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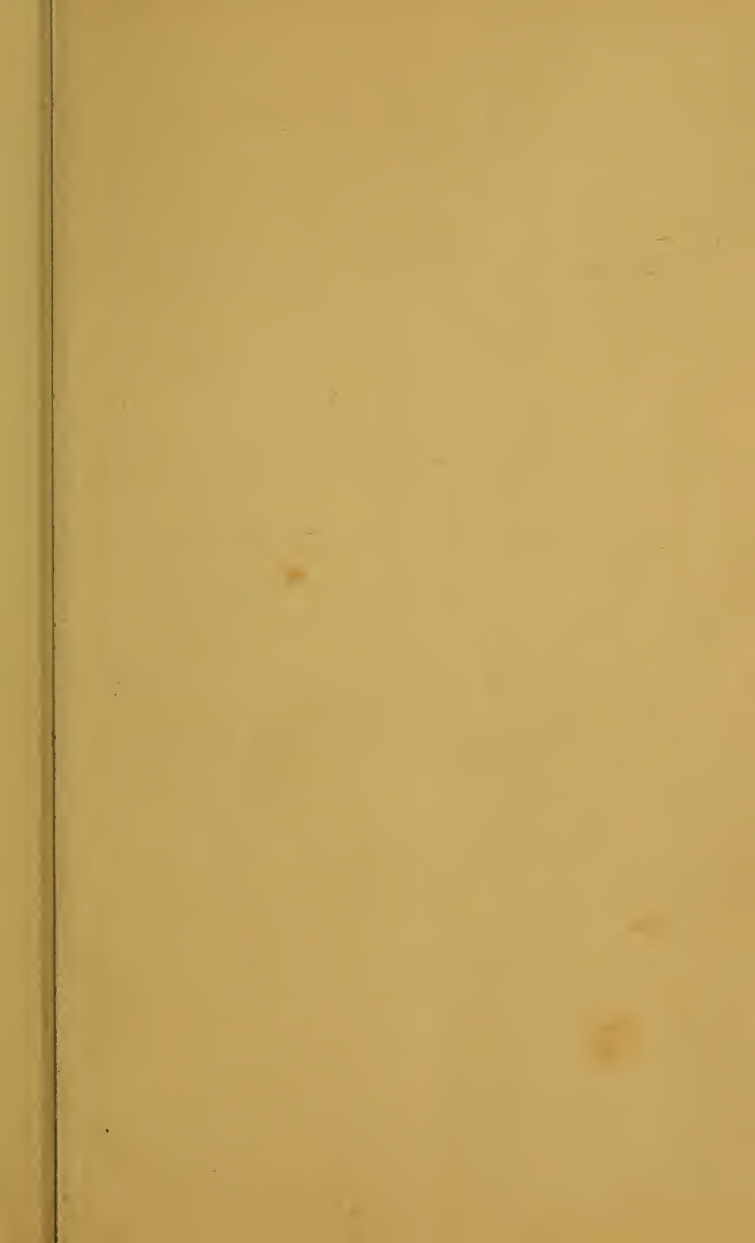
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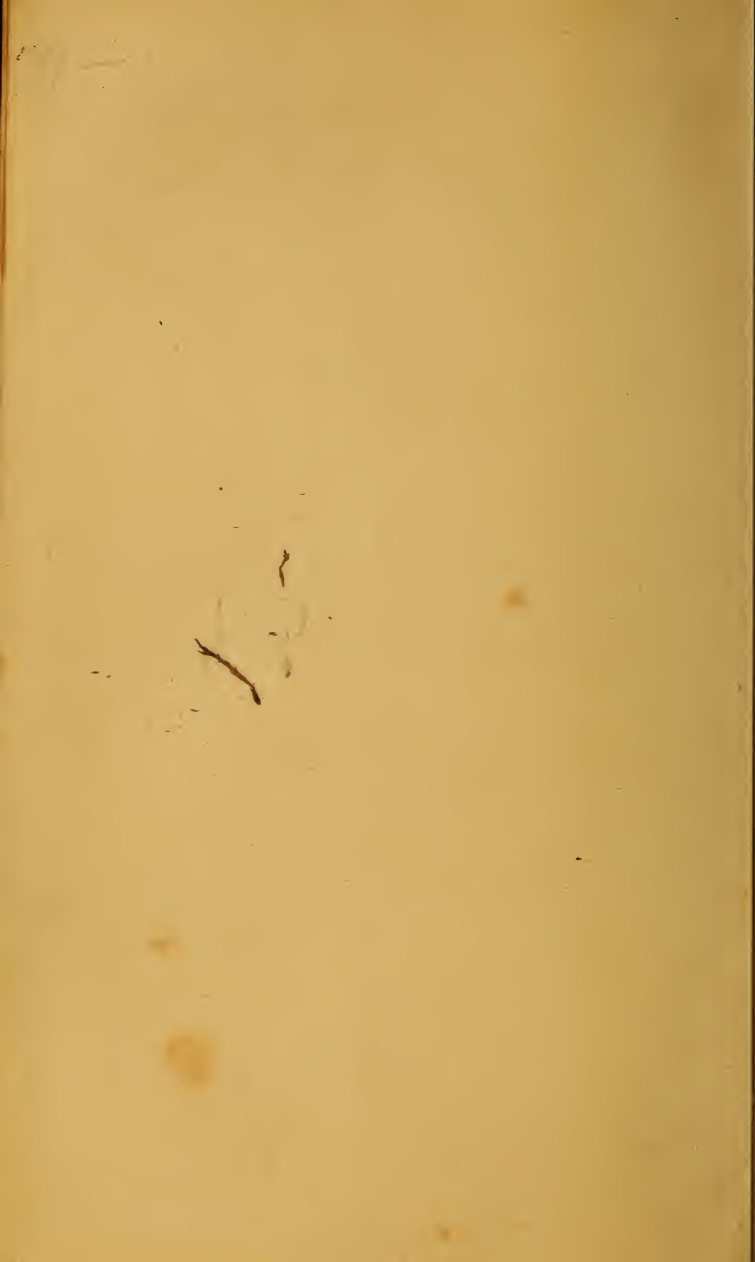
SCS # 1286

Thomas F. Torrance

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HISTORICAL SKETCHES

OF THE

53-1-44

RELIEF CHURCH;

AND A FEW

SUBJECTS OF CONTROVERSY

DISCUSSED.

WITH AN

ADDRESS TO THE BURGHER CLERGY.

---

BY MR. JAMES SMITH,

Minister of the RELIEF CHURCH in *Dunfermline*.

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*Quæ culpæ soles, ea tu ne feceris ipse.  
Turpe est doctõri cum culpa redarguit ipsum.*

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ECCLES. V. 7. *For in the multitude of dreams, and many words, there are also divers vanities; but fear thou God.*

MAT. XXV. 40. 45. — *Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.—Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.*

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MDCCLXXIII.

[Price Four Pence.]

**I**N every age we find the clergy too much disposed to make gain of religion. A disinterested Christian in the ministry, zealous for God, and the best interests of mankind, is an undoubted blessing to society. A selfish and interested priest, who is ready to sacrifice the peace of the church, and even truth herself, to his vanity, or his wealth, is a dangerous creature in the world. Of this number, we have reason to fear, there are not a few in Scotland. It is not uncommon to see parents, from apparent vanity, set apart one of their children to the ministry; no matter what his genius and dispositions be, he must go forward to the pulpit.—The young gentleman is often the darling of his parents, their rising hope, destined to bring into renown an obscure name. Humoured and flattered to excess, he becomes the capricious tyrant of the family; more apt to learn vice than virtue, he attends the classes; from mere necessity he becomes a divine; full of pride and self-importance, he is next in the Presbytery: At last, with eager expectations, he arrives at the pulpit; every thing is then made subservient to his interest and fame. To such men the divisions and animosities of the church of Christ are much indebted. Whenever polemical divines shake themselves free from vanity and interested motives, our controversies will take a very different turn. To rescue the truth from the injuries she hath suffered from contending parties, is my present design.—It is granted, that this publication bears evident marks of a crude and hasty composition. The pamphlet of a day will not bear, nor does the subject require much polish. The cause in which I am embarked requires no aid from art: Naked truth, and plain common sense, are her guardians. I have only to add, that my arguments rest not on any particular text of scripture; quoting particular texts is purposely avoided as much as possible when arguments are necessary; they are founded on acknowledged principles, and the general tenor of scripture.

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# HISTORICAL SKETCHES

OF THE

## RELIEF CHURCH, &c.

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### B O O K I.

#### HISTORICAL SKETCHES of the RELIEF CHURCH:

**W**HENEVER a Christian's character is wantonly abused, his person punished, or his temporal interests injured on account of his religion; or, if he shall be cast out of the synagogue for declaring the truth, then he suffers persecution.—Though persecuting principles and dispositions are under restraints in our country, yet their baneful influence is visible in the conduct of professed Christians. Corruption in the heart of man is cruel and unjust: Saints themselves, while in the body, feel its influence, and often have been left to harass one another. It is remarkable that the Relief Church sprung from and continues to flourish under a certain species of persecution. If we suffer justly on account of our vice or folly, then those who we thought had injured us are blameless; if we suffer in defending the truths and rights of mankind, then all who have violently opposed us in the good work of the Lord, are, in this, enemies both to God and man. How far this hath been the lot of the Relief Church, let the unprejudiced reader judge from the following sketches of her history.

#### S E C T I O N I.

##### *Mr. Gillespie's Deposition.*

**P**RESBYTERY hath long flourished in Scotland, nor could any other form of church-government, though frequently tried, ever be made to prosper in our kingdom.

I congratulate my countrymen, on their steady adherence to the principles of our fathers, and earnestly wish that they may not be forsaken by posterity. Though a few parts of our system admit of some amendment, yet in equity and simplicity it excels. Presbytery and Patronage are not likely ever to accord, hence every true Presbyterian impatiently bears that yoke of bondage: Though the ruling clergy have long and artfully laboured to reconcile Christians to that mode of settlement, yet they still reprobate it with indignation. In the Establishment there were always a number of ministers who steadily opposed the rigorous exercise of patronage: These avowed enemies to all tyrannical measures, gave great offence to their more arbitrary brethren, who determined to humble such opponents. The frequent style of some rigid rulers in the church, was, " We'll enlighten the scrupulous understandings of these men, with their wives and children;" *i. e.* We will compel these obstinate brethren, not only to acquiesce, but also to assist in executing our good measures, or starve, or beg, for dig they cannot. An opportunity of executing these severe threatenings occurred to the Assembly in the year seventeen hundred and fifty two. That memorable Assembly took a very unprecedented step; they not only appointed Mr. Andrew Richardson's admission in Inverkeithing, but also required every member of the presbytery of Dunfermline to attend, and witness the execution of the sentence. Mr. Thomas Gillespie, then minister of Carnock, and a member of that presbytery, was one of those men whose scrupulous understandings that Assembly wished to enlighten. He called these measures unscriptural and tyrannical; with other brethren he refused to countenance that admission. The manner and dispatch with which this affair was conducted is very remarkable. On Monday the Assembly gave out this appointment; the day fixed for ordination was Thursday at eleven o'clock: Every member of the presbytery was summoned to appear at the Assembly's bar, and Mr. Gillespie, who disobeyed the appointment, but obeyed the summons, was deposed on Saturday, all in one week! When the presbytery of Dunfermline appeared at the bar on Friday, Messrs. David Hunter, Thomas Gillespie, John Spence, Alexander Dal- ing, and Thomas Fernie, confessed that they had not obeyed the Assembly's appointment; and as a vindication of their conduct, they gave in a representation signed by them  
and



and Mr. Stark at Torricburn. As this deed laid a foundation for the erection of the Relief Church, I shall insert it at full length.

“ Unto the very reverend the Moderator, and the  
“ reverend and honourable members of the Venerable  
“ Assembly of the Church of Scotland, met at Edinburgh  
“ 1752. The humble representation of the members of  
“ the presbytery of Dunfermline, whose names are here-  
“ unto subjoined.—We cannot but be deeply affected  
“ with our present situation, in being obliged to stand at  
“ the bar of this Venerable Assembly to answer for non-  
“ compliance with any of their appointments: But, as this  
“ court is so good as to allow us to speak in our own be-  
“ half, we shall therefore beg leave humbly to represent  
“ some of those things which have all along straitened us  
“ in the execution of the orders we received; and which  
“ still lay such difficulties in our way as we are not able to  
“ surmount; and this we hope to do with that plainness  
“ and honesty, and, at the same time, with that decent and  
“ dutiful respect to the supreme judicatory of the church,  
“ which it is so justly entitled to expect from us. We need  
“ scarce observe how unjustly we have been represented as  
“ having no other difficulty, but the unreasonable fear of  
“ opposing the ill-grounded prejudices of our people; nor  
“ need we inform this house, that ever since the act  
“ restoring patronage, in the end of Queen Anne’s reign,  
“ there has been a vehement opposition to all settlements  
“ by presentations, where there was but small concurrence;  
“ which settlements have already produced a train of the  
“ most unhappy consequences, greatly affecting the interests  
“ of religion; and, if turned into the stated and fixed rules  
“ of procedure, will, in all probability, be attended with  
“ every fatal effect. Now, under such a view and apprehension  
“ as this, was it any wonder, or was it inconsistent  
“ with that obedience which we owe to our earthly superi-  
“ ors in the Lord, that we should demur and stop short  
“ in carrying a settlement into execution, where, in our  
“ apprehension, there was by no means such a concurrence  
“ of persons residing in the parish, as might give sufficient  
“ weight and influence for promoting the great ends of  
“ the ministry? The Assembly know well that it appears  
“ from their own acts and resolutions entered into their  
“ records, that the law of patronage has been considered  
“ as no small grievance to the church, not to say as incon-

“ sistent with our union and settlement. We find it de-  
 “ clared by the Assembly in the year 1736, that it is and  
 “ has been, ever since the Reformation, the principles of  
 “ the church, that no minister shall be intruded into any  
 “ parish, contrary to the will of the congregation; and  
 “ therefore it is seriously recommended to all judicatories  
 “ of this church to have a due regard to the said principle  
 “ in planting vacant congregations, so as none be intruded  
 “ into such parishes, as they regard the glory of God, and  
 “ the edification of the body of Christ, which recommenda-  
 “ tion we humbly apprehend to be strongly supported by  
 “ the principles of reason, and the laws of our Lord Jesus  
 “ Christ.

“ Permit us to inform the Assembly, that after repeated  
 “ endeavours used by committees of the presbytery to lessen  
 “ the opposition to Mr. Richardson, in the parish of Inver-  
 “ keithing, matters still remain in such a situation, that  
 “ we are brought unto this unhappy dilemma, either of  
 “ coming under the imputation of disobedience to a par-  
 “ ticular order of our ecclesiastical superiors, or contributing  
 “ our part to the establishment of measures, which we  
 “ neither can reconcile with the declared principles, nor  
 “ with the true interest of the church. On the whole, we  
 “ cannot help thinking, that by having an active hand in  
 “ carrying Mr. Richardson's settlement into execution, we  
 “ should be the unhappy instruments, as matters now  
 “ stand, to speak in the language of holy writ, of scatter-  
 “ ing the flock of Christ, not to mention what might be  
 “ the fatal consequences of such settlements to our happy  
 “ civil constitution.—If the venerable Assembly shall, on  
 “ this account, judge us guilty of such criminal disobe-  
 “ dience, as to deserve their censure, we trust they will at  
 “ least allow, that we acted as honest men, willing to fore-  
 “ go every secular advantage for conscience's sake. In such  
 “ an event, this, through grace, shall be our support, that  
 “ not being charged with any neglect of the duties of our  
 “ ministry among those committed to our care, we are to  
 “ suffer for adhering to what we apprehend to be the will  
 “ of our great Lord and Master, whose we are, whom we  
 “ are bound to serve in all things, and on whom we cast  
 “ all our care.”

