and a thousand other enormities, of which, those only who have an enlarged acquintance with the state of the world, and with the modern history of the church, can form any proper ideas, were maintaining such a conspicuous place in the midst of the most civilized and potent nations, while diffusive knowledge expanded the understanding, and industry and arts arouzed the energy of men, and while the fair fruits of civil and religious liberty were appearing in some other nations around, to incite them to gain the possession of the like advantages, could any true philosopher, good citizen, or wise politican, have continued always indifferent or inactive? Why should the disciples of Jesus be offended, because such have been raised up to abolish that system which heaven had long ago doomed to destruction, and which the earth could no longer bear? Should divines and saints be totally silent, and were these philosophers and republicans altogether to hold their peace, *the very stones of the field would cry out*, when the time of destruction is come. Such political systems of religion, as Popery, Mahommedanism, or Pagan idolatry, combined with despotism, are a violation, not of revealed religion only, but of natural: they militate against the light of reason, common sense, morality, the liberties of man, and the welfare of states: in so far, therefore, upon any of these grounds they may be opposed. Idolatry and superstition, slavery and falshood, present a common

mon mark at which the arrows of reason, or of scripture may be equally shot: and when philosophy, liberty, and enlightened policy, are disposed to join their voice, and lend their aids, on the side of true religion, in combating a common foe, and in removing common nuisances, they ought ever to be welcomed. Even their separate efforts and unintentional services may be very important.

In such cases, the Protestant clergy-man, and the good Christian, need not be ashamed to be found, (while keeping within the limits of their own vocation) on the same side with the patriotic infidel. The former do not change their ground, or their object;——they do not go over to the camp of infidelity; but the philosopher, and the infidel, by a superintending Providence, are brought to adopt the views, and to befriend the cause of the Protestant. The zealous defenders of all ancient and existing establishments, with all their errors and iniquities upon their head, who suppose it very consistent with attachment to Christianity, and the principles of free government, for Protestant courts to make a common cause with Pope and Turk, with the Barbarians and Scythians of the North, with Mamalucs, Arabs, and Algerine pirates, in the East and South, hitherto ranked by Protestants among the most noted enemies of Christ, the chief oppressors of the earth, and the refuse of mankind, will not surely account this any paradox.

If in the late and still spreading convulsion of nations, the Lord hath employed the doctrines, aided by the skill and valour, of bold innovators, to shake the throne and strong-holds of iniquity, to demolish the temple of idols, and to free the great part of Europe from a grievous yoke, ought any Protestant to be grieved? Whether they display the banners of liberty, and boast of their patriotic zeal, in pretence, or in sincerity, should he not rather, like Paul, rejoice, because a great and needful work is done? a work which the calm influence of religious truth, the demonstrations of reason, and of scripture, and the *still small voice* of the gospel, had not effected, nor could, in the circumstances of these nations, have effected. But of the necessity of the change, and

the magnitude of such a deliverance, the body of those called Protestants, are now become incompetent judges, either in a civil or religious view, partly from their ignorance, and general indifference, as to the nature and hurtful tendency of the evils abolished, while they themselves have, for so long a time, been happily free from the experience of most of them. The specious tale of a change of the spirit and pernicious maxims of Popery, so often sounded in the ears of Protestants, by the artful friends of Rome, but which the more discerning policy, and the more vigilant spirit of religion in former times, always accounted a chimera and a mere decoy, has at last gained so far on modern credulity, as to reconcile almost all classes of men to the hazardous schemes of a coalition of the incompatible interests, and a confidential co-operation, abroad and at home, some of them formed on the side of established governments, and some of them for their subversion. After a long continued, and well-founded alarm, on the head of popish alliances, and increasing influence of Popery in Britain and Ireland, and after a sudden effervescence and ebullition of zeal, some time ago, on account of a partial extension of liberty to Catholics, that soon evaporated into smoke, all denominations in these kingdoms, political and religious, are now sunk into total apathy in reference to a far more extensive and active system of defence and countenance. While Protestants appear to have forgotten their former jealousy of Romish priests and monks, or are become ashamed of their zeal against a hierarchy, and its superstitions, the never-failing allies of despotism, the new philosophical reformers, and political infidels, seem now alone to inherit them. But the Lord cannot forget, nor will he cease to inflict his vengeance on that kingdom of darkness and of blood, till by their hands, or some others in their stead, he have utterly wasted it. Stroke shall follow stroke, and one messenger shall run to meet another, as in the capture of ancient Babylon, to announce to so many courts and kings the unwelcome tidings, that the great city is smitten, and her strong-holds taken. And those whom he employs in the service he