While this representation highly displeased the church,  
 it discovered to the Assembly the proper objects, of whom  
 they ought to make an example, in order to intimidate  
 others

others of like tempers and principles: Accordingly, the Assembly, after some reasoning, determined, by a vote, that one of these six gentlemen should be deposed. To determine on which of the six brethren this sentence should fall, was the work of another day. The Assembly therefore adjourned till Saturday, when they met, eagerly bent on asserting their authority, and punishing the disobedient.—Mr. Gillespie appeared to be the most obstinate offender. He read a paper at the bar, expressing, in strong terms, his adherence to the representation which was given in on Friday. Mr. Stark at Torricburn confessed that some of his difficulties were now removed; the other four chose to say nothing.

After prayer for light and direction, it was determined by a vote, which of the six brethren above-mentioned should be deposed. The roll being called, and votes marked, it carried Mr. Gillespie.—In the most solemn manner, the clergy of those days proceeded against that godly man, as follows: “Therefore, the General Assembly did, and hereby do, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the sole Head and King of the church, and by virtue of the power and authority committed by him to them, DEPOSE Mr. Thomas Gillespie minister of Carnock, from the office of the holy ministry, prohibiting and discharging him to execute the same, or any part thereof, within the church, in all times coming: And the Assembly did, and hereby do, declare the church of Carnock vacant, from, and after the day and date of this sentence.”

Though the other five transgressors were involved in the same offence, the Assembly “desirous to mix mercy and lenity with their judgment” only suspended them from the exercise of their office in judicatories.

When Mr Gillespie was called to the bar, and stood up to receive the sentence of deposition, his serenity, devout appearance, and particular situation, attracted the attention of the whole house. I question, if ever he appeared to greater advantage in the church, than on that day.—When his sentence was read, he answered with great solemnity and composure of mind, in the words of the apostles, which were spoken when they had been beaten, and commanded to speak no more in the name of Jesus; “I thank God, (said he) that I am counted worthy not only to preach the gospel, but also to suffer shame for the name of Christ,” and instantly retired. While some treated this

reply



reply with scorn, it was sensibly felt by others, and excited a murmur which was heard in different corners of the house, "Alas, the good man! alas, the good man!"

He who with infinite wisdom guards the interests of his people, and often makes the wrath of man to praise him, over-ruled this unjust and rigorous censure for the benefit of his church; accordingly this outcast from the established party, was honoured to become an instrument of laying the foundation of an asylum for the oppressed. This deed of the Assembly was the utmost stretch of persecution; which the laws of our country permit; he was cast out of the synagogue, solemnly forbidden to preach any more to the people, and deprived of the means of supporting himself and family, merely because he acted according to his principles, and refused to assist in executing, what he deemed to be an iniquitous sentence. But the severity of this persecution did not discourage this worthy man: While he felt the testimony of a good conscience, he firmly believed that his Master would both support and direct him; convinced that it was still his duty to preach the gospel, he determined not to be silent: When cast out of his house, he went to the fields, and warmly spoke to the people, from these words, "For necessity is laid upon me; yea, wo is unto me, if I preach not the gospel\*."

His situation rendered him more conspicuous than before his deposition. Still he claimed his pastoral relation to the people of Carnock, many of whom, together with a number of Christians from other congregations, attended his ministry.—Being deprived of his church and stipend, his people determined to support their pastor, and to provide a house in which they could meet for public worship. The congregation agreed that it should be built in Dunfermline. This resolution was soon put in execution, and a respectable auditory attended his ministrations in that place.

A petition was transmitted to the next General Assembly from the heritors, elders, and heads of families in the parish of Carnock, craving that they would *repose* Mr. Gillespie. Many worthy ministers, were exceedingly active to obtain this, but were not successful. He refused to do any thing in this affair himself; the application of others in his behalf became abortive; unsupported, he long stood, "earnestly contending for that faith which was delivered to the saints." When first he proposed to dispense the

Lord's

\* 1 Cor. ix. 16.

Lord's supper in Dunfermline, the disadvantage of standing alone was sensibly felt. The work was rather too great for one man, he therefore warmly solicited the assistance of some eminent ministers in the church; they saw their danger, and rejected his request.

The state of the Establishment then, and since, prevented him from asking, or even desiring to be admitted again a member of that party. Besides, the sentence of deposition in the way, the law of patronage, promiscuous admission to the seals of the covenant, and Arminian tenets, rendered a coalition with his former brethren impracticable. The law of patronage, unfriendly to presbytery, disagreeable to our countrymen, and, in our opinion, contrary to the word of God and sound reason, is a yoke of bondage to which he never could submit, and the promiscuous admission of members to receive baptism, and eat the Lord's supper, was a grievance which deeply affected his conscience.— There are many characters notoriously irreligious, against whom no particular crime can be easily proved: In the Establishment, such cannot be excluded from the seals of the covenant, even by those ministers who endeavour to preserve their communion more pure than other brethren. If a clergyman of the church of Scotland should obey the dictates of his conscience, and the word of God, by endeavouring to exclude those who are known to be irreligious and profane, he may expect a civil process, and shall learn his duty from the laws of the land. All who choose to receive a presentation, must, in this, violate the laws of our holy religion, and yield to the influence of civil power. Our father was more attached to the precepts of Christianity, than to the parish church of Carnock. Paul's direction to the Corinthian church influenced his mind more than the love of a presentation; he was therefore determined, not to eat the Lord's supper with such as were known to be extortioners, covetous, liars, or wicked and profane\*. Besides, he was a rigid Calvinist, and abhorred the Arminian tenets, which he believed were preached by too many in that church which had deposed him.

It is therefore evident, that he could not maintain his avowed principles in the Establishment, or return to it with a good conscience; nor could he adopt the principles of the Secession. The heat of their zeal had hurried them into extremes, of which he highly disapproved. The nature of  
their

\* 1 Cor. v. 11.

their Act and Testimony; the importance into which they wrought up that long creed; their limited communion; and, according to his opinion, their illiberal sentiments and want of charity, were discordant with his views of Christianity; for these reasons, he was obliged, for some time, to dispense the Lord's supper, without any aid from men. When he administered this ordinance, his principles were publicly declared to the people: He had the lax admission, which was practised in the Establishment to avoid on the one hand, and the unscriptural partition which the Secession reared up to separate between their little party and other Christians, to demolish on the other; with this view, he assured the public, that "his principles were to hold communion with *all* who appear to hold communion with the Head, our Lord Jesus Christ, and with such *only*." Accordingly, such Christians as had a competent measure of knowledge, were found in the faith, and unblameable in their lives, were admitted to his communion, though not his followers.

Many worthy ministers in the church of Scotland were of the same principles, but did not choose to leave the society with whom they were connected. In their own congregations they had a sphere of usefulness, and continued their opposition against the arbitrary measures of their rulers.

Mr. Thomas Boston, minister of the gospel in Oxnam, was of the same opinion with Mr. Gillespie, and lamented his deposition as a most tyrannical deed, and a gross prostitution of church-censure. When the church of Jedburgh became vacant, the town-council, the kirk-session, and body of that people, declared their inclinations unanimously for Mr. Boston: From this unanimity, and their political connections with a noble lord, who could have easily obtained the crown presentation in favour of their object, they could not doubt of success to their earnest solicitations. To their astonishment, it turned out otherways. The one presented was unacceptable, and the people were greatly distressed with this disappointment. Unwilling to give up their Christian privileges, they steadily adhered to their choice, and refused to submit to the presentee. The entanglements of an Establishment were now sensibly felt by Mr. Boston, and these people; they therefore agreed to use that liberty, which, to them, appeared consistent with the genius of our holy religion. Mr. Boston stepped forth, the friend of that injured congregation; though hazardous  
the



the deed, he gave in his demission to the presbytery of Jedburgh, and undertook the pastoral care of that people. His cause was brought before the General Assembly, who declared him incapable of receiving a presentation, or preaching in a parish church; and all her members were prohibited from holding ministerial communion with this offender. His principles and views, in this affair, were fully and clearly explained in a long discourse, which he delivered before the presbytery on giving in his demission. In that discourse, of which I have seen a written copy, he explains his principles, vindicates his conduct in a masterly manner, and fully answers every objection which had been made against him. Out of delicacy for those against whom he was necessarily led to throw out some reflections, he refused to publish that testimony, which would have done him honour; and as the principles he publickly and solemnly espoused, and his uniform adherence to these in practice, ever after he went to Jedburgh, is a most satisfactory vindication of his character, and a transcript of his speech before the presbytery, his friends think it unnecessary to put it in the hands of the public.

Messrs. Gillespie and Boston were in such similar circumstances, and so much the same in principles, that they soon agreed to assist one another. This union strengthened their hands in the work of the ministry, was exceeding agreeable to their people, and attracted the attention of other injured congregations. The people in Colinsburgh were the first who formally applied to them for relief. They suffered, like many others, from the rigorous execution of Patronage, but determined not to submit to the arbitrary measures of an Establishment. Messrs. Gillespie and Boston gave them sermon and assistance in their struggle for liberty. The congregation built a meeting-house, and chose their own pastor. Mr. Collier, originally from Fife, known to be a minister of eminent piety, and orthodox principles, was then among the Dissenters in England; his character was known to the people of Colinsburgh, who gave him a call, of which he accepted: This gentleman heartily approved of the conduct and principles of Messrs. Gillespie and Boston; he preferred a connection with them to the state of Dissenters in England. Accordingly he was admitted to his charge in Colinsburgh by Mr. Boston, who, with Mr. Gillespie, and some ordained elders, con-

B

ducted

ducted the whole affair, according to the established rules of Presbytery.

## S E C T I O N II.

### *The Constitution of the Relief Presbytery.*

**M**R. Collier's admission is an affair of great importance in this history. In examining that transaction, we see with certainty the constitution and principles of the Relief Church. In Colinsburgh the Relief Presbytery was first constituted; the transactions of that day clearly discover the foundation, nature, and form of that religious society. The members did not dissent from the constitution of the Establishment, nor did they voluntarily abandon the communion of that church; they were cast out and persecuted for acting according to their views of presbytery. Mr. Gillespie was deposed because he could not obey unconstitutional appointments; Mr. Boston was cut off from all ministerial communion with that church, for taking part with, and preaching among an injured people, who had been deprived of what they deemed to be their undoubted right. These two brethren had been regularly licensed and ordained; they never changed their principles, nor deviated knowingly from their ordination vows. To rule according to the word of God, and feed with wholesome doctrines, the people who submitted to their ministry, was all their aim. In doing this, they now saw it necessary to constitute a regular church court. Their views and principles ought to be traced back to that representation which was given in to the Assembly, to which Mr. Gillespie solemnly adhered before that court when he was deposed. In that testimony Mr. Gillespie, with other brethren, declared, that, "As  
 " honest men, they were willing to forego every secular  
 " advantage, for conscience's sake; and, rather than act  
 " contrary to the declared principles of the church, and  
 " her true interest, they would submit to any censure." Mr. Boston's letter of dimission, and especially his speech before the presbytery of Jedburgh, breathes the same spirit, and, in the strongest manner, expresseth his attachment to the original constitution of the church, and his resolution of supporting these principles, at all expence. In this they were uniform and unanimous: As yet there was no judicial deed confirming their several testimonies and declarations.



The frequent rumours spread by their enemies kept the public in suspense, and occasioned their conduct at Colinsburgh to be carefully watched. Their names had been frequently traduced, and their principles and design industriously misrepresented; with caution and strict regularity they therefore proceeded. After the presbytery was constituted by Messrs. Gillespie and Boston, with two elders who had been ordained in the Church of Scotland, the principles and constitution of the Relief Church were judicially declared; to which Mr. Collier, when admitted to be a co-presbyter, solemnly adhered. The presbytery required of him a solemn and public profession of his faith in God, his belief of the scriptures, his approbation of Presbytery, according to reformation principles, and his adherence to the constitution of the Church of Scotland, as exhibited in her creeds, her canons, confessions, and forms of worship. This profession he solemnly made unto the presbytery, before his people, and promised to abide by these, in subjection to his brethren. Thus the founders of the Relief Church, in a judicative capacity, solemnly and publicly declared their adherence to reformation principles, and the constitution of the new-testament church, as delineated by our worthy ancestors; a solemn profession of which principles, was then stated by the presbytery, and hath ever since been observed as the terms of admission. Messrs. Warden and Scott, justly esteemed in the Christian world, for their piety and zeal, were next admitted, in the same manner as above. This hath been the uniform practice of the Relief presbytery, at the admission of every new member: Consistent with this profession, in all our deliberations in church courts, the established laws of presbytery are consulted, and by them our transactions are regulated. Thousands who have attended our public assemblies and church-courts, can attest these notorious and unquestionable facts. All who witness ordinations in the Relief interest, and the administration of the seals of the covenant to our members, hear them solemnly bound to these laws, in conformity to her original constitution.

Having ascertained, beyond all possibility of contradiction, the original constitution and form of the Relief Church, I shall proceed, tho' with reluctance, to correct the mistakes into which other churches and writers have fallen, in their account of our system of principles. I esteem the other Presbyterian churches in our country, and am persuaded

that in each are many valuable members of society; may they increase in purity, and shine more and more in the beauty of holiness! It is not inconsistent with this regard and desire, to detect their errors or mistakes, and to endeavour to dissuade them from injuring one another. The Burgher synod, of whom better things were expected, have fabricated a curious Testimony against all other Christians, to which their members are no less bound, than Relievers to the principles of reformation. With the same solemnity in which we approve of the constitution and order of the church of Scotland, they approve of, and promise to adhere to this new system of principles; in which are found the following marvellous contradictions of those undoubted facts which I have narrated, and which are universally known.

*Judicial Testimony*, page 177. "The several articles," (in the *Judicial Testimony*,) "assertory of the institution of a particular form of church-government under the New Testament, and of the divine right of Presbytery are a lasting testimony against Episcopacy, Independency, and Sectarian principles." Allowing these brethren the merit of asserting, that the form of church-government which Christ hath instituted is Presbytery, and thereby to testify against all who are not of these principles; then, in conformity to their own *profession*, they are bound to pay their respects to all true Presbyterians; an attack on the Relief Church from the reverend synod, is therefore exceedingly inconsistent. However ill the persecuting sword suits the Christian name, yet, in an evil day, these cruel brethren took it up, and, with a gloomy brow, plunged deep the bloody weapon into a church of Christ; for, it is added in the same page, "They," (*i. e.* the articles in the *Judicial Testimony*) "strike with equal force against those who call themselves the Presbytery of Relief, whose principles and measures have a visible tendency to lead off professing Christians in this nation, from any stedfast attachment to the reformation principles of the church of Scotland." The reader will observe, that the question here, is not, Whether the Relief Presbytery, or individuals in that interest, have, in some instances, ignorantly or wilfully deviated from the constitution of the Establishment, or reformation principles? But the question is, What are the avowed principles of this church, which she regularly and constantly professeth before the world? Every individual,  
and

and every church, in many instances, act contrary to their declared principles; but when a contrariety in practice to an uniform profession is unfrequent and condemned, these occasional errors are no part of the real system; consequently the absurd method which the Secession have taken to condemn our principles, in arguing against them, from a few instances in which Relievers are supposed to have been in a mistake, cannot invalidate the facts which I have established. It cannot be denied, that the Relief Church uniformly, in the most explicate and solemn manner, approve of, and promise to adhere to reformation principles, or the constitution of the church of Scotland; a steady adherence to which was the true cause of her existence in Scotland.

The Burgher synod, regardless of these undoubted facts, are pleased to assert in the same page of the *Judicial Testimony*, that the Relief "scheme stands upon the ruins of the grand  
"distinguishing principles of the Reformation, in as much  
"as all the abettors of it are animated by a spirit of uncommon opposition to the nature and design of our covenants, the national and solemn league." I am sorry that this respectable body of divines, should bring themselves into such discredit, and endanger their usefulness in Scotland, by this and several such unprovoked and unjust thrusts at the Relief Church: The charge is so obviously false, that all who know any thing of her constitution will see its contrariety to the truth. When the synod asserts, that "all  
"the abettors of the Relief scheme are animated by a  
"spirit of uncommon opposition to the nature and design  
"of our covenants," perhaps they did not consider, that, as to their nature, they contain these principles which we have sworn to maintain. The design of our religious ancestors in forming these covenants, was to support Reformation principles, and their civil and religious liberty, to which the abettors of the Relief scheme have shewn an uncommon attachment. Though some Relievers do not approve of the form of these covenants, and the mode of swearing them, yet, so far as I know, we all heartily approve of, and solemnly adhere to their nature and design; nor have, or can our accusers, produce any evidence in confirmation of this heavy and groundless charge.

Let the reverend synod therefore come forward, and like honest men confess that they were wrong. Sheath



now your sword, and heal the wounds you made, by Christian reparation, as penance for your crime. (I know that you are blushing) stand up before the public, with Mr. Walker, your judicious commentator, on the front. Surely the clergy ought to be rebuked when they are in the wrong: Though reluctant, gentlemen, you must appear; your faults must be reprov'd with an honest freedom, for the sake of truth. I will dismiss you with exhortations suited to your situation, when it is judged proper.

Long and loudly have both the parties in the Secession DECLAIMED from the pulpit against the egregious sin of becoming a Reliever. The substance of these pulpit harangues is collected, and artfully arranged by Mr. Ramsay the Antiburgher, in his *Relief Scheme considered*; as a specimen of that publication, in which the spirit of a Seceder appears in glowing colours, I shall lay before my readers his account of the Relief principles.

In the preface to that remarkable publication, we are told, that the Relief scheme "is an odd pernicious device," which communicated to the author, "a full conviction of its unscriptural nature and tendency to ruin the best interests of religion among us." This gentleman, therefore, became desirous "of checking its progress and baleful influence."

In page 2. he says, "The sentiments of some may be thought harsh; but I am not sure whether it be without foundation, that this scheme in general is the growth of modern scepticism and infidelity." He adds, in the next page, "The first work of the Deistical tribe, was to shake the generation loose, (as to their principles.) Doctrinal points of every kind in religion must be accounted doubtful, and of small consideration, supposing them true: Regular moral conduct constitutes the good man, whatever his speculative opinions be; the fruits of this maxim, urged with confidence, have been bitter: Something very like it, (says he) is the characteristic of the Relief communion, and seems too openly to confess its origin."

In page 14. he says, "In fact, it is not easy to account for, and far less to justify the ambiguous and mysterious airs she gives herself. Is it because she is ashamed to be seen and known? This argues a consciousness of so great deformity, (says he) that we will by no means charge it upon her. Is it that she would become  
more

“ more liable to scrutiny and contradiction, being exposed  
“ to vulgar eye? Is it that her friends are not yet agreed  
“ about her constitution and form? This, (says our author)  
“ seems to betray a very pitiable weakness somewhere. Is  
“ it that her adherents would not be so numerous? This  
“ intimates either that mankind are happy in having their  
“ eyes put out, or that there is something exceedingly  
“ disagreeable in her cast. Is not this, (says he,) a poor  
“ reputation which rests upon imposture for its support?”  
He then adds, “ It is probable that all the reasons infi-  
“ nuated, concur to keep the Relief Church so long from  
“ the censorious eye of the public.”—This is but a small  
specimen of a Seceder’s declamation; but so unjust and  
absurd, that it is sufficient confutation merely to repeat it.  
I have proved that the Relief scheme is a solemn and public  
approbation of, and adherence to Reformation principles,  
or the original constitution of the Church of Scotland.  
This is done uniformly, in every church, and at mid-day:  
Any other reply to this glaring slander would insult the  
good sense of my reader.

The same answer overturns the whole of Mr. Walker’s  
attack upon the principles and constitution of the Relief  
Church. This gentleman, like his brother, Mr. Ramsay,  
comes forward into the public with an air of great im-  
portance.

In the preface to his first publication, he informs the pub-  
lic, that even the most pacific of his people, solicited him to  
begin his warfare against the Relief in the pulpit. “ If,”  
(says he,) “ it is a watchman’s duty to give the signal of ap-  
“ proaching danger, it is plain, that it was not very easy to  
“ give solid reasons for refusing.” The pulpit is instantly  
turned into a theatre of war, where our brave champion  
fights with mere shadows. His wonderful discourse equalled  
the expectations of his people; for he informs us, “ That  
“ immediately after it was delivered, many who have a just  
“ claim upon me to instruct them, were as urgent for its  
“ being published,” as they had been to hear it preached.  
I believe he and his connections meant well, but he certainly  
mistook his trade, (like many others) when he commenced  
a polemical writer. Mr. Hutchison erred when he argued  
his writings into importance; his friends sacrifice their  
honour at his shrine, when they extol his works; and he  
hath egregiously injured the cause he attempted to defend.  
Except a few trite arguments, constantly used by his bre-  
thren,

thren, I see nothing in his works which merits observation. A small specimen of his publications will justify these remarks.

In Mr. Walker's *Candid Examination*, he wraps up his performance in an attempt to divest the Relief scheme of those things which are none of her peculiarities, but common to that church and other denominations. This part of our system is divided into six articles. I shall mention the two last, (page 173.) "To mingle Baxterian, Neonomian and Arminian tenets with the doctrines of the gospel, although it hath been done by ministers in the Relief connection, both from pulpit and press, is no branch of their peculiar scheme, for this is done by numbers in the present age." Our author criticises some Relief publications into a number of errors, which the writers disavow, and then chargeth all these errors upon the Relief scheme. Mr. Hutchison is universally acknowledged to be both an able and orthodox preacher; notwithstanding of this, Mr. Walker attempts to criticise that gentleman into errors almost innumerable: Within the compass of a few pages there are thirty marked, 1st, 2d, and 3d, besides blasphemy, and a vile profanation of God's name; all these inventions are charged upon our system of principles. My reader will be serious, and I shall quote his sixth particular. "To maintain an unbounded active toleration, that it is the duty of the civil magistrate positively to enact and declare to his subjects, that they may maintain Socinian, Arian, Deistical, idolatrous, blasphemous principles; that they may worship stocks, stones, departed saints, angels, yea and devils, if they will: That the revenues of the kingdom shall be as cheerfully expended by him in rearing temples for the queen of heaven, as places of worship for the living God; and that he is determined to spare robbers and murderers, if God spare them. It is not peculiar to the Relief, (says he) nor even to Mr. Hutchison to maintain such principles; it is done by many in this æra of Christian liberty." The error peculiar to the Relief scheme is declared by this writer, to be a voluntary breach of the moral law, see page 175. To argue such mean jargon into importance, is not my present design. My reader, perhaps, will ask, What is become of that plain and unequivocal system of principles, which the Relief Church daily professeth? And why do the Secession constantly palm upon her a new system of strange errors, which



is openly renounced? I shall answer the question very briefly. Seceders have a strong appetite for religious creeds, which they always devour with great greediness; the virtue of these morsels enables them to lengthen out many an excellent sermon to a prodigious length. As the spider, by devouring flies, is enabled to spin out of his own bowels a long web for catching these unwary insects; so, Seceders, by devouring the creeds of other Christians, are enabled to produce, from their own brain, a long Testimony, with which they endeavour to catch mankind. Whenever the Relief Church appeared in this country, these creed-devourers gathered round her, and swallowed up, in broken fragments, all our system in a moment. Immediately they raised a pitiful uproar, "that the Relief Presbytery was without a testimony!" How could it be otherways, when they had devoured every syllable of it?

Messrs. Walker and Ramsay, one from each of the two parties in the Secession, were afterwards sent into the Relief territories, in order to purvey for themselves and their hungry brethren. These gentlemen became very clamorous, because they could find nothing to devour, except a few sermons. Mr. Hutchison complimented them with a small system, and some other materials not so easily digested, which they instantly snapped up. Seceders finding nothing more to gratify their appetite, seemed to think it improper, that the Relief should remain any longer without a creed. Their inventive powers were therefore employed, and produced another of a monstrous size. The materials were such as could be devoured with ease and pleasure, and, when received by that church, would afford them a future morsel. The only difficulty in this affair, was to persuade the Relief to accept of their strange inventions. Obstinate refusing to adopt this new creed, we steadily contended for our own system of reformation principles. This vexed the Secession not a little, and obliged the Burghers to employ that glorious and valuable machine, the *Judicial Act and Testimony*, in tearing from us our real constitution and principles, and enforcing others which were suited to their purposes. Though armed with judicial authority, the whole synod, and their feeble champions, have never yet been able to overcome our abhorrence of that strange system which they urge upon us, or to destroy our regard to and approbation of the one we solemnly adopted. In this state stands the controversy at present, be-

tween the Relief and Seceſſion, with reſpect to her ſyſtem of principles.—Whenever the Seceſſion ſhall give up their deſign of compelling us to acknowledge a creed which we ſincerely deteſt, there may be peace among the churches.

### SECTION III.

#### *The Character and Conduct of the Relief Clergy.*

**T**HE piety, the integrity, the orthodoxy, and religious zeal of thoſe miniſters who founded the Relief Church, have, in vain, been impeached by Seceders. Theſe four, Meſſrs. Gillespie, Boſton, Collier, and Warden, have all left the ſtage with well earned renown: Their very enemies confeſs, “They were good men.” By them the conſtitution and principles of the Relief Church were fixed: No regulations or laws contrary to the ſyſtem of reformation principles which they adopted, have knowingly been admitted into that religious ſociety. I have no concern with the natural abilities or literature of theſe gentlemen; it is their principles and practice with which we are preſently concerned. If the account which the Seceſſion have given to the public, of our principles, were juſt, the men who invented ſuch a diabolical ſcheme, muſt certainly have been egregiouſly wicked. That injuſtice done to their principles, naturally led their enemies to injure their characters; accordingly, Seceders, converting the pulpit into a theatre of ſcandal and defamation, tranſgreſſed all the bounds of modeſty and candour, in railing againſt theſe good men. Mr. Ramſay, an Antiburgher miniſter in Glaſgow, cooked up a diſh for the public, of that kind with which Chriſtians in the Seceſſion are often entertained from the pulpit. How far this tends to cheriſh the graces of the Spirit, let my readers judge, from the following account of thoſe worthy men who founded the Relief Church.

Mr. Ramſay, in his *Relief Scheme conſidered*, page 3. ſays, “A few reſtleſs, diſcontented, and intereſted men, found it,” (Mr. Whitfield’s principles,) “a proper decoy to a headleſs and unthinking age.” From this charge Mr. Gillespie is excepted.—But in his *Review*, page 35. without making any exception, he maintains, “There is not the leaſt credible evidence that their conduct originated from ſcripture zeal for the truth of the goſpel, the rights of

“ the



“ the church, and in all for the glory of Christ; but from  
“ a spirit of faction, discontent, and restlessness. Had it  
“ not been for the predominacy of this humour in some  
“ aspiring minds, the foundation of the Relief Church  
“ would not yet have been laid.”

In page 15. of his Scheme, we are told, “ that they had  
“ very little at heart the honour of the Redeemer, the  
“ credit of his ways, the duty which they owe to him, to  
“ the conscience, and best interests of mankind.” And in  
page 17. Relief ministers are said, “ to have come into  
“ office, and continued therein, at as great uncertainty,  
“ and in as great confusion as you can well conceive the  
“ builders of Babel to have been in, when in righteousness  
“ their language were confounded. The great point,”  
(says he) “ in which they unite, and the only cement which  
“ seems to hold them together is their interest, and the  
“ credit of a party to which interest has joined.” There-  
fore he afterwards says, page 27. “ In truth, it is not easy  
“ to find how such procedure can be vindicated from the  
“ most palpable jesuitical juggling.” This is but a small  
specimen of what may be found in this gentleman’s writings,  
and of the unprovoked injuries which Relievers daily suffer  
from the clergy in the Secession. The founders of the  
Relief Church, whose characters are chiefly attacked by this  
foul torrent of abuse, I trust are now in glory; as their  
credit is established above the keenest and most malignant  
shafts of those clergy who persecute their very ashes in the  
grave, it would be altogether superfluous any further to  
vindicate their names.

It is with reluctance that I relate the means which these  
gentlemen have used to make their followers swallow down  
their doctrines. When all other artifices failed, the *Judi-  
cial Act and Testimony*, that grand engine, by which the  
priests in the Secession execute many difficult undertakings,  
was employed with some success. With all due respect I  
approach this huge and unwieldy machine, whose contents  
seem intended to become no less fatal to the churches, than  
the wooden horse, dedicated by the Grecians to Minerva,  
was to the Trojans.—The manner in which this instrument  
was used to compel the Relievers intirely to give up their  
own system, and accept of another in its place, hath been  
explained. I shall now unfold the manner by which it was  
employed to ruin the characters of my fathers and brethren.

In pages 177 and 178 of the *Judicial Testimony* we are told,

that "many Relief ministers, contrary to the standing rules of the church, deserted their charges." It is added, that "it does not to this day appear to the world, that they abandoned their former charges on account of those defections which prevail in the church." So they are charged with the guilt of a "glaring schism," and "a breach of established order."

Sinful silence is another crime with which the Relief clergy are also charged by the Burgher synod: "Now," say they, "it will not be refused, that many members in the Relief presbytery deserted their respective charges without giving any testimony against those evils which prevail in that communion which they have abandoned, and therefore their departure out of it did not proceed from any scruple of conscience."

The unjustifiable manner in which these clergy have attacked the characters of Relief ministers is matter of lamentation. Had they watched the vices, errors, and imprudencies of individuals, and exposed them with severity, but in justice and truth, their unpleasant labours might be of some benefit to the public; but the manner in which these brethren have endeavoured to ruin the reputation of the Relief clergy, appears to me to be no less inimical to society, than contrary to the plain precepts of Christianity. The general charge is so vague, that I deem it altogether unworthy of any further notice: The particular charge brought against individuals, affects none at present in the Relief Church, except Mr. Baine, whom the synod mentions in particular. He is not only charged with the sin of deserting the Establishment, without giving any testimony against those evils which prevailed in that communion; but it is added, "Mr. Baine had the most fair opportunity that ever was offered to any man, of giving his testimony in the face of the Assembly; but said not a word on that subject." The Burgher synod then ask, "if his separation from the church of Scotland proceeded from principle? &c."