will

will support and reward, till he have performed all his pleasure; though in their hearts they mean not so, but it is their intent to seize the spoil, and to tread down nations, not a few. They shall be allowed, like Cyrus, to parcel out the dominions of the dissolving empire, and to dispose of her hoarded treasures: Unbelieving and atheistical as these conquerors may be, yet as pagan Cyrus opened the prison doors of the oppressed Jews, and proclaimed liberty to every man so disposed, to go up, and rebuild the house of their God, so may these, consistently with their system, open an asylum to the friends of pure Christianity in promoting the kingdom of Jesus. If the comparison be properly stated between the old state of many nations in the world, and that which the new revolutionary principles tend to produce, the change from the former to the latter, considered merely in a political aspect upon religious interests, must, for obvious reasons, be accounted more favourable: for, however ruinous, in every view, atheism would prove, (a system which has never yet been avowed or realized in the government of any nation) or however formidable infidelity, attended with the intolerant spirit and power of persecution, would prove, yet pure deism, as implying on adherence to the principles of natural religion, a regard to morality, and the civil and religious rights of men, however otherwise pernicious, must be, in a political view, far preferable such systems of religion as to Pagan, Popish, or Mahommedan nations many exhibit, combined with their cruel despotism, and persecuting bigotry.

In such days of shaking and alarm, Protestant nations can only be safe by stedfastly maintaining the reformation they have attained; by advancing it where it has been left remarkably imperfect, or where it has declined; by the churches remembering whence they have fallen, repenting and returning to do their first works;—by purging out from among them the remains, and the old working leaven of anti-christianism, and similar evils, whether appearing in the doctrines, the worship, the government, or discipline of the churches, established or tolerated, among them, or in their political laws

laws and conſtitution. Many ſuch have undoubtedly prevailed to a great degree in Britain and Ireland: many of them do ſtill prevail, call loudly for reformation, and while they are retained, threaten us with a cup of trembling, and confuſion, after the manner of other nations, even though the Lord, who is jealous and avengeth, ſhould not require the blood of ſo many thouſand faithful Proteſtants, ſacrificed in former reigns, to the rage of intolerant prelacy, and arbitrary prerogative, in theſe kingdoms, upon the preſent impenitent generaton, as we have reaſon to fear he will; as he hath exacted a ſevere account for the former treachery and cruelties againſt the profeſſors of the goſpel, together with their other and more recent iniquities, from a neighbouring nation, at a time when the ſpirit and manners of the governors, and people, ſeemed to be more mild, and after the glowing furnace of perſecution ſeemed almoſt extinct. It is not in joining in affinity with the people of theſe abominations, it is not in attempting to prop up the crumbling heaven-ſtruck towers, but in flying to the greateſt diſtance from the falling and burning city, that the ſafety of any Proteſtant nation will in the event be found. Not by a blind attachment to old abſurdities, and ſenſeleſs, or hypocritical forms; not by cheriſhing the ſpirit of degrading ſuperſtition, and ſervile ſubjection to men; not by holding up the pageantry of eccleſiaſtical pride and pomp, or by preſerving the dead bones, and dry ſkeletons of national churches, held together by the mere legaments of ſtate policy, or worldly emoluments, while the fleſh, and animating ſpirit, are departed from them, can the cauſe of religion be effectually ſerved, or a ſtable government maintained. It is not by denying, or palliating abuſes, when they obviouſly exiſt, nor by bearing a heavier hand upon all who may mutter the word Reform;—not by the ſuppreſſion of knowledge and free enquiry, nor by multiplying ſevere edicts or penalties againſt all who may complain of public grievances,—that public peace and ſafety can always be prolonged. Nor in great public conteſts, like the preſent, can the intelligent, and ſerious part of a nation be kept ſatisfied, nor dangers be finally warded

ed off, by the oſtentatious diſplay of public reſources, and the ſpirit of enterpriſe; by pompouſly celebrating the occaſional and partial victories, which, in a ſeries of complicated operations, Providence may grant, or by magnifying the temporary ſafety or commercial advantages that may ariſe from them, while the general ſtate of the quarrel, the counterbalancing evils, and what may be the probable reſult of the whole, are forgotten, or artfully kept out of view; as children and thoughtleſs ſpectators of a deep tragedy, may make themſelves very merry at ſome of the leſſer incidents and lighter ſcenes, utterly inſenſible to the plot, and what is likely to be the final cataſtrophe. It is not by ſhutting their eyes to dangers, and putting "the evil day far away," that a people, in ſuch caſes, can expect ſecurity, but by inveſtigating and removing the procuring cauſes of calamity, and the occaſions of public diſcontent; by ſearching and trying their ways, and turning again to the Lord, "when he ariſes to ſhake terribly the earth, to bring down the loftineſs of man, and utterly to aboliſh the idols *:" "For whereſoever the carcaſe is, thither will the eagles be gathered together †." It is not by checking the ſpirit, or poſtponing the work of reformation, but by haſtening ſpeedily to effect it, and by calling in the united efforts of all the conſcientious fearers of God, and friends of morality, in the great deſign, to correct the baneful influence of long-eſtabliſhed abuſes and ſyſtematic corruption on the one hand, and to counteract the attempts of libertines and of ill-intentioned nominal reformers on the other. None but ſocieties and conſtitutions that are corrupt, and reſolutely maintaining their corruptions, can have any thing to fear from the ſpirit of reformation, even as the man who doth well has no reaſon to be afraid of the magiſtrate's power; but to ſuch as do evil, "he beareth not the ſword in vain." By a timely and regular reformation, the danger of commotions and innovations are prevented: all the wiſe and conſcientious will be gratified, and reſt contented; and hereby the fallacy and evil deſigns of other pretenders to reform, will be more eaſily detected and defeated.