I shall oppose the several parts of this charge with obstinate and undoubted facts.—Mr. Baine was publicly and uniformly an enemy to the arbitrary measures of his brethren. For reasons, which may be seen in his printed *Memoirs of modern Church-government*, he thought it his duty to resign his charge in Paisley, and associate with brethren who appeared to him strictly to adhere to the constitution

of the church. His letter of demission was regularly given in to the presbytery, and his reasons sustained by the society with whom he joined. This letter was transmitted from the presbytery to the synod, and from that to the assembly, where he appeared and vindicated his conduct. This letter contains a most pointed testimony against the evils which prevailed in that communion, from which he thought it his duty to separate.—In this Testimony he declares, “The charge I have accepted, makes no change in my creed, or Christian belief; none in my principles of Christian and ministerial communion; none in my cordial regard to the constitution of the Church of Scotland, which I solemnly engaged to support some more than thirty years ago, and hope to do so while I live. At the same time, I abhor persecution in every form, and that abuse of church power of late, which to me appears inconsistent with humanity, with the civil interests of the nation, and destructive of the ends of our office as ministers of Christ.” This gentleman published his letter of demission, and reasons for giving up his charge in Paisley, and accepting of another in the Relief interest. In that publication he declares, that “the Relief Presbytery preach the faith which the ministers in the Church of Scotland have subscribed, and are bound to maintain.” He adds, “The Relief Presbytery stand up for our ancient church constitution, so shamefully changed from the limited into the arbitrary, from the truly Christian into the despotic mould.”

After pointing out the injury done to many thousands by the rigorous exercise of the law of patronage, he asks, What those people in Scotland ought to do, who have ministers forced upon them to whom they cannot submit? Mr. Baine then shews, that the Relief scheme appeared to him to be a scripture asylum for such injured people. Extracts from this testimony against the evils which prevail in our Establishment, mar its beauty; I must therefore refer my reader to the publication.

Thus Mr. Baine first testified publickly in church courts against what he deemed defections; he next gave in a written testimony, and lastly published his principles and disapprobation of the conduct of established brethren. The Burgher synod, however, find all this no testimony, and make their followers believe, that Mr. Baine, in a disorderly manner, deserted his charge, without giving **ANY TESTIMONY** against these



these evils which prevailed in that communion which he abandoned. This conduct of the reverend synod, even as it presently stands under the covert of zeal for God and religion, marks with an indelible stain that respectable body. Were the hidden springs of action laid open to the public, perhaps the whole society would stand abashed.

Many of my readers will understand the following query; Is it possible that a pretended testimony for God, can, by ministers of the gospel, be made an engine for revenging private quarrels, and gratifying the passions of hot-headed men?

The Antiburgher clergy, like their brethren the Burghers, pass from general declamations against the characters of Relievers, and fiercely attack individuals: Of this conduct, so unbecoming ministers of the gospel, we have a very remarkable instance in the *Relief Scheme considered*, by Mr. Ramsay. Let not this publication, and its vindication, be lost to the public. I cannot recommend them to mankind as a pattern to be imitated, as they comprehend every thing which a Christian writer should avoid; I shall endeavour to make them a negative instruction to polemical writers for ever. It would, however, be cruel to collect the whole odium of this work upon the head of its author. I see many excuses which may be pled in his favour. The principles he adopted; the constant practice of his fathers and brethren; the prejudices of his education; together with the injuries done to the temporal interests of the Seceder clergy by Relief ministers, in reducing the number of their followers, may all be urged on his behalf. These, especially the last, even upon good men, have a powerful tendency to blind the understanding, to inflame the mind with passion, and to hurry the fierce disputant into slander and abuse.

We have seen the unchristian manner in which this gentleman abused the characters of the founders of this church in general; I shall next consider his attack upon individuals. The reader must keep in remembrance, that a tale half told, is universally condemned as the worst of falsehoods. When things necessary to be known, in order to judge of an action, are artfully concealed, and only such circumstances narrated, as tend to mislead the judgement, then truth herself is prostituted to the vile purpose of deceiving mankind. I apprehend that it will be impossible to rescue Mr. Ramsay's method of censuring Relievers from this condemnation.

Let us hear what he says of Mr. Boston; *Relief Scheme*, page 4. "The late Mr. Boston could not procure the presentation to Jedburgh, for which, it seems, weary of his former charge, he had conceived a liking: He would be minister in that town, and the patron would not suffer him upon the Establishment: Through interest in the people's affections, however, an agreement with them is soon made; without more ado, he deserts his parish, and forms a Relief congregation." In this artful tale, Mr. Ramsay, who will not allow Mr. Boston's ashes to rest in the grave in peace, appears to be intimately acquainted, not only with his whole conduct in this affair, but also with his heart; for we are told, that "he was weary of his former charge, had conceived a liking for the presentation to Jedburgh, was desirous of being minister of that place." We are next informed of the unlawful method he took to accomplish that desire: "Through interest in the people's affections, we are told, an agreement was soon made." He then insinuates that Mr. Boston took no other legal step in this affair; his words are, "without more ado he deserts his parish, and forms a Relief congregation." The conduct of the Establishment, which disgusted Mr. Boston; his disapprobation of their rigorous measures; the manner in which the congregation of Jedburgh was injured; his demission, and testimony before the presbytery against those measures, of which he could not approve, together with his public explanation of his principles, and reasons for going to Jedburgh, are all concealed: A bad heart and criminal motives are substituted by this writer in their place. But suppose Mr. Ramsay's representation of this affair just, will one action establish a wicked character? Mr. Ramsay does not pretend to charge Mr. Boston with any other crime. Neither do the Burghers in their Testimony against the egregious sin of becoming a Reliever. Will this one fault of an individual, authorize Seceders to give such a black character of the whole founders of the Relief Church, as is done by this gentlemen in his Scheme? Yet this is the only crime with which he hath the audacity to charge them.

Mr. Baine, who was not one of the founders of this society, is next in order. This author, says, page 4. "His measures in Paisley were disconcerted; he cannot be acknowledged a man of that importance, he thinks himself in driving political purposes; neither can he digest affront  
" and

“ and inferiority; and therefore, in a pet, pitcheth his  
 “ camp in Edinburgh.” Is this a juſt representation of Mr.  
 Baine’s conduct in this affair? Or, is it one of thoſe half  
 told tales, which the world juſtly call the worſt of falſhoods:  
 Mr. Ramſay firſt judgeth his heart and ſecret purpoſes;  
 having found theſe wrong, he only tells us, that he pitched  
 his camp, in a pet, in Edinburgh: We are told, that “ his  
 “ meaſures in Paisley, after a ſhort conflict, are diſcon-  
 “ certed.” What were theſe meaſures, and how were  
 they diſconcerted? Mr Ramſay tell us, “ he cannot be ac-  
 “ knowledged a man of that importance, he thinks him-  
 “ ſelf, in driving political purpoſes; neither can he digeſt  
 affront and inferiority.” I ſhall confront this with a paſ-  
 ſage in Mr. Baine’s letter of demiſſion: “ They do not  
 “ know, ſays he, how far I am advanced in life, who ſee  
 “ not that an houſe for worſhip, ſo very large as the High  
 “ Church, and commonly ſo crouded, muſt be very un-  
 “ equal to my ſtrength, and this burden was made more  
 “ heavy by denying me a ſeſſion to aſſiſt me in the common  
 “ concerns of the congregation, which I certainly had a  
 “ title to; nor am I ſingular in thinking ſo, as I have the  
 “ opinion of the firſt judge of the kingdom, that, to ſay  
 “ no more, it was peeviſh to reſuſe it: But the load be-  
 “ came quite intolerable, when, by a late unhappy proceſs,  
 “ the juſt and natural right of it was wreſted from us,  
 “ which drove away twelve men of an excellent character  
 “ from fitting in ſeſſion, ſo that I have not one elder to  
 “ five hundred examinable perſons in my proportion; nor  
 “ does it alleviate the burden, that the ſeſſion’s right was  
 “ ſo tamely given up, (ſome perhaps, will ſay, betrayed)  
 “ by others who ought to have defended it; for in any  
 “ ſociety, where candour is thought to be gone, confidence  
 “ muſt die.” This is an account of theſe meaſures, which,  
 ſo far as I know, never were called in queſtion. That  
 my reader may underſtand this affair, I ſhall mention two  
 circumſtances, which I was informed of by Mr. Baine him-  
 ſelf. A ſeſſion-clerk was impoſed upon them by a pre-  
 ſentation from the town-council; this eraſtian meaſure, Mr  
 Baine and the elders diſputed before the Court of Seſſion,  
 and were caſt. The other is, that the ſeſſion to which he  
 had an undoubted title, was fought in a conſtitutional way,  
 through all the church courts, to the General Aſſembly,  
 where a leading party reſuſed to grant it. Mr. Ramſay’s  
 artful miſrepresentation, compared with theſe plain facts;



now appear in its proper light. I leave him in the hands of the public, to receive his due reward, and deem his half told tales of other members unworthy of any further notice.

As the injury done to Mr. Baine and his connections by the Secession, is so great and inexcusable; I once asked him, whether he intended any public reply to the Burghers and their Antiburgher brethren? His answer was, "Not a syllable as to any personal abuse, said he, from the Burgher synod and their champions, I can easily forgive and forget it." One reason he gave for refusing to make any reply was, "He could not think of entering the field where the favourite weapons of antagonists were so rough and unmannerly; so strongly tinged with ill-nature and Billingsgate." He added, that "some late publications had frequently recalled to his mind, a saying of Dr. South, *Many men break their heads, by rushing into the pulpit, who would have made a good figure between the stilts of a plough.*"

Among the several inventions which have been contrived by the Secession, in order to blacken the characters of the Relief clergy, I shall mention one, which the reader will find in *The Relief Scheme considered*, by Mr. Ramsay, page 9. where it is asserted, that there is a law in the Relief scheme respecting ministerial assistance at sacramental solemnities, that every assistant receives a pecuniary compensation, and that is according to the length of his journey, "Does he come, says he, ten, twenty, or thirty miles, then he will expect, and actually receive, two, three, or five pounds; the sums mentioned are common, he says, and moderate." Every man must see the deep design of this invention, against the characters of our clergy. We all know how hurtful it is to the reputation of ministers to have their gain perpetually at heart; to appear in all things worldly-minded, and greedily to grasp every opportunity of extorting money from the people; but to filch Christians by administering the most solemn institution of our holy religion; as Papist priests do by selling indulgencies to their people, is the most detestable crime with which they can be charged. That some congregations, though very few, in the Relief, as well as other societies, have, in certain circumstances, given to some of their assistants, at the communion, a small compensation for the expences of their journey, is not denied, nor need those few to whom it was given, be ashamed of having received it; but that this is a law, that

every assistant receives money, and such sums as Mr. Ramsay mentions, is utterly without foundation. As this, and a number of such mistakes are to be determined, not by reasoning, but by testimony, I once intended to collect a number of such as were most inexcusable, and prove their falshood by the testimony of a dozen of congregations; but finding that the public in general were in possession of the truth, and not deceived by these artful misrepresentations, that design was given up as unnecessary. Let us rather apologize for Mr. Ramsay and his brethren. As in war, every possible artifice is often used to deceive and destroy the foe; so, in this war which the Secession carry on against every other Christian church in Scotland, why may they not be approved of in using every possible artifice to ruin the reputation, and bring into discredit the principles of those Christians whom they attack; nor is this practice of the Secession without example. The Jews used the very same methods to ruin the characters and usefulness of the apostles and first ministers of the gospel: The Church of Rome, in after ages, practised the same arts against such heretics as were inimical to the interests of the priests.

It is remarkable that these fierce warriors have drawn their swords against the people, as well as the ministers in the Relief Church. Many eminent Christians, men of taste, of character, and education joined this party, and added weight and importance to the interest. This enraged the Secession, and threw hot-headed opponents into a ferment; from the pulpit, often prostituted to bad purposes, much lamentation was frequently heard, because such numbers of ignorant, deluded and unprincipled sinners, had run, like a mob, to the Relief Churches. A small specimen of the character given to these worthy members of Society, by Seceders, may be seen in *The Relief Scheme considered*, by Mr. Ramsay.

In page 8. they are compared to a heap of stones casually thrown together, without any fixed principles of attachment to their pastors, or among themselves; perhaps nothing more than disgust at the person of the parochial clergyman.

In p. 17. the bulk of our people are compared to the riotous assembly at Ephesus, that awful mob who rushed together to murder Paul; "In fact, says he, they know not wherefore  
 " they are come together as constituent members of the  
 " society; by far the greatest part are utterly incapable of  
 " rendering any tolerable reason of their conduct: One, (it

" is



“ is added,) is actuated by humour, another by vanity, a  
“ third by novelty: Scarce two have exactly the same views  
“ and motives; each is almost as much unacquainted with  
“ the religious sentiments of his fellow, as if they were  
“ members of churches under the opposite poles. Such a  
“ church, (we are told,) is familiar to a dislocated body, the  
“ several members whereof are only kept together by the  
“ skin.” And to add no more, he says, “ They are the  
“ very reverse of the church as described by the apostle  
“ in Eph. iv. 16. in so far as the description is applied to  
“ her visible professing capacity.”

In answer to the whole that Seceders have preached and wrote against our people, of whom we are not ashamed, I shall refer my reader to those valuable Christians who are members of our churches, and then you will see reason to apply the fable of the fox and the four plums.

Before I conclude this section, it may not be improper to mention the death and character of Mr. Gillespie.— However much our reverend father once rejoiced to see the number and affection of his brethren increasing, yet he lived to feel an abatement of these pleasures: Unable to brook contradiction, his temper flamed when he met with opposition. Such differences took place between him and some of his brethren and people, as were thought to hurt his constitution. Though Mr. Gillespie had no difference with his brethren, as to the constitution and principles of the Relief Church, yet he was much offended on account of their opinion of a particular man\*. It is not so difficult to see the propriety of wise laws, as to know how they should be applied to practice in every particular case. The right application of established laws to practice, depends on the integrity of the heart, the light of the understanding, and the strength of the judgement: Inequalities in these produce different opinions and practices. There never was a society on earth whose members were all of equal integrity, knowledge, and capacity, consequently in all things of one mind, which undoubtedly should induce us to bear with and forbear one another. Mr. Gillespie's temper was not so happily calculated for this, as his principles. Towards the end of his life, he was subject to some degree of peevishness; his difference with some of his people and brethren, increased with the decline of his mental powers. His affliction was not of long duration: The

\* Mr. Pirrie.

powers of his mind weakened by the decline of his bodily strength. His death was followed with the loss of his meeting-house, and some respectable members of the congregation to the Relief interest.

This good man was acknowledged, even by his enemies, to be eminently pious. Though his natural faculties were no way uncommon, yet he was exceedingly diligent in the discharge of his duty as a minister of the gospel; he was remarkably zealous for God and religion: Though his pulpit talents were not the most shining, yet his zeal, his genuine piety, and the persecution he suffered, rendered him very popular. His manners were remarkably rigid, his mind credulous and austere. The integrity of his heart made him liable to imposition, and not a little susceptible of flattery. Those who gained his esteem, were sure of his ear. Averse to much company; little acquainted with the world, and mankind at large, he was far from being a scheming politician, insinuating flatterer, or calculated to take the lead in Society. To a warmth of temper was added an inflexibility of mind, which inclined him to adhere tenaciously to all his opinions; convinced that he suffered for righteousness sake, he gloried in his persecution. His ejection out of the church was the mean of bringing him into public view. Though he once was a little tinctured with Independent principles, yet he afterwards heartily approved of the Presbyterian scheme. The progress of the Relief in Scotland, on Presbyterian principles, gave him great joy. Though he differed with some of his brethren, yet he never discovered to his people, any inclination to be connected again with the Establishment. His disapprobation of that church which deposed him, continued to the end of his days; and he reprobated her conduct with a severity, perhaps too great. The charge of Enthusiasm came from his enemies, and his life was finished unstained with any known immorality.

On the day of Mr. Gillespie's burial, the congregation met to consider what was to be done with their meeting-house. Mr. Robert Gillespie, their deceased pastor's brother, attended the meeting. This gentleman, once was a keen Reliever; like other men he was not unchangeable; for reasons best known to himself, he was now become the avowed enemy of that religious society, which his deceased brother had the honour of founding. His design in attending the meeting, was to wrest from the Relief, his brother's chapel,

chapel, and ruin our interest in Dunfermline. He had a difficult part to act, but his talents were well adapted to his design. Several members of the congregation were displeased with those brethren who had differed with their deceased pastor concerning Mr. Pirrie. Their prejudices against those Relief clergy, and respect for the brother of their worthy minister, disposed them to listen with attention to his counsel. After the congregation agreed that their house should continue a place of worship, the important question was, To whom they should apply for sermon? It does not appear that the congregation in general, had any design of separating from the Relief Church; accordingly the first meeting could not be wrought up to answer Mr. Robert Gillespie's scheme. It was then necessary to prevent the congregation from coming to a final determination, till numbers were gathered and prepared for a Chapel of Ease. That new invention, unknown in the church of Christ, till of late, was described, not according to its real form and maimed constitution, but in conformity to the known principles of the people. This caught a few. The Relief scheme was dressed in a fool's coat, and represented as awfully deformed and dangerous; this affrighted the weak and the credulous. To complete the farce, it was found necessary to publish in the *News-papers*, That Mr. Gillespie intended to have abandoned his former principles, by turning his meeting-house into a Chapel of Ease. This, no doubt, would appear to the public a strange reverse of sentiment, and altogether unexpected: He once felt that yoke most grievous, he usually in public prayed for the people who supported him in that ministry which he received from the Lord; and uniformly disapproved of that church which unjustly endeavoured to take it from him. The rigorous measures, under which he suffered were still on the increase; yet Mr. Gillespie, now, in the end of life, in the full possession of all his ministerial and Christian privileges, but under no temptation whatsoever, is represented by his friends, as desirous to be stript of his judicial capacity, and willing to give up his right to rule his own flock, in order that he might be honoured to come again under that yoke: However ridiculous this bait was, it caught a number who had great respect for the opinion of this good man. At last a majority of donors were patched together, who voted away the house to the Chapel scheme. By this deed, the congregation now divided. A respectable number afterwards



wards from the church, joined the Chapel party. The congregation is now in a flourishing condition, and commands respect.

## SECTION IV.

### *Of Communion with Episcopalians and Independents.*

THE Relief Presbytery, after a very considerable opposition, were at last prevailed upon, through Mr. Gillespie's influence, to admit Mr. James Cowan. Mr. Cruden in Glasgow, employed this gentleman to give in an overture, "desiring to know the mind of the synod; with respect to ministerial and Christian communion with Episcopalians and Independents, and also those who are unsound in the essentials of the Christian faith." Mr. Cruden was thought to have a political purpose to serve by this overture, and therefore employed his brother to give it in. The synod unanimously declared, that their principles did not allow them to hold communion with the unsound: Convinced, however, of the real saintship and orthodoxy of some in these churches, it was added, "that it is agreeable to the principles of the Relief Church to hold communion occasionally with such as were visible saints." This hath been her uniform profession ever since Mr. Gillespie was deposed; who not only professed this, but acted up to his principle to the end of his life. He and his brethren always were of opinion, that the constitution and principles of the Establishment, (which were shewn to be Relief principles) allowed of this occasional communion, and that it was consistent with the word of God. The importunity of Messrs. Cruden and Cowan, to have the door of communion shut against Christians of these and other denominations, obliged the synod to put a vote: On the one side, were these gentlemen who had obtained a place in the Relief interest, but were of other principles: On the other, were the synod, who have always been uniform and unanimous in their principles respecting communion; when the synod gave their opinion as above. It is said on supposition that they are visible saints, *i. e.* have a competent measure of knowledge, are sound in the faith, and not only unblameable, but exemplary in their life and conversation. When this affair was discussed in the synod, the question was, Whether communion occasionally with these

these churches was consistent with the principles of reformation, and constitution of the Establishment, which we had solemnly engaged to support. The synod thought that it was, and accordingly quote our Confession of Faith as a confirmation of that opinion; hence our minutes say, that it is agreeable to the principles of the Presbytery of Relief, to hold communion with visible saints in the Episcopalian and Independent churches. — This noted transaction of the Relief synod obtained an honourable place in the Burgher Testimony, with the following very singular comment, page 179. “The way in which this minute is expressed is pretty singular, for the synod of Relief does not find these terms of communion, which they have adopted, to be agreeable to the word of God, or to the received standards of the Church of Scotland, but agreeable to the principles of the synod of Relief; in this, (it is added) it must be owned, they are very candid.” Accordingly, we are condemned for adopting terms of communion, which we are candid to acknowledge, are neither agreeable to the received standards, (which are our system,) nor the word of God, on which we founded our principles. I truly feel for the reverend synod: No man of common sense can examine the synod’s comment on the text, without pity and contempt, it is so very absurd and unworthy of the commentators. Come forward, gentlemen, and tell the world why you misconstrue plain common sense so egregiously; bring, from the bottom of your breast, the reason why all your misconstructions, and inexcusable mistakes, so deeply affect the characters of other Christians? Say where you find the Relief Church candid to acknowledge her principles not to be agreeable to the word of God or the received standards of Presbytery? Tell the public, like honest men, whether it be zeal for God, or your own temporal interests, which prompted you to use such contemptible measures to ruin the reputation of those ministers who are likely to reduce the number of your followers?

Produce also your proof for the following charge against the Relief Church: *Judicial Testimony*, page 179. “The popular plea, advanced in support of such vague and extensive terms of communion, is, that all the children of God have an undoubted right to the children’s bread, and that it is not lawful to keep it from them.” When and where did the Relief Church vent this error? Some of God’s children may be ignorant, others may be erroneous,

or fall into an immorality, all which we daily exclude, till they are instructed, or profess repentance, and reform. Although our uniform practice and profession contradict the charge, yet two dozens of valuable lines are employed to condemn this popular plea invented by themselves — One poor innocent word found in the minutes of the Relief synod, did not escape so easy as this imaginary plea. That miserably tortured word is ESSENTIALS, which the Burgher synod have torn and squeezed with no less than threescore long lines. Mr. Ramsay, the Antiburgher, cudgels this harmless word through half a dozen of flaming pages, for no other crime than appearing in our minutes. The Burghers did not choose to chastise that single word alone. *Essential* and *fundamental* they considered as synonymous; they then brought forward *circumstantial* and *indifferent* as the opposites of the former two, which four words are all put to the rack at once, and examined in the *Judicial Testimony*, pages 179—181. The first question put to these words, by the reverend synod, is from whence they came, and in what page of the scripture they dwelt? After much inquiry, the synod found that they were out-laws, and pronounced a heavy sentence against any Christian who shall venture to harbour them in his creed. The Relief synod are then solemnly condemned for having admitted them into their minutes.

With all due respect to our Burgher brethren, we have still something to plead in favour of these much injured words, and continue to believe that the distinction between essentials and non-essentials, may be safely used: For the benefit of Seceder clergy, I shall give a few examples. We reckon it an essential truth, that Moses was no imposture; we account it a non-essential opinion that he wrote the book of Job. In examining the knowledge of our members, we think it essentially necessary that they know their need of a Saviour, and who that Saviour is; we consider their knowledge of the real difference between a Burgher and Antiburgher creed to be circumstantial. We cannot allow, that the name given to a preacher of the gospel, whether it be bishop, minister, or elder, is of the same importance with his qualifications for this office, regular call to the ministry, orthodoxy, and faithfulness in that station. Whether a session, presbytery, or synod consist of three or thirty, is a mere circumstance: It is essential that their decisions be equitable, and their procedure con-

formable



formable to the word of God. We deny, that it is essential to the character of a good man that he be a Burgher; we deem it essential that he believe the whole of God's revealed will, and evidence the truth of his faith by the temper of his mind, and the tenor of his life. We reckon it a circumstantial error to mistake the signification of a single word; but call it a fundamental mistake in the Secession to persecute and injure the Relief Church in the manner they have done, from the pulpit and the press.

Before I mention the principal objections, which have been brought against this decision of the Relief synod, it may be proper to explain the reference in our minutes to the Confession of Faith, chap. xxvi. sect. 1st. and 2d. "Where," say the Relief synod, "our opinion of that important point is fully set forth, and the doctrine contained therein, is accordingly adopted by us." The doctrines in that chapter are, 1. "All saints that are united to Jesus Christ their Head, by his Spirit, and by faith, have fellowship with him in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory."—2. "Being united to one another in love, they have communion in each others gifts and graces."—3. In consequence of their relation to Christ and one another, "they are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man." It must be remembered, that the title of this chapter is, "Of the communion of saints." Accordingly, church-fellowship, as founded on our union to Christ and one another, is thus expressed; "Saints by profession are bound to maintain an holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other services as tend to their mutual edification." This fellowship our worthy ancestors proved by the following texts of scripture, Heb. x. 24, 25. Acts ii. 42, 46. Isai. ii. 3. and 1 Cor. xi. 20. which scriptures speak of assembling ourselves together, and continuing stedfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and prayer.

From these plain and unequivocal principles, the Relief synod gave their opinion, that "to hold communion occasionally with those who were by profession visible saints," (*i. e.* had a competent measure of knowledge, were sound in the faith, and unblameable in their life,) though members of the Church of England, or Independ-

ents, was agreeable to these principles in our Westminster Confession, of which we had approved. We have not found any thing in our Confession which shuts the door of communion against these Christians. That such have been, and may be found in these churches is unquestionably certain: We all have heard of an Hervey, Owen, or a Newton.

In chap. xxix. sect. 8. we are told who ought to be excluded, "Wherefore all ignorant and ungodly persons, as they are unfit to enjoy communion with him, so are they unworthy of the Lord's table." The unsound are included among the ignorant, for error is ignorance of the truth. In the *Directory for public Worship*, that section which respects the celebration of our Lord's supper, asserts, that the ignorant and the scandalous are not fit to receive the sacrament, in which places the door is left open to Independent and Episcopalian saints; nor indeed do reformation principles exclude them. Our ancestors, in these passages, with great propriety, propose only to exclude the ignorant, erroneous, and the wicked, for this reason, "they are not fit to receive the sacrament." Now, because some in these churches are found both qualified and fit to receive this seal of the covenant, and our ancestors justly maintain, that "such are bound to maintain an holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification;" the Relief synod, in conformity to these principles, could not avoid declaring as above. That this concludes unanswerably in favour of communion with other Presbyterian churches as are found in the faith, is obvious to the weakest capacity. The title of the chapter; the known principles of our fathers; the manner in which they are explained; and the other passages which I have quoted from our Confession, are sufficient demonstration, that the Relief scheme, as it respects communion with other sound Presbyterians, is strictly conformable to reformation principles; and indeed the Secession must either renounce the Confession of Faith, and run contrary to the plain dictates of common sense, or give up their opposition to the communion of saints. What I contend for in this section is, that these plain and scriptural principles of our ancestors clearly open the door of communion to such valuable Christians as are qualified and fit to receive the sacrament, and earnestly require this privilege from Presbyterians, though they are members of other churches. I feel for the

Burgher

Burgher synod in, risking their credit and honour, by maintaining that the two sections quoted from the xxvi. chapter of our *Confession*, speak not of church communion, but of acts of charity. I trust they are men of better sense than to be seriously of that opinion. I am not much surprized to see a few zealous and scribbling priests assuming an effrontery, and advancing such palpable fiction; but to hear a reverend synod gravely telling the public, "Our *Confession* speaks not here of church-communion in "spirituals, but of church-communion in ministring with "our substance;" as in *Testimony*, page 178. is not a little singular, and a shameful shift to evade the truth.

Let us now collect the principal objections which have been made against this sentence of the Relief synod. The declamation and objections of Messrs. Walker and Ramsay against this opinion, do not appear to me to merit notice on any account, except their bulk and number. If all the controversies among Presbyterians were to be determined by weight and measure, which I believe would be for the benefit of religion, these gentlemen make a promising appearance of carrying away the palm. If the effusions of these polemical divines were never read, but committed to oblivion, only their real weight announced to the public through the channel of the *Advertiser*, like the price of corn in Haddington, much venom would be buried, and less harm done to character and truth. After the more deliberate examination of what these gentlemen have said against the Relief scheme, as it respects the communion of saints, occasional hearing, &c. I cannot see any purpose it serves, unless it be to make a book. The real point in question is hardly ever touched. To prove this from examples, it is only necessary to produce the first which occurs. Mr. Walker in his *Animadversions* brings forward no less than ten objections at once, one of which is page 195. "This plan cuts off every thing, whether in principle or "practice, from being any ground of church censure, if "it is not inconsistent with a gracious state; and how "many errors in principle and irregularities in practice "must pass unobserved." The answer to which is obvious; Mr. Walker ignorantly or wilfully mistakes the plan. The very minutes he condemns guard against admitting the erroneous or immoral, and often God's saints fall into errors, and are guilty of immoralities: There are also, in other synodical minutes, the most weighty injunctions laid upon our



members, to beware of admitting the erroneous or immoral to receive the seals of the covenant. The universal practice of the Relief Church is still a stronger answer to this, and all such objections against her plan of communion. I appeal to the conscious minds of Seceders themselves, if they are more strict in excluding the unworthy than Relievers.

As Mr. Ramsay, who is by far the best book-maker of the two, rests his seven long objections upon an inexcusable misrepresentation of the plan, I shall not here disturb him in that employment, but proceed, with great respect, to weigh the objections to be found in the *Judicial Testimony*.

*Object. 1.* "The Relief terms of communion are so general and undetermined, that they will admit Protestants of every denomination." To which I answer, That the Burgher synod have fallen into a very great mistake in asserting this; for our minutes, as quoted in the *Testimony*, express an explicit and unanimous confutation of this charge. Some denominations of Protestants are unsound in the faith, with whom the Relief synod unanimously declare, that they cannot hold communion; as the reader may see in the *Judicial Testimony*, page 178.

*Object. 2.* The Burgher synod maintain, that "we separate the privileges from the discipline of the church;" therefore neglect some of the most essential branches of church-government, in regard that we cannot pretend to exercise any discipline of the church upon those whom we admit from other denominations, when guilty of immoralities, page 179. This is the capital objection, I have collected its parts from much lumber, and represented it in its greatest force. Mr. Walker, the synod's unsuccessful commentator, splits, wears, and weakens this objection, to the great injury of his cause. If his brethren do not save him by clapping the *Testimony* on his head for an helmet, I am afraid he will suffer much loss in this warfare; from mere pity I shall spare this unwary youth, and not avail myself of the advantages he affords me, but take up the objection as it stands above: To which my answer is, That none but such as are free from all known cause of church-censure are admitted. If those who have been admitted shall afterwards fall into an immorality, we exclude them from our fellowship, until they are censured according to the rules of the church. In dispensing the privileges of the church to Christians of other societies, we also exercise the discipline of the house. They must produce the most

satisfactory testimonials. In admitting a professed Christian from another denomination, we rest not our opinion of their character on doubtful evidences; their knowledge and exemplary life, must either be known to the church, or attested by those on whom we can depend: Besides, we appoint such regulations in the form and order of public worship, as are thought necessary and proper; these, they who are admitted, must punctually observe. In vain therefore, do the reverend synod in this charge us "with too little concern to keep pure and entire all the ordinances of Christ, according to his express command;" for to us the synod's objection, when examined, appears to be a mere quibble.