The ſpirit that has gone forth, and the troubles prevailing among the nations, undoubtedly call all to ſerious reflection, and reverential fear. The awful proceſs which the Lord hath begun againſt ſecure, idolatrous, and perſe-

* Iſa. ii. 17. 19. † Mat. xxiv. 28.

cuting ſtates, is not yet cloſed, and we are afraid, that the language and the tendency of it are not yet duly underſtood. Britain, in particular, ſeems to be peculiarly averſe to receive the inſtruction, and gives no evidence of profiting by the examples ſet before her eyes; it is likely, therefore, that the greateſt criſis of her danger may be yet to come. Theſe men, who are eminently God's ſword and battle-axe, whoſe rage ſhe hath defied and provoked, or thoſe ſtrange and ungodly alliances ſhe hath lately courted, or both of them together, may probably prove her ſcourge, if not her ruin. But though a nation may be irreclaimable, and though rulers may refuſe to liſten to the alarming admonition, ſurely none of the churches of Chriſt ſhould at ſuch a time be aſleep; nor ſhould their faithful watchmen keep ſilence, leſt when they ceaſe to warn the wicked of the evil of their way, the ſword ſhould come, and cut them off in their iniquity, and their blood be required at their hand. What can be more applicable to ſuch events and days as theſe, than the deſcriptions and admonitions contained in the 50th and 51ſt chapters of Jeremiah, throughout, eſpecially as they are applied and illuſtrated in the book of the Revelation of Jeſus Chriſt. In reading the following verſes, the hearts of all may *meditate terror*, and the friends of Zion may have hope; nor need any conſider ſuch declarations, and the common application of the language and imagery, to the Papal kingdom, ſo long familiar to the ears of Proteſtants, as an antiquated tale, when the mighty Redeemer is in the midſt of the execution of his determined work, from which he will not be diverted, either by the petty intereſts of nations, the political intrigues of cabinets, or the combination of armies. "Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord's hand, "that made all the earth drunken; the nations have "drunken of her wine, therefore the nations are mad. "Babylon is ſuddenly fallen and deſtroyed: howl for her, "take balm for her pain, if ſo be ſhe may be healed. We "would have healed Babylon, but ſhe is not healed; for-"ſake her, and let us go every one into his own country; "for her judgement reacheth unto heaven, and is lifted up "even to the ſkies. The Lord hath brought forth our "righteouſneſs: come, and let us declare in Zion the work "of the Lord our God. Make bright the arrows; "gather the ſhields:—for his device is againſt Ba-"bylon

" bylon to deſtroy it, becauſe it is the vengeance of the " Lord, the vengeance of his temple. The Lord hath " both deviſed and done that which he ſpake againſt the " inhabitants of Babylon. O thou that dwelleſt upon " many waters, abundant in treaſures, thine end is come, " and the meaſure of thy covetouſneſs. The Lord of hoſts " hath ſworn by himſelf, ſaying, Surely I will fill thee " with men, as with caterpillars; and they ſhall lift up a " ſhout againſt thee.—And the land ſhall tremble and ſor- " row: for every purpoſe of the Lord ſhall be performed " againſt Babylon, to make the land of Babylon a deſola- " tion without an inhabitant. The mighty men of Ba- " bylon have forborn to fight, they have remained in their " holds, their might hath failed, they became as women; " they have burnt her dwelling-places, her bars are bro- " ken.—The violence done to me and to my fleſh, be upon " Babylon, ſhall the inhabitant of Zion ſay, and my blood " upon the inhabitants of Chaldea, ſhall Jeruſalem ſay.— " My people, go ye out of the midſt of her, and deliver " ye every one his ſoul from the fierce anger of the Lord. " And leſt your heart faint, and ye fear for the rumour " that ſhall be heard in the land; a rumour ſhall both " come one year, and after that in another year ſhall " come a rumour, and violence in the land, ruler againſt " ruler. Therefore, behold the days come, that I will do " judgement upon the graven images of Babylon, and her " whole land ſhall be confounded, and all her ſlain ſhall fall " in the midſt of her.—As Babylon hath cauſed the ſlain of " Iſrael to fall; ſo at Babylon ſhall fall the ſlain of all the " earth. Ye that have eſcaped the ſword, go away, ſtand " not ſtill: remember the Lord afar off, and let Jeruſalem " come into your mind.—Wherefore behold, the days " come, ſaith the Lord, that I will do judgement upon " her graven images, and through all her land the wound- " ed ſhall groan. Though Babylon ſhould mount up to " heaven, and though ſhe ſhould fortify the height of her " ſtrength, yet from me ſhall ſpoilers come unto her, ſaith " the Lord. A ſound of a cry cometh from Babylon, and " great deſtruction from the land of the Chaldeans: Be- " cauſe the Lord hath ſpoiled Babylon, and deſtroyed " out of her the great voice, when her waves do roar like " great waters, a noiſe of their voice is uttered. Becauſe