*Object. 3.* "This plan hardens those of other denominations in their sinful compliance with the defections of these times." I hope the reverend synod are better acquainted with human nature, than to be seriously of this opinion. To us the quite reverse appears. We all know, that the great engine by which the clergy of those churches in which there are many defections, keep their people from forsaking their communion, is, to endeavour to make the breach between them and other churches wider than in fact it is, and, if possible, to prevent all intercourse with other denominations: This was the practice of the Church of Rome to prevent her votaries from joining the Church of England, and this hath been the uniform practice of the Secession themselves. Were we to exclude from our communion those worthy Christians who are strongly prejudiced in favour of an Establishment, or such sound and worthy Episcopalians or Independents as still retain some prejudices against Presbyterians, that would tend to harden them in their mistakes. To open a door of communion to such, and welcome them to our love-feast, is a proper method to dissolve their prejudices, and increase their knowledge of the truth; nor, in this, are we chargeable with admitting those who revile and impugn Presbytery, as Mr. Ramsay alleges in his sermon: Such would not desire admission, or if they did, our answer would be, "Go and first be reconciled to your brother."

It hath been objected to this opinion, that an Independent, Episcopalian and Presbyterian could not join in the same devotion, because in all its parts they would have a principal eye to their own dear party. If they prayed, they would particularly mention their own glorious cause: If they preached, the speaker would recommend his own particular

ticular principles; and if at the same communion table, each would be wrestling with God in behalf of his own particular party. See *Relief Scheme* page 55. It is very natural for Seceders to argue in this manner, because it appears to be their own practice. Christians of other denominations, we hope, are actuated with better principles; They carry not their controversies and party-spirit to a throne of grace, and a communion table; nor do they make the pulpit a theatre of controversy and defamation. Were the above denominations to meet in the same assembly, our devotion and prayers would be unanimous. Such Christians see many disorders in their several churches, which they lament, but cannot rectify; they therefore unite in praying, that whatever is wrong in our own, or other churches, may be done away; and whatever is right may be made to prosper: Meeting at the same communion table with hearts conciliated with love to one another, they remember with concern the melancholy divisions in the house of God, and pray that they may be healed. When Presbyterians are thus successful in bringing Christians of other denominations to conform to them in worship and discipline, for the time, and to lay aside their prejudices against their brethren, their former objections against Presbytery is apt to evaporate in a flame of love, and their conformity to us to become permanent. This seems to be the views of the Relief synod; for they say, "When they join in communion with us, we do not conform to them, but they to us." See *Judicial Testimony*, p. 179.

## SECTION V.

### *Of Controversy.*

THE Christian religion condemns all anger and malice. "The wisdom which is from above, is peaceable and gentle," we are commanded "to learn of him who is meek and lowly;" are assured, "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." While therefore the polemical testimonies, and other publications of the present age, will transmit the memory of their several authors to posterity in disgrace, they will be beheld by the godly, as a dismal proof that religion is not flourishing in this kingdom. Whenever the great doctrines of Christianity properly influence the heart, the present disputants will throw down these pens they dipped in gall, and wipe out with



with their tears the injurious lines which they wrote. I am far from thinking that heresy may pass by uncondemned, or that different opinions ought not to be tried: Our duty to God and man requires the first; the interests of truth demand the last. If truth were the great object which parties have in view; if the controversy were conducted with meekness, candour and love, the encounter of different opinions might tend to discover truth, as the collision of flint and steel to produce light: But alas! darkness, confusion, and a spirit inimical to true godliness, spring from the contentions of this period. A historical account of which, in the Secession, and with the Relief, is my intention in this section.

Among Presbyterians, the increase of any one party proportionally diminisheth the numbers of another; this affects the interests of the clergy, and inflames their zeal. Hence we find that those who suffer loss, are usually the most clamorous; those by whom they suffer, often become the objects of their relentless fury; hence the religious controversies of this age resemble open war between the neighbouring tribes of savages; as that is often most inveterate and bloody when the contending parties live near to one another, so we often find those Christian churches who enter into war, maintain the contest with a virulence great in proportion to their uniformity of opinion. The two parties in the Secession split upon a very trivial question. They had sworn at the altar to stand by and strengthen one another in the work of Reformation; the moment that a division took place, the two parties became rivals in trade; laying aside the practice of an honest and fair-dealer, the one party, in the name of God, excommunicated and gave up the other to the devil. The men who were excommunicated, though valuable Christians, censured in their turn without mercy. The most important question agitated between the two parties was, What had become of the synod? The Secession had only one synod, and as it was not supposed to be divisible, it behoved to be in the one party, and not in the other. The Burgher clergy maintained, that it remained in their society, while the Anti-burghers endeavoured to prove that they carried it away with them to Mr. Gib's manse. It is not easy to determine what became of the synod on that occasion. It is reported that the moderator, before they actually separated, terrified at the loud and angry words of the members, leaped from his chair in a fright, and run home. In his absence  
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the Antiburghers, overpowered by their Burgher brethren; ran also away, and took shelter in Mr. Gib's house; forthwith they either made a new, or mended the old synod. Their antagonists, thinking themselves possessed of the true synod, fell to work, and declared their fugitive brethren without a synod, as the reader may see in their long Testimony, page 265. The Antiburghers, having excommunicated them and their synod both, could not allow the Burgher association to have the least claim to a synod. This strife is not yet decided, and hath produced melancholy effects in their societies. It is confessed in the *Judicial Testimony*, page 262. "The greatest alienation of heart and affection took place; the most intimate familiarity among friends was interrupted; the endearing friendship and mutual cordiality, which had long subsisted in families, between husbands and wives, parents and children, was, in many instances, broken by it. Ministers of the glorious gospel were divided, congregations were torn in pieces, and the hearts of the godly were grieved."

It is not known to what heights, this rancorous spirit of controversy about a synod, would have arisen, if the Relief Church, encroaching on their borders, had not diverted their arms. As the savage tribes in the wilds of America, who were butchering one another without mercy, at the approach of the Europeans, found it necessary to suspend their hostilities, and attack the common foe, so these battling churches, being invaded by the Relief interest, were obliged to abate their rage against one another, and mutually repel the invader. Accordingly they are now negotiating a peace, and if the dispute about the synod were once finished, it is hoped they will unite. It is happy for the Relief, that the persecuting spirit is under such particular restraints in this nation. The unremitting severity with which we have been attacked by the Antiburghers, and their offspring the Burghers, puts me in mind of the Carthaginian youth and his father, who made him swear on the altar, that he would ever be the inveterate enemy of the Romans. If the injury done to the temporal interests of the clergy be excepted, in every other thing the Relief were not only inoffensive, but friendly. That Church, in her terms of communion, came forward to the Secession, and called them brethren, abhorring these unreasonable contentions among Presbyterians; the open declaration of our scheme was a pathetic call to the Christian churches, "Let there be no such divisions  
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“ amongst us.” The Relief declared that they did not think it essential to constitute a good man, that he be a Seceder, and that there are godly Christians in all parties of Presbyterians who hold the head. The Secession exclude us from their communion, and throw out anathemas innumerable, because we are so charitable, and believe that many of them, and of other societies, have as good a right to receive the seals of the covenant as our own members. Besides, the Secession always demand our testimony; we shew them the scriptures, which are God’s testimony: They demand a new Testimony of our own making; we shew them the constitution of the Establishment, and principles of Reformation, of which we have solemnly approved, and to which we steadily adhere. This they endeavour to tear from us, and, urging their own long creed in its place, demand our approbation; that we are unable to grant, and therefore are put to the sword as infamous hereticks: Errors innumerable are hatched, and laid to our charge, which we daily disavow. The Relief Church expected to overcome evil with good; she long bore with patience the illiberality of these brethren, in expectation they would be overcome at last with her kindness, nor did this expectation appear to be ill-founded. The Burgher association became intimate with other parties in our seminaries of learning: With a more liberal education, they imbibed more liberal sentiments; by a more intimate intercourse with the Relief, they were silently, but with perceptible progress approaching her standard. With hearty approbation, we saw their reformation and increasing light. Rigid Seceders were often lamenting that the Burghers daily apostatised from their former faith; while the Relief, with secret satisfaction, beheld the prospect of union fast approaching; but alas! a most violent and unexpected thrust at the Relief, from the Secession, blasted the pleasant prospect, and disappointed our fond expectations. It was something like the last and most desperate effort of an exhausted foe in despair. This roused the indignation of my brethren, and occasioned *retaliations* which never were intended. The Burghers, in synodical array, beat up our quarters, and from their magazines made church canons fly thick at our heads: They pushed hard at my fathers with puzzling questions. This grand exploit is on record in the 178—181 pages of their valuable Testimony. Mr. Ramsay, an Antiburgher minister in Glasgow, like Paul in his unconverted state, zealous for



the faith of his fathers, and apparently full of rage against the Relief, broke through the lines of modesty and truth, carrying fire and sword against the living and the dead. Mr. Hutchison then minister of the Relief congregation in St. Ninian's met this foe with studied contempt; fell was the fury of their arms, when our brother taught the Secession that our long silence did not arise from an incapacity to speak. A detachment of pamphleteers ran to succour Ramsay; Mr. Hutchison stood alone. Not satisfied with an endeavour to repel the foe, our brother attacked them briskly in his turn, and thrust violently at the *Judicial Act and Testimony*, their limited communion, and favourite principles about covenanting: The two parties are now obliged to fight *pro aris et focis*.

I shall conclude this section with a short account of the controversy between the Relief and Establishment. The former part of my history states the difference between the Relief and the Church of Scotland; I intend here to relate the manner in which the dispute hath been conducted.

The established party of Presbyterians in Scotland, by far the most numerous, are divided into two factions, called the *moderate* and *popular* clergy. The most intelligent of the former confess that patronage is a grievance, but think it their duty to submit to that law while in force, because they cannot prevent its execution. The popular party declare, that they ought not to submit to patronage, and that resistance may become effectual. Under this confessed yoke, they embrace not all the same principles; some are noted Arminians, and others rigid Calvinists.

As the Relief scheme provides an effectual remedy for such congregations as are aggrieved by the law of patronage; from principles strictly constitutional, we had reason to expect the countenance and approbation of our brethren in the Establishment, especially when we do not separate from their communion, but approve of their ancient laws, creeds, forms of worship. The popular clergy who publicly espouse Relief principles, and only increase the distress of those whom they wish to relieve, by leading them on to trouble and expence in church courts, might well be expected to patronize the Relief scheme. We are no enemies to them; we stand up for the original constitution and order of the church; we are willing to assist and support them in the work of the Lord, and execute, at expence, what they plead for, but are unable to accomplish: Notwithstanding

of this, the popular clergy, in general, are more keen enemies to the Relief than their other brethren, and in this less consistent. In their popular harangues in church courts, one principal argument, which they zealously urge against presentations, is, "These violent settlements send numbers of their people to countenance and strengthen the hands of the Relief." They also endeavour to persuade the people, that the Relief are the worst and most dangerous of all Sectarians: Their reason for asserting this, is very remarkable, "The constitution of the Relief church, say they, is so exactly the same with the Establishment, that our people when disappointed, or offended, instantly seek redress in that interest, and therefore we suffer much loss from them;" accordingly they lament, in pathetic strains, the increase of the Relief and other denominations. "In every point of view," saith a moderate clergyman to his popular brethren, "the increase of the Sectarians is a subject of deep regret." He adds, "They are losers by the change into which they are seduced; they commit themselves to the charge of less capable instructors; their education and sentiments are confined, and it is their interest to confirm them in those illiberal errors to which they are too naturally prone."

If we push these gentlemen hard, to know in what respect other ministers are less capable than the established clergy, we find that it turns out to be an incapacity to receive a presentation; and if a right to receive this could be conveyed to an ass, he would thereby become superior to the most learned and able Christian in a dissenting interest. If it be enquired what these illiberal errors are, in which the people are confirmed by dissenting clergy? We are told, "From deserters, they become the enemies of the church." Pray, what church? Is it the church of Christ? No, no, it is the rigorous measures in the Church of Scotland, against which the tempers of the poor people are soured. See *Principles of Moderation*, page 23, 24. as a specimen of that declamation against Dissenters in general, and the Relief in particular, which is become pretty universal in the Establishment. Although the clergy in that communion shine in literature and taste, yet bigotry and illiberal sentiments are spreading rapidly among them. Numbers of their clergy deny, that a preacher can be a minister of our Lord Jesus Christ, in Scotland, if he be not licensed in their party to preach in a chapel or parish church. They call in

question the virtue, the loyalty, and, in one word, the salvation of the people who are not under their own ministry. We are not to expect any reason assigned for what they are pleased to assert; intoxicated with big notions of their superiority to all other denominations of Christians, it is below their dignity to submit the dispute to common sense and the scriptures.

As our brethren in the Establishment affect to treat with contempt their friends in the Relief, it may not be improper to mention those superior advantages of which they are so vain.

I hope the public will allow, that it cannot be any uncommon eminence in their natural talents, or literature and taste: These brethren have more sense than think that nature was partial to them, and more sparing of her bounty to Relievers. As to literature, the Relief have the same education and opportunity of improvement with the clergy in the Church of Scotland; and frequently make a similar progress. Our proportion of weak men does not exceed the number found in other churches. The people to whom we preach are neither inferior in knowledge nor virtue, to the members of their congregations: They are neither less loyal, nor worse members of society. Our principles and constitution are the ancient creeds and constitution of their church in its original purity; our measures are more congenial to, I do not say the scriptures, for that, to some of these gentlemen, would appear whimsical, but to the British constitution, than their tyrannical procedure against injured congregations. They do not pretend to any pre-eminence in integrity and virtue. I sincerely pray that the clergy of all denominations would convert their strife into this channel: Were there more of this among the clergy, there would be less dissention in the churches. "In what then consists the pre-eminence of an established clergyman?" I answer, it is wholly derived from the presentation he receiveth, and the house in which he doth preach. The walls of a parish church are supposed to be sacred, and the spot on which it is built is not without a charm; there also, you may sometimes see my lady and my lord. The people are therefore industriously persuaded, that it is a greater honour, and more profitable, to hear any thing, from any creature, provided it be qualified to receive a presentation, than to receive the gospel from the most eminent preacher in a meeting-house. Some sentences of the General Assembly, may convince



convince the public, that the members of that court, esteemed these two privileges to be their chief glory. Those ministers who first opposed their rigorous measures, and then deserted their society, were thought to deserve the most severe censure. The amount of these sentences, which is thought to be so severe, is this: The offenders are declared to be “unworthy and incapable of receiving a presentation, or preaching in a parish church.” No merit, eminence, or privileges in the Relief can compensate for the loss of this glory. The rigour of patronage, and disagreeable restraints which these brethren feel, in consequence of their closer connection with the state, are but small evils, when attended with the honour of receiving a glorious presentation, and preaching under the charming roof of a parish church. Lest such ignorant people, as neither see any glory in, nor reap any benefit from these circumstances, should be seduced to leave that honourable place of worship, where the bell tolls, and the presentee speaks, our friends have invented chapels, on a footing which the most intelligent of their clergy confess to be subversive of their constitution. See *Principles of Moderation*, page 76,—79.