" the

" the ſpoiler is come upon her, even upon Babylon, and " her mighty men are taken, every one of their bows is " broken, for the Lord God of recompences ſhall ſurely re- " quite *."

* Jerem. li. 7.—14. 29. 30. 35. 45.—47. 49. 50. 52. 53. 56.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

CHURCHES, who have had their conſtitution and profeſſion once ſettled according to ſcriptural rule, ought certainly, on all occaſions, to act a part ſuitable to theſe. They are ſolemnly enjoined to "remember how they have heard and received, and to do their firſt works; and to hold faſt till the Lord come." Not content with a general aſſent to a ſyſtem of principles or rules contained in written formulas, or in ſtandard books ſuffered to lie dormant; not indolently repoſing their credit for faithfulneſs upon former deeds, in order that a religious profeſſion may be preſerved in life and vigour, and that principles may have their practical operation, it will be neceſſary, from time to time, to revive afreſh the memory of them, and by all the ways competent to a church, frequently to exhibit them to the minds, and apply them to the actions of men, according to the occurring circumſtances and calls of Providence. If they ceaſe from their progreſſive and conſtant exertion, a ſimilar effect muſt happen to them, as to individuals, in the deſcription of the poet,

> The reputation
> Of virtuous actions paſt, if not kept up
> With an acceſs, and freſh ſupply of new ones,
> Is loſt and ſoon forgotten; and like palaces,
> For want of habitation and repair,
> Diſſolve to heaps of ruins ——.

There are more ways than one of loſing the ſpirit of a religious profeſſion; this may be as really produced by negligent omiſſions and evaſion, as by direct renunciation. The greater part of thoſe who have departed from the peculiar doctrines of the goſpel, in late times, have not done it by openly denying or reaſoning againſt them, but by dropping them in ſilence, and declining, on proper occaſions, to introduce them. The ſame danger may be apprehended in reference to other matters about which a church may contend; for the teſtimony of Chriſtians is very far from being confined to a few doctrines immediately reſpecting the juſtification and ſalvation

vation of ſinners. A body, aſſociated for oppoſing a torrent of prevailing evils, and for promoting reformation, like that with which the writer of this hath been long connected, has eſpecially need to be obſervant of the courſe of public events, the ſtate and tendency of controverſies, and of public opinion, and to embrace opportunities of exciting attention to objects which they judge to be of common utility and importance, and to ſhew that their Teſtimony is not employed only about the corruptions or attainments of a former age, without reſpect to the preſent.

The late commotions abroad and at home, in their commencement and progreſs, preſented ſomething very intereſting to the conſideration of churches as well as ſtates. The judicatories of the Seceſſion, who had formerly explained their views ſo particularly on the principal ſubject of the preceding Declaration, had in theſe a new and preſſing call to remind their people and the generation of the duty of civil obedience, and of the neceſſity and obligation to promote reformation, when either the one or the other of theſe was in danger of being forgotten; and to lift up their directing and warning voice amidſt the tumultuous ſcenes and awful providences taking place. They might have conſidered themſelves, like Eſther, as come to their ſtation and authority, for ſuch a time, and for ſuch a ſervice, as this. Even though no accuſations or dangers had been particularly pointed at them, the care of their flocks, regard to the ends of their aſſociation, and to the general intereſts of the kingdom of Chriſt, demanded this at their hands; and ſomething of this kind, it may be ſuppoſed, was generally expected from them. That valuable Declaration and Defence of our principles relating to civil government, from which the leading ſentiments in the preceding are taken, and the SOLEMN WARNING, long ago publiſhed by the Synod, are now little known, even among their own people. The former, too, is perhaps rendered of leſs general uſefulneſs, on account of its connection with a perſonal proceſs, and a temporary controverſy.