With this scheme, unknown till of late in the church of Christ, they have combated the Relief. Such chapels as were litigated in church courts, had this irresistible argument in their favour, “It will prevent a number of our people from deserting our glorious churches, and thereby check the progress of the Relief.” It must be confessed, that the pride of an Establishment is greatly humbled by this invention. The place of worship, which is their chief glory, is at best but a meeting-house, and some chapels were once occupied by Relievers. The only pre-eminence they retain, is, the preacher is qualified to receive a presentation, and, for the most part, determined to catch at the first which he can obtain. In this consists the eminence of a chapel. The loss of their preacher’s judicative capacity is compensated by his capacity to become a presentee; and, it is thought by these gentlemen, to be far more safe and honourable to bear the yoke of an Establishment under a maimed ministry, than enjoy our Christian privileges in a Relief Church. The bait by which Christians are seduced into the Chapel Scheme is this, “They have the choice of their own minister, and at the same time remain in the bosom of the church.” Pray, what real benefit or honour can Chapel congregations derive from being, as is said, in  
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the bosom of an Establishment? Connection with a religious society is honourable and beneficial, in proportion to the purity of their communion, and extent of their Christian privileges. As to the first, I have shewn, that the communion of that church is lamentably impure, and from her present circumstances necessarily open to the wicked and profane. The Christian privileges of the people are notoriously abridged, especially in a Chapel; their ministers authority is shamefully circumscribed; the people are daily stripped of all their collections; their poor are at the mercy of another society, who sometimes grudge the existence of a Chapel in their borders. Their delinquents must all be judged by that society, who deprives them of the power of managing their own affairs, like other Christian congregations. In short, a Chapel is, in the Establishment, like a conquered kingdom, reduced to a province, in a great and tyrannical empire; with this difference, the one willingly puts her neck under the yoke, the other through necessity: The one suffers in her temporal, the other in her spiritual privileges. "But, as a compensation for this, a Chapel is in the bosom of the established party." Pray, what is meant by that warm expression? Is there any real privilege arising from this, which is not enjoyed in the Relief interest? All that the members of a Chapel congregation either ask or expect, is to hear and occasionally join with such valuable ministers in the established party as they most esteem: But it is obvious that Christians in the Relief interest, who are freed from that yoke of bondage which their brethren are under, have the same liberty and privilege of hearing and joining in the Establishment, which Chapel congregations obtain. In this view, therefore, we are as much in the bosom of the church as they are, and at the same time, not subject to a foreign yoke. We possess the privileges of their citizens, but bear none of their unscriptural burdens. We do not therefore envy established brethren their presentations, and honourable places of worship, especially as it is not thought they can expect any pre-eminence hereafter.

## B O O K II.

The principal SUBJECTS of CONTROVERSY between  
the RELIEF Church and the SECESSION.

**T**HIS subject may be reduced to two articles, occasional hearing, and occasional communion with other denominations. After discussing which, I shall canvass some questions concerning Covenanting, and then conclude this publication with an address to my Burgher brethren.

## S E C T I O N I.

*Of occasional Hearing.*

**T**HIS subject is of more importance to religion than is generally thought. Had not the Secession invented this fatal device of prohibiting their people from all intercourse with other Presbyterian churches, they would not have been able to exasperate their followers so effectually against every other denomination. By prohibiting them from hearing the gospel in other churches, the breach appeared very wide to the people; and their opinions of other Christians were thereby subjected to the management of the clergy. Their members had no further opportunity of seeing, with their own eyes, the principles and practices of other worshipping assemblies, but behoved implicitly to imbibe the bitter invectives of their priests.

Hume, in his history of England, observes, “ In the  
“ beginning of Queen Elizabeth’s reign, the Papists shewed  
“ little reluctance against going to Protestant churches, or  
“ frequenting the ordinary duties of public worship in the  
“ Church of England. The Pope, sensible that this practice  
“ would, by degrees, reconcile all his partizans in  
“ England to the reformed religion, hastened the publication  
“ of the Bull, excommunicating that heretical Queen,  
“ and freeing her subjects from all oaths of allegiance:  
“ Great pains were taken by the emissaries of Rome to render  
“ the breach between the two religions as wide as possible,  
“ and to make the frequenting of Protestant churches  
“ appear highly criminal in the Papists.” My readers will  
easily



easily perceive the similarity in this, between the priests in the Secession and the Church of Rome. When the Secession split into two parties, the question on which they divided appeared to many a mere quibble about words. It therefore required no small degree of priest-craft to keep their several followers at a sufficient distance from one another. Their situation with regard to the Relief Church was also critical, the numbers which flocked to that interest, gave real alarm to the clergy, and required their utmost influence to prevent the consequences. Their laws against occasional hearing were of vast service to them in such circumstances. We cannot know the motives from which they have acted in this affair, but see the advantages which they derived from the Scheme.

Before I state the precise point in question, which in all controversy is very necessary, let it be observed,

1. The Relief maintain, that every Christian ought to choose his own minister, and submit to his ministrations by a regular attendance.

2. For Christians to wander from one assembly to another, from vain curiosity, is unbecoming, ought to be discouraged, and testified against by all churches.

3. Christians ought not to join in public worship with such preachers as are profane, unsound in the faith, or have no authority to minister in holy things.

But, 4. we also maintain, that it is the indispensable duty of all Christians, regularly to worship God in public; and, when their own pastor is absent, or they at a distance occasionally from him, to join in any other society of sound Presbyterians, where the speaker is known to be orthodox, of good report, and regularly called to the ministry. The Secession think it proper to controvert this, and have often rebuked, or excommunicated from the Lord's table, valuable Christians, for no other crime, than joining occasionally with a worthy gospel minister in the public worship of God. When the offender is a man of some eminence, and not likely to submit to censure, his minister frequently discharges his duty, by preaching powerfully against this egregious crime, in a manner that his congregation understand the cause.

This device in the Secession and anti-government societies concerning occasional hearing, points out a fatal mistake in some of these churches. Suppose the Antiburghers in the right; when they censure their people for hearing occasionally

occasionally in any other denomination of sound Christians, then it follows, that their clergy are the ministers whom the people of every denomination ought to hear; accordingly every church who prohibits their people from hearing these men, fight against God, and oppose Christians in the performance of an indispenfible duty. According to this fuppofition, the Burghers and Anti-government fociety are guilty of this crime: Or, if we fuppofe that the Burghers are in the right, then that fin falls upon the other two churches. I fhall allow the clergy of thefe focieties to determine the queftion, who fights againft God, and who againft fin. Only one of them can be fafe.

This device of the Seceffion hath been the unhappy fource of much unwarrantable abufe committed upon other churches. The Seceder clergy faw, that it was impoffible to condemn occasional hearing, without declaring all thofe ministers whom their people were forbidden to approach, to be either wicked, unfound, or without authority to preach the gofpel, while all thefe qualifications behoved to be confined to themfelves, which is a vaft degree of arrogance and pride. This brought Seceders under ftrong temptations to injure the character, and mifreprefent the principles of other Christians. Their testimonies, pulpit harangues, and polemical writings, fhew how awfully they were driven before this wind. Of the many instances of this, which might be produced, I fhall felect two: When this artifice was firft practifed, the church of Scotland was declared to be utterly forfaken of God, and no church of Chrift. The Seceffion was then, as they have ever been fince, by their own account, the only true church in this land.

It pleafed God, remarkably to blefs the labours of fome eminent ministers of the Eftablifhment, which they declared to be utterly forfaken. This remarkable down-pouring of the Spirit in fome eftablifhed congregations, was in direft oppofition to a Seceder's creed. This brought them into the dilemma, either to retract their cenfure, or deny the undoubted fact. Had they confefed the fact, that God was eminently countenancing the labours of his fervants at Cambufhang, and other congregations in the Church of Scotland, then their fcheme againft occasional hearing fell to the ground; for it could not be a crime in their followers to countenance thofe worthy ministers, whom God was pleafed, fo eminently, to make fuccefsful. This I confefs was a very critical fituation: Interest and honour, which are very

apt to blind the mind, were at stake: The temptation to persevere was strong. The clergy gave way, and denied the undoubted fact. That remarkable event, required the most deliberate investigation on the spot where it happened: This was not done: Without sufficient inquiry, the work was declared to be from hell. In vain were they put in mind of our Saviour's answer to the Pharisees, who charged him with diabolical art, Mat xii. 22. to 31. Still they maintained this remarkable revival of religion to be all the work of the devil, and made their churches resound with its condemnation: Their people were in danger of being excluded from the synagogue, or cut off from the seals of the covenant, if they said not Amen! I don't say that, in this, the clergy acted contrary to their convictions; I only mention the fact, as the fatal consequence of their principles.

The other instance shall be taken from Mr. Ramsay's works. When arguing against occasional hearing, in a manner, likely to ruin, even a good cause, which, it is obvious his was not, that author found himself under the necessity of maintaining, that the ministers of other denominations are not sound in the faith, unfaithful in their stations, and their church courts not rightly constituted: This is the common practice of his brethren. Having no facts to support the charge, they are obliged to have recourse to fiction, like their Burgher brethren in their *Testimony*. After dismissing the established party with all their crimes on their back, he proceeds to criminate the Relief. In his *Review*, page 34. he says of that church, "We cannot admit they are rightly constituted churches of Christ," and in page 35. he adds concerning her ministers, "We cannot admit that they are faithful in the trust committed to them, and the duties which the King of Zion expects from them." The first part of his charge is supported by the following *invention*, page 34 "The general rule, says this author, from which there must be very few exceptions, if any, in the choice of the first minister in a Relief congregation, is, that none be allowed to vote but those who have property in the place of worship, or contributed to build it. Want of money, he says, will exclude the most holy Christian, as effectually as if he were a Heathen and a Publican, from voting in the Relief interest; while all who contribute are qualified, whatever their principles or character be;" from which he concludes, that the Relief ministers came not in by the door, but



but climbed up some other way. This story was invented by this gentleman and his brethren, in *The Relief Scheme considered*, page 10. In order to prove that a "worldly spirit" pervades that whole church." Mr. Hutchison assured Mr. Ramsay and his brethren, that the whole of this story was without foundation: No matter, it is an useful invention, and accordingly Mr. Ramsay, who does not appear to be soon put to the blush, maintains its reality a second time, for another purpose. A more striking instance, that Seceders, in order to vindicate their invention concerning occasional hearing, are under some necessity of injuring other Christians, cannot be required. One would naturally expect, that when an author is detected, and publicly exposed, he would not choose to risk his character by repeating the same fault. Into this infatuation hath Mr. Ramsay fallen. Although I feel for that gentleman and his brethren, yet the cause of truth, requires me to assure the public, so far are the Relief from permitting all who contribute, in a forming congregation, to vote, at the election of a minister, whatever their character be, that it hath sometimes been made a question, when there was any suspicion, whether all the subscribers were of age and unblameable characters. This enquiry I have seen made in Edinburgh presbytery. So far is it from being a general rule, as Mr. Ramsay asserts, "Want of money will exclude the most holy Christian," I never heard, nor any of my brethren, that a Christian in the Relief interest was excluded from voting on account of his poverty. In some forming congregations, (and these were very few) when it was difficult to ascertain the real members, it hath been made a question, Whether such as proposed to vote, and were in opulent circumstances, had taken any concern in the affairs of the congregation formerly, or born any part of the public burden? All who vote, undertake, according to their ability, to contribute their mite for the maintenance of the gospel. When any person's right to vote was doubtful, who was in a station which enabled him to bear a part of the public burden, this was thought a proper question, in order to prevent those who had no concern with the society from outvoting the real members, and palming upon the congregation a minister whom they did not choose. Even in these few instances, no member was excluded for want of money, nor were such as contributed largely, admitted to vote, if their character was known to be scandalous. Mr

Ramsay

Ramsay himself, though an Antiburgher minister, according to the Relief scheme, were he to join a forming congregation, and build the whole house, could not be admitted to vote, until he professed repentance, and made reparation for the injuries, which, we think, he hath done to religion, truth, and the characters of the godly.

Further, to make a law which occasionally prohibits many hundreds from worshipping God in public, when it is practicable, and to punish those who transgress this law with censure, or exclusion from the Lord's table, as is done by the Secession, appears to us to be an incroachment on the divine prerogative. My former argument proves, from undoubted facts, that this device leads the inventors to commit injuries upon fellow Christians; I now assert, that it is an insult upon divine authority. Our obligation to worship God regularly in public, cannot be controverted. This invention criminally opposeth that obligation, by often obliging great numbers of Christians to keep a silent sabbath, when their own ministers are absent. Though they might easily wait on God in the assemblies of fellow saints, where the gospel is purely preached by faithful ministers of Jesus Christ, yet by this law they are under a prohibition. Where-ever a few of God's saints are met to worship him in that manner which he hath appointed, there he hath promised to be present. In such assemblies, the devotion of Seceders may be as fervent, pure, and acceptable unto God, as if one of their own ministers were the speaker. When the manner and the matter of the devotion is good, the place where, and the *name* of the person by whom it is offered, neither affects the edification of the worshippers, nor renders it less acceptable unto him. Can the praises of Seceders be marred, by being joined with those of other saints? Are they excluded from a throne of grace, whenever they appear in other churches? Or, shall not the ordinances profit them when administered by God's servants of other societies? How impious and absurd is the principle from which our brethren act, in this affair? Alas! by obliging their followers so often to keep a silent sabbath, they rob God of a revenue of glory due to his name, and greatly injure the souls of his saints. If a sense of duty impel some publickly to worship God in the assembly of another denomination, when they are not able to reach their own pastor, how presumptuous is it, in the Secession, to censure such, and exclude them from the Lord's table for obeying God  
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rather than man? Often they have been guilty of this crime, in vindication of that useful device. May God make these crude thoughts a mean of enlightening their minds, and leading them to repentance!

## SECTION II.

### *Of occasional Communion with Presbyterians.*

I Have discussed this subject, as it respects Independents and Episcopalians. The Relief Church, as was shewn, hath given her opinion on that subject. It was founded on the plain and general principles laid down by our ancestors. Since such Independents or Episcopalians as could be admitted by Presbyterians, seldom or never require from us this privilege, it is highly improper, to make that a bone of contention in the church. That in which we are chiefly interested is occasional communion with sound Presbyterians. If the Secession were once enlightened in this article, there remains no further object of dispute. The subject is of vast importance, and as we are all deeply interested, it requires the most dispassionate consideration. As the several Presbyterians in Scotland subscribe the same articles of faith, observe the same form of government and mode of worship, and preach the same doctrine, nothing but the whimsical caprice or interested views of the clergy, prevent our intercourse and fellowship with one another. It must be granted, that though we all profess reformation principles, and adhere to the ancient constitution of the Church of Scotland, it is with some variation.—The established party submit to the law of Patronage, are too lax in their admissions, and too many of their members, who subscribe our creeds, preach another doctrine in public. The Secession have piled up upon our ancient constitution much rubbish, which favour not a little of the Church of Rome; their laws against occasional hearing; their limited communion, and unweildy Testimony, appear to us hay and stubble, which ought to be consumed. The Relief neither add to nor take from the original constitution of the church as explained by our ancestors.