Though individuals, in the courſe of their miniſtry, may be careful to diſcharge their public duty, yet this can be no reaſon for Courts continuing ſilent. Every thing of this kind muſt appear with far greater advantage and force, when it ſpeaks the minds of the repreſentatives of a whole body, and when it comes with the ſound of a multitude, as the voice of many waters. The former is like an aſſault by a ſingle arm, and one by one; the other as the joint onſet of a whole army.

For theſe conſiderations, and others mentioned in the introduction, the writer of this, after he had tried, in vain, to obtain a joint concurrence in the Preſbytery of which he is a member, in expreſſing ſome judgement, and in giving ſome admonition, relative to the ſtate of public affairs, and after he had attempted to publiſh ſomething of a ſimilar import, for his

his own exoneration *, wiſhed much to hear the General Synod ſpeaking in their own name, and pleading their own cauſe. He had no doubt but that they were convinced of the neceſſity of this, when they enjoined the buſineſs to be brought forward, and that they ſincerely meant to improve the critical opportunity, the like to which they may never behold again, while any now in office have a place on the mortal ſtage. In this confidence the foregoing paper was offered, in expectation that either that, or ſomething in place of it, framed in their own manner, and to their own liking, would, with all convenient ſpeed, receive a ſanction from the Synod. In this, however, he is ſorry to ſay, he has been entirely diſappointed. If they ever ſeriouſly intended to enact any thing upon the ſubject, their thoughts have changed, or their zeal has relaxed; and in the event they have ſhrunk back from the taſk: Nor is this the only buſineſs of a public nature, of late years, that hath been either ſhuffled over, or laid for ever to ſleep, after being formally introduced to the conſideration of the Court.

From the beginning, indeed, ſome had ſhewed a diſinclination to have any thing on this ſubject introduced. No ſooner was it entered upon, than it became apparent that a number were not diſpoſed to give it a favourable, or even a patient hearing. A clamour inſtantly aroſe, in which ſome attempted to renew the debate, though entirely out of order, about the propriety of any Overture at all, which had been determined at the previous meeting. Upon reading that part of the preamble that took notice of aſperſions caſt upon the whole body of Diſſenters and Seceders, as mentioned in a publication, bearing the name of a member of Court, (p. 2.), that brother, in great heat, complained of this as an injury done to him; objecting, and in form proteſting, againſt any farther procedure in that cauſe: upon which he immediately left the houſe, not returning to take his ſeat again till the buſineſs was diſpoſed of: though all the ground of complaint was the rehearſal or bare reference to a matter of fact, ſufficiently notour to all the word, introduced ſolely for the purpoſe of evincing the propriety of the Synod's attempting ſome vindication; without precluding that brother from his right of exculpating himſelf as to that or any other particular contained in that publication, in the proper time and order †. But if the Synod thought themſelves,

* Particularly in "*The Difference between the Old Diſſenters in Scotland, and other Preſbyterians, on the head of Magiſtracy.*"—"*A Serious View of the Remarkable Providences of the Time, and a Warning*, &c. *with the Illuſtrations ſubjoined*," &c. &c.

† It is to be obſerved, that there was then an order of Synod for inſpecting and reporting upon the contents of that publication,

ſelves, or the body they belong to, to be publicly injured, they had ſurely a prior right, if they pleaſed, to exculpate themſelves.

Though after this the reading proceeded without interruption, it was obvious, that before the diſmiſſion that evening, near midnight, a very ſmall proportion of the members were preſent: he remarks this, becauſe next day a greater number ſcrupled not to take a ſhare in the vote. Though the lateneſs of the hour might plead the excuſe of ſome, yet it could hardly be ſuſtained for all; it may too often be obſerved, though little to the praiſe of the judgement of modern Seceders, that

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blication, in conſequence of a very general diſſatisfaction expreſſed by members of Court and others, on account of ſeveral things in it, though the duty of loyalty and obedience to civil rulers, as hitherto maintained among Seceders, was none of them. If there was any degree of diſapprobation of the manner in which theſe aſperſions had been mentioned in the Eſſays, expreſſed in the preamble, this is what would unavoidably ariſe in the breaſt of every one concerned, upon reading theſe paſſages; and was farther juſtified by the reſult of an extrajudicial converſation, in a Committee of the whole Houſe, at the former meeting, in which almoſt all preſent (and the meeting was very full) expreſſed their marked diſpleaſure with that and other things in that pamphlet, while not the ſmalleſt degree of acknowledgement was offered by the author for obviating any offence it had occaſioned. This produced the appointment of a judicial inquiry, though the Synod either have not yet found leiſure, or have not been diſpoſed to travel farther in this affair.

In the vehement declamation that preceded that brother's proteſt, deviating from the caſe in hand, he began to find fault with that appointment, though, when appriſed of the general offence, and while he conſidered himſelf as an honoured ſufferer for having done his duty, he ſhould have been the laſt to complain of having a fair opportunity granted him of doing juſtice to himſelf and his cauſe. Being in that inſtance out of order, little or no reply was made to him at that time on that head; nor did the Court then appear ſufficiently calm to liſten to any. The perſonal reflections that accompanied his invective againſt the writer of that paper, for the ſhare he had in any of theſe proceedings, he made little account of, while he was engaged in cauſes of a public nature, acting in them according to his own beſt judgement, and, at the ſame time, as a ſervant and ſubject of the Court. With that member he never had any perſonal quarrel, though the public queſtions, on which he may widely differ from him, are, of late, but too numerous and momentous.

that cauſes or diſcuſſions relating to the general intereſts of religion, or to the whole body, are ſeldom ſeen, ſo much or ſo long, to engage attention, as ſcenes of unchriſtian litigation, wherein parties eagerly proſecute their local and petty differences, and vent their angry paſſions and ſcurrilities againſt each other. Theſe laſt, not rarely, will occupy many long days, and ſometimes keep many hundreds of people awake, and cluſtering in Synod-houſes, or in open churches, through all the hours of night.——It were to be wiſhed, that there had not been reaſon to ſuſpect ſome members of ſpending part of the time that evening unneceſſarily and impertinently, "as the manner of ſome is," in the adjoining room of noiſe and entertainment, waiting to ſee the concluſion, with ſome other view than to be in caſe to form a deliberate and impartial judgement about the ſubject of diſcuſſion. We have heard of a practice, well known in the ſecret hiſtory of a certain high and honourable Houſe, of ſome who have obtained ſeats in it, but are too much the gentlemen of faſhion and ſpirit to trouble themſelves with the drudgery and tedious detail of Parliamentary buſineſs, who yet, on particular occaſions, will not fail to be attending within call, to give the deciſive YEA or NAY; or, in their fox-hunting dialect, though they decline the fatigue of the chace, they take care to be in at the death.

When the Synod proceeded to judgement, inſtead of adopting the foregoing Decl ration or Vindication as their own, a great majority agreed to re-commit the buſineſs to another committee *de novo*. This, doubtleſs, in all ſuch caſes, they have full power to do, or wholly to diſmiſs it, upon proper reaſons aſſigned, provided they do nothing againſt the truth, nor fail in the diſcharge of any part of their public duty. Reaſons ſatisfactory, at leaſt to the judgement of the propoſer, in this caſe, were not adduced: nor was any thing offered as a ſubſtitute for fulfilling, in a ſpeedy, as well as better manner, the intent of the Overture. He could not conſider the general obſervation of a certain brother on the manner and compoſition of the paper, as a ſufficient reaſon for rejecting, or even deferring the buſineſs *ſine die*. In matters of a ſerious importance, the affair of words and manner muſt always be points of a very inferior conſideration: To all of theſe, eſpecially in dealing with common people, every minute and pedantic rule of modern criticiſm would be but idly and impertinently applied. The ſame mode of compoſition can neither be preſcribed to all perſons, nor be adapted to all ſubjects and kind of writing. "For meats," ſaid Paul, "deſtroyeſt thou the work of God?" For the ſake of words, or capricious modes, ſhall needful truths be ſuppreſſed, or urgent buſineſs be hindered? There are ſome, and too many modern divines among the number, who account it a more venial fault to utter heterodox and dangerous ſentiments, than to be guilty of

a grammatical impropriety; and they will grant more indulgence to him who ſubverts the order of law and goſpel, or who breaks any of the divine commandments, and teaches men ſo, than to one who offends in the arrangement of a period, or violates perhaps ſome frivolous, or unſettled rule of a Lowth or Blair.

Dant veniam corvis, vexant cenſura columbas.

The Declaration, at any rate, both as to matter and manner, was under the review of Synod, and waiting their alterations and corrections.

There was not more force in the objection of the ſame brother from the weſt, (who has diſtinguiſhed himſelf ſo much as a warm partizan of the high-flying Toryiſm and Antichriſtian warfare of theſe days), namely, that the paper was a defence of the Societies, meaning, thoſe of "The Friends of the People;" for at that time, the clandeſtine dangerous ſocieties that have ſince riſen were not heard of. But whether the cauſe of theſe Societies was defended, or how far, every one may judge. Whoever weighs impartially what was ſaid on that head. will probably be of opinion, that the contrary concluſion might, with as much truth, be drawn; as was very properly obſerved by another member of Court at that time. Were it to the purpoſe for the writer to diſcloſe his real ſentiments upon ſuch a ſubject, few perhaps would be found, who have leſs confident expectations of good to ariſe from the ſudden ebullition of popular zeal, or who entertain a leſs high opinion of haſty coalitions, irregular aſſemblies, tumultuous proceedings, and precipitant reſolves, ſometimes the fruit of it. He has had ſufficient occaſion to learn, from too many inſtances, how theſe uſually terminate, to prevent him from being forward to beſtow upon them a large meaſure of applauſe, or to hail ſuch appearances as auſpicious. Friend as he is to reform of every kind, and to popular liberty, he never expected to ſee a real and permanent reform effected by the upſtart patriots of a day, by a ſet of pert noiſy praters, by clubs, compoſed, perhaps, for the greater part, of raſh and hot-headed ſtriplings, without reflection, without experience, without fixed principle, and without perſevering integrity. All ſuch mobbiſh conventions muſt prove like a rope of ſand. Thoſe who compoſe them are not more remarkable for the forwardneſs and impetuoſity of their proceedings in the beginning, than they uſually are afterwards for the timidity and rapidity of their retreat, upon the approach of danger or difficulty; when every one, in the haſte to ſave himſelf, will not ſcruple to betray his aſſociates, and the cauſe; all of them, perhaps, baſely deſerting thoſe very individuals, whom their activity puſhed forward to the conſpicuous poſts of hazardous reſponſibility, and unfeelingly

feelingly looking on, while their perſons or property pay the forfeit for their credulity in relying on their promiſed ſupport. It is not by perſons of ſuch a ſpirit, nor by ſuch means, that the public weal, in critical times, can be greatly benefited. But what is the good work that may not be miſmanaged? or where is the cauſe that may not meet with falſe friends?

With the Synod's determination in this cauſe, the writer at the time was grieved: he could not but conſider it as an inſtance of fainting, at any rate, of improper delay and ſlackneſs, in a part of public duty that required diſpatch. But as the buſineſs was not finally diſmiſſed, but re-committed, he was diſpoſed to ſay the leſs, contenting himſelf with expreſſing his opinion verbally, while he had ſome proſpect of another overture being prepared, and the matter at laſt brought to a deſirable concluſion. He was averſe to put the harſheſt conſtruction upon the motives and intentions of the Court; but was diſpoſed to impute the failure of this attempt to the defects or improprieties of the draught then preſented, rather than to a diſlike in the minds of any to ſome of the principles contained in it, or to the ſcope and ſpirit of it. He therefore abſtained from making any other complaint, or taking any other active ſtep, at that time, leſt it might have been interpreted, as ariſing from ſome undue partiality to any thing in which he himſelf had a particular hand, a weakneſs which all need carefully to avoid, or leſt it might appear to be only contending about a particular manner of doing the work, rather than a regard to the cauſe itſelf. In theſe views, he waited from Synod to Synod, expecting to have a new draught called for and preſented; but he waited to no purpoſe; a dead ſilence was always obſerved on the ſubject; till at the laſt meeting in Auguſt, he was obliged to remind the Synod of that appointment, and to move, That the report ſhould be called for. This could not well be refuſed. The report was, "That nothing had been done by the Committee." Upon which, another member of Court inſtantly moved, That the appointment of the Committee be diſcontinued, and diſcharged from the minutes of Synod. Which, to his ſurpriſe, was as inſtantly agreed to, *nemine contradicente*.

For this deed, no reaſon whatever was given; every one therefore is left to put upon it what conſtruction he pleaſes. It may mean, either that it is now the opinion of the Court, that the circumſtances of the times do not render any thing of the kind required in the Overtures, neceſſary; or, that the Angels of our churches are not prepared with their trumpets to give a certain ſound; or, that there are certain conſiderations of the prudential mind, or what may be uſually ſo called, that determine them to forbear, as regard to peace among themſelves, fear of encountering public prejudices, giving offence to thoſe in power, or the like. But in whatever light it be viewed, many will think, that it leaves an imputation either

on the diſcernment, the conſiſtency, or the faithfulneſs of the Supreme Court. There are indeed but too many ſymptoms of the ſpirit of counſel, of deciſion, of vigorous zeal, as well as of unanimity in the public cauſe of God, being departed from the judicatories of the Seceſſion, of whom it was hoped, that, like Judah, they would long have "ruled with God, and been faithful with the ſaints." It will alſo be a grievous ſtroke upon their own churches, and on the generation, if, amidſt the other dangers of theſe times, the words of the prophet be verified alſo upon them: "Therefore night ſhall be unto you, that ye ſhall not have a viſion, and it ſhall be dark unto you, that ye ſhall not divine, and the ſun ſhall go down over the prophets, and the day ſhall be dark over them. Then ſhall the ſeers be aſhamed, and the diviners confounded: yea, they ſhall all cover their lips, for there is no anſwer of God *." From what has occurred in a courſe of years paſt, there is reaſon to apprehend, that a comfortable progreſs in their public contendings and Teſtimony is denied them; but that the *facilis deſcenſus*, the retrogade path, is only acceſſible to them.

The reader by this time may perceive why the foregoing Declaration is brought forward to public view, with the name of an individual prefixed to it; and alſo in what light to conſider it. It was not from any ſatisfaction that he takes in the troubleſome and expenſive taſk of writing and publiſhing on ſuch ſubjects, to which he well knows the taſte of the age to be ſtatedly averſe; much leſs from any pleaſure he takes in differing, or purſuing a different tract, from his brethren, whom he eſteems and loves in the Lord,—that he hath taken this courſe. But he deemed it needful to ſupply, in part, "their lack of ſervice." Hereby he addreſſes them, as he did before, in terms like theſe:

> ———Si quid noviſti rectius iſtis,
> Candidus imperti: ſi non his utere mecum.
>
> HOR. EP. l. 1.

As every member of a body is particularly intereſted in the charges brought againſt the whole, ſo he has availed himſelf of a right pertaining to each apart, of vindicating himſelf in the juſtification of the common cauſe, by attempting to give the juſt ſtate of thoſe points moſt ſubject to miſrepreſentation, and that are viewed as moſt obnoxious; to hold forth the ſentiments undiſguiſed upon certain topics, which either the letter or ſpirit of his religious profeſſion warrant; and to diſcriminate intentions and conduct that may be laudable, from thoſe that are criminal, when they are ready to be confounded

* Mic. iii. 6. 7.

founded together. In this he did not propoſe either to introduce new principles, or to give a full ſtatement of the old, nor to enter into the large field of illuſtration or argument, but to turn the attention to ſuch articles as bear ſome relation to, and ſeem to come into contact with certain ſubjects of living diſputes. He has not, to his knowledge, advanced any thing on thoſe ſubjects, but what he was virtually bound both to believe and teach, when at licence and ordination, in common with all his brethren, he gave his aſſent to this queſtion, "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 to Mr Nairn's Reaſons of Diſſent, with the Defence thereto ſubjoined." Theſe are not leſs the genuine principles of the Seceſſion, that the preſent judicatories may refuſe their ſanction to a new declaration of them, and leave the world to gueſs at their preſent ſentiments upon any of theſe ſubjects, in the beſt manner they can. Even the real principles formerly adopted by the Synod, can no longer be conſidered as theirs than they may be willing to own them; much leſs ſentiments not according with theſe. If there be any thing, therefore, offenſive or amiſs in the foregoing ſtatement, the publiſher alone muſt bear the blame. The Synod have fairly exculpated themſelves.

How far a change of ſentiments in regard to ſome of the principles contained in it, particularly in pages 25. 28. and 31. may have prevented their enacting this, and ſome other Overtures formerly preſented, he will not pretend to ſay. He did not at firſt allow himſelf to ſuſpect this to be any part of the cauſe; but it can now no longer be concealed, nor do they wiſh to have it concealed, that the majority of Synod have adopted different views about national reformation, national covenants, and the diſtinct intereſt which both political and eccleſiaſtical bodies have, and the part they ſhould ſeverally act in reforming, ſettling, and promoting religion in nations, and other things connected with theſe. In theſe particulars they are departing, it may be ſaid are already departed, from the former principles of their own ſociety, and of all the Proteſtant churches; as appears from the progreſs made towards the reception of a new Teſtimony, and from ſome late acts of Synod, appointing a change in the Formula, to be ſubſcribed by all in public office, and affecting the terms of miniſterial and Chriſtian communion, the one condemning part of the doctrine in the Confeſſion of Faith, without ſubſtituting any thing elſe in its place, and even without a mouth being opened on the merits of the cauſe; the other for ſuſpending covenanting for the preſent, till it may be done in a manner more adapted to preſent circumſtances; or, perhaps more properly, to the new ſcheme of principles; a ſcheme that, in the opinion

nion of the writer, tends to ſacrifice the boaſted reformation of Scotland, and of other lands, to the ſpite and ſcorn of ſectarian anarchiſts, and in its latitude makes a near approach to the worſt and moſt miſchievous part of the Revolutionary ſyſtem of modern infidels, that totally divorces government from religion, and would aboliſh every authoriſed form or national ſyſtem of the latter. But on theſe affecting ſubjects, he impoſes ſilence on himſelf, and would gladly do it for ever, if he can be but ſuffered to maintain his firſt profeſſion and engagements, free from the imperious encroachments of innovation and impoſition. But when the ſilver cord of the common profeſſion of a religious body comes to be looſed, it forebodes its approaching diſſolution. May ſuch an event in our caſe, be yet in mercy averted!