If the Secession could be persuaded to give up their unscriptural scheme of communion, their other inventions fall of course. For their benefit I shall therefore explain what appears to us to be the scripture scheme of communion, as adopted by our forefathers, and practised by the Relief church.



1. We exclude the ignorant from the Lord's table because they are incapable of discerning the Lord's body.

2. Those who are unsound in the faith are rejected. In those minutes, against which the Secession have wrote and preached so much, it is expressly declared, "with respect to those who are unsound in the essentials of Christian faith, the meeting unanimously agree that their principles do not allow them to hold communion with such." The Burgher synod fill up their Testimony with these minutes, and explain the text in the following words; "The Relief terms of communion are so general and undetermined, that they will admit Protestants of every denomination, and seem to be under too little concern to keep pure and entire all the ordinances of Christ, according to his command:" *Testimony*, page 178. By what temptation the synod were led into this inexcusable blunder, I do not know: but it is no less absurd than it would have been to call Yes, No; or Black, White. The minutes they quoted, our daily and uniform profession and practice directly contradict the charge. It helps, however, to enlarge their weighty creed, and I hope this little piece will find a place in the next re-exhibition of their long creed, for which, if I be alive, the synod may expect a letter of thanks.

3. The Relief exclude from the Lord's table the irreligious and profane.

4. We exclude the children of God, in certain circumstances, from his own table, and think we have the Master's authority. A child may be one of his family, and sanctified by his Spirit, but incapable of communicating knowingly. A true Christian may be unsound in the faith; he may fall into immoralities, or take an unreasonable offence at a brother, which cut off from the seals of the covenant for a time. Although it is universally known that the Relief Church not only profess this, but in general act up to their principles, yet the Burgher synod were pleased to assert, *Testimony*, page 179. "That the popular plea advanced in support of such vague and extensive terms of communion, is, that all the children of God have an undoubted right to the childrens bread, and that it is not lawful to keep it from them." The conduct of these brethren puts me in mind of the treatment which the ancient Christians received from their persecutors. These martyrs were clothed in wild beasts skins, and then destroyed by fierce dogs. Seceders endeavour to ruin the reputation of whole churches by

by means no less unbecoming. While these gentlemen make such wide and unwarrantable stretches to destroy the reputation of the Relief Church, they discover a temper of mind foreign to the religion we profess, and would do well to consider that "Charity", without which all religion is vain, "is kind, envieth not, and thinketh no evil."

*Lastly*, We do not rest the qualifications of a communicant in a *negative* character. It is not enough that he be free from public scandal; he ought to be exemplary in his life, and to endeavour daily to fulfil his duty to God and man. In this all churches are chargeable with negligence, and have cause to say, *Peccavi*.

Having explained the Relief principles respecting admission to the Lord's table, I shall state the precise point in dispute between the Secession and that church: It is this; Whether we have any divine authority to exclude from the Lord's table our dear brethren in Christ, whose knowledge is competent, whose principles are orthodox, and whose conversation is unblameable and exemplary, merely because they are members of another Presbyterian church, and see it not as yet to be their duty to leave that society and join our party? The Secession affirm that we ought: The Relief deny that we have any authority to debar such. As I know of no objection against this opinion which deserves notice, we shall proceed to the argument. I have shewn in a former section, page 34. that the principles we all subscribe, in the Confession of Faith, require this. No reasoning, acknowledged principles, or scripture, can be of any use to those who presume to deny a fact so obvious and plain. To keep my antagonists to the point, let us fix the objects of dispute to a certain denomination: Suppose the people who apply to us for admission, submit to the ministry of an intruder, my opponents grant, that their case, of all others, is the most doubtful; consequently, whatever can be said in their favour, will conclude more strongly in the favour of all the other Presbyterians in Scotland. My argument goes upon the supposition, that there are real and worthy Christians of this denomination, eminently pious, and whose knowledge and principles are unexceptionable. They are also supposed to produce a most satisfactory testimonial, either from some praying society, of which they are members, or from such eminent Christians as are known to us, and may be trusted. The only objection that can be brought against them, is, they still continue members of a corrupt church,

church, and submit to an intruder. The question then is, Ought we to exclude them from the Lord's table on this account? As they are supposed to be eminent Christians, we are sure they act according to their knowledge; for it is incompatible with the character of a true Christian to act habitually in contrariety to his own convictions. Though their minister be an intruder to others, he is the object of their choice, and they think it their duty to submit to his ministry: That such men, however faulty in the way of entering upon their charge, may be beneficial in the church to those who choose to adhere to them as their pastors, cannot be denied. The reason why those Christians continue in that communion, is, they do not yet see it to be their duty to leave the Establishment; though they highly disapprove of the law of Patronage, yet they love their minister, and are benefited by his doctrines: Notwithstanding of his blameable acceptance of the presentation, they think him one of the Lord's servants, and are persuaded whatever defections may cleave to him and his connections, yet it is not their duty to forsake his ministry. Meantime, like other saints, they lie open to light, and will not hesitate to forsake that communion whenever they can see it to be their duty. In this we shall allow that they err; but then I observe,

1<sup>st</sup>, We cannot see how this error disqualifies them for the performance of that duty. Their mistake neither affects their faith nor morals. They are even supposed to disapprove of what we condemn, but do not think those things with which they are displeas'd, sufficient reason to abandon that communion, especially as they reap much profit from the ministry to which they presently adhere; for God gives his people the good things of the covenant, whatever the instrument be. Saints therefore in this communion, and under these circumstances, are verily in a state, and also a proper frame, to celebrate the death of Christ, consequently invited by the Master himself, and under indispenfible obligations to obey the command. In performing obedience, they obtain much benefit to themselves, and glorify their God and Saviour, though in a state of imperfection; yet they, like other saints, are accepted in the Beloved. The Secession who violently thrust them from the table of the Lord, rob him of a glory due to his name, and do signal injury to his saints: If those who withhold a cup of cold water from his children, when it is required, are thereupon condemned; what can they expect who unjustly withhold  
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from them the seals of the covenant? Yet this is done even by those whose office it is to persuade them to the regular observation of this ordinance. It undoubtedly is as much the duty of ministers to excite Christians to a frequent and regular observation of the Lord's supper, as to urge their obedience to the great commands of love to God and man: But the Secession scheme combats the authority of God, and privileges of his people, by excluding the greatest number of his dear children from their Father's table: Besides, it discovers a spirit of arrogance and pride, the most shameful and unchristian: If Seceders be in the right, then the weakest saint in their church must be more worthy of, and better qualified for heaven than the most eminent in any other denomination. Their scheme supposeth them to be better Christians, and more capable of enjoying God; the absurdity of which stares us in the face! Come forward, gentlemen, attentive to the subject; behold, and be ashamed of your error: Why should mankind, in this, have any longer occasion to complain, that you shew more zeal for your own Dagon, than the living and the true God? Why do ye work up the peculiarities of your party to an importance greater than real holiness; and oppose the authority of God, and rights of Christians, to support an idol of your own making?

2dly, To reject these Christians, merely because they do not see it to be their duty to put themselves under our ministry, or to separate from that church of which they are members, is contrary to the nature of the ordinance, and great principle of love. At the Lord's table we sit down to hold communion with the Head Christ, and through him, with all the members of his body: It is not merely with our own church with whom we hold communion, it is the whole society of the godly, scattered through all the different denominations on earth. Whatever different opinions in things of small importance may take place among them, to whatever particular church they may belong, yet believers have all communion with Christ in his righteousness and graces, and with one another in the same peculiar privileges, in the exercise of the same graces, and in the performance of the same evangelical obedience; they all meet at the same throne of grace, are animated by the same Spirit, have the same reconciled God for their Father, and partake of the same spiritual provisions. To profess this at the table of the Lord, and at the same time

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debar from our communion his most eminent saints, as unworthy of the childrens bread, is truly a most glaring inconsistency. To profess the most sincere love to all the brethren, and at the same time to thrust them violently from our love-feast, and treat them as if they were dogs and swine, is shamefully absurd and unscriptural: Never was this the design of that holy institution, nor that the method of expressing our love to one another. Pharisee-like these gentlemen say to every other Christian, "Stand by, I am more holy than you;" and by erecting an unwarrantable wall of separation between themselves and other Christians, they mar the beautiful form of the house of God. In vain do they plead, that by admitting Christians from other denominations, they thereby partake of their imperfections. It is no less absurd to say, that we "homologate their errors," or are chargeable with their mistakes by receiving them into fellowship, than it would be to affirm, that all the imperfections of those who sit at the same table, are chargeable to every individual. It is no less absurd to exclude other societies from their communion on this principle, than it would be to debar the whole generation of the godly on earth, because they are exceedingly imperfect. Come forward then, ye injured race of the godly, and plead your right; ye shall not plead in vain: Produce the evidences of your sonship, and we welcome you to your Father's table. We hope to meet again in a better place; let us bear with and love one another on earth: You are dear to God, and precious in his sight; we are not therefore ashamed to plead your cause, and admit you into all the intimacies of love.—For,

3dly, The more our communion on earth resembles heaven, the more it is also consonant to the will of God. All true Christians, of different denominations, will meet in the celestial world; there they will also sit down at one table, and partake of the same bread: It is a part of their beauty and felicity that they make but ONE great company: From this unity there ariseth a revenue of glory to God the Father, Son, and Spirit; hence our Saviour ardently prays that they may be one on earth: "I pray," said our Lord, "that they all may be one in us.—The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one—I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one\*." To exclude from our

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\* John xvii.

communion those for whom our Redeemer thus bled and prayed, when they appear to be in a proper state and frame for the observation of that ordinance, is to thwart the will and purposes of God: While, on the one hand, we carefully exclude the unholy and profane; on the other, we ought to welcome and encourage all God's saints who appear capable of performing this service acceptably, in order that the church below may resemble those who are in a state of perfection above. When Christians of different denominations agree in one spirit, with hearts conciliated to one another in love, to meet occasionally at the same table, in testimony of their affection, and of their agreement in all the great articles of faith and duties of religion; this is a brighter image of heaven on earth: It agrees with the will and purpose of our heavenly Father, and fulfils the desire of our Saviour's heart. How beautiful is it to see saints, from different churches, assemble and jointly express their faith in and love to God! Their different opinions afford them an opportunity of exercising humility, meekness, and forbearance. They argue with one another, "Your God is my God, your Father my Father, and the bread of the family is common to us all: Do you not love God? Is not your heart sincerely his? Are we not one in Christ? Yes, and in heaven we shall be one in sentiment and employment; come then, let us anticipate that happy period in our union and fellowship at the Lord's table." From heaven our Father looks down with divine approbation, saying, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity; this is like precious ointment on the head, or the dew of Hermon, which descendeth upon the mountains of Zion; I will therefore command the blessing to rest upon them, even life for evermore," P<sup>sa</sup>. cxxxiii. Therefore,

*4thly*, To admit these Christians, under consideration, to partake of the seals of the covenant, is similiar to that love which God the Father, Son, and Spirit evidenceth to his own church: As Christ's body mystical is but one, so all the members are the objects of his love and favour; they are all near and dear unto him, led by the Spirit unto all truth, clothed in the righteousness, and washed in the blood of Christ; they are all equally entitled to the blessings of the covenant, and the privileges of children. The least in the family of God are the objects of his affection and particular care: "A bruised reed will he not break; a smoking flax



“ will he not quench: The lambs he carries in his bosom,  
 “ and gently leads those who are with young.” From this  
 his tender love and care, our Saviour enforceth their request  
 to be admitted to his table: “ Injure not, (says he,) offend  
 “ not any of these little ones: Deal kindly with them for  
 “ my sake. Whatever ye do unto them, I account it as  
 “ done unto myself; receive them therefore in my name,  
 “ for they are my image, of whom I am not ashamed.  
 “ They lie in my bosom; if you love me, receive them into  
 “ yours: Bear with, and forgive them, for so I bear with  
 “ and forgive you. Those who are weak in the faith,  
 “ receive, not to doubtful disputations, but to cherish  
 “ their graces, and comfort their hearts with the childrens  
 “ bread.” I tremble to see the Seceder priest, with an un-  
 christian frown, reject their claim, and the warm entreaty  
 of him who washed them with his blood; however near and  
 dear they are to God, even though they should faint and  
 perish for want of food, yet these ministers of the gospel  
 prohibit them from tasting the bread of the family in their  
 communion. Let therefore Relievers never be ashamed to  
 run and succour such: “ Welcome, ye injured saints of  
 “ God; welcome to your Father’s table, and all the inti-  
 “ macies of love”. Since God makes no distinction, but  
 equally and impartially cares for us all, so let us imitate  
 our heavenly Father; much we have suffered on your ac-  
 count, but in this we suffer with a good conscience, for  
 righteousness’s sake; and thank God that we have been  
 honoured not only to plead for the privileges of his dear  
 children, but also to administer unto you that spiritual  
 provision of which you have been unjustly deprived by other  
 churches. For,

5thly, This is conformable to the universal practice of  
 the primitive church, &c. But, why do I urge the argu-  
 ment further with those who have the word of God in their  
 hands, and, I trust, grace in their minds? while the for-  
 mer in the most clear and express manner invites, the latter  
 will keep the heart open, and arms expanded to receive them  
 to our communion. Let those therefore who refuse to be  
 convinced, at least cease to persecute from the pulpit and  
 the press, such Christians as act according to reason and  
 religion; for, in the end, that may be heavy on the con-  
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## SECTION III.

*Of Covenanting under the Law.*

**T**HE covenants mentioned in the scriptures are not well explained by the greatest number of systematical writers. Not attending to the difference between these and covenant transactions among men, the subject hath often been misunderstood. The dispensation of grace under the Old Testament is called the first covenant, and when discontinued, to give place unto another and better, is by Paul compared to the posterity of Agar\*.

In this section, I propose to consider the manner in which the Old Testament church was required to adhere to this dispensation, which manner is usually called Covenanting.

The subject appears to me to be involved in much darkness, by disputants who have wasted much time and paper upon Covenanting under the gospel. Those who relish unmeaning and useless composition, are much indebted to Mr. Walker, who on this one subject spends near two hundred pages. By this writer, and his brethren, the proper distinction, between things moral and positive, appears, to me, to be lost; and therefore, I shall here enquire whether this duty under the Old Testament, called Covenanting, was a moral or a positive service?

The word moral, literally respects our manners. When applied to the law, it denotes that which is perpetually binding, in opposition to such precepts as are positive, or only binding for a time. A moral precept, properly speaking, is that unalterable rule of right and wrong, which is founded on the infinitely holy and just nature of God, to which men, as reasonable creatures, are indispensably bound. Positive laws are such institutions, as depend intirely upon the sovereign will and pleasure of God, which he might not have enjoined, or may abrogate, at any time, in perfect consistency with equity and justice †.

Let us now consider the manner in which Israel covenant-ed, and then we shall see whether it corresponds to the description of a moral or positive service. The scripture does not, in any one part, give the whole or full account of this: I shall gather the circumstances, from several passages of holy write—1. From Deut. xxix. 10. 11. we learn, that all the people, young and old, men and women, entered  
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\* Gal. iv.

† Synod's Catechism.

into the covenant.—2. From Exod. xxiv. 4. 7. we learn, that the bond to which they swore obedience was not of man's making; it was the words which God himself had spoken, and nothing else, written in a book, and read in the audience of the people.—3. From 2 Chron. xv. 14. we find, that they swore with a loud voice, accompanied with instruments of music and shouting.—4. When we compare Exod. xxiv. 5. 6. 8. with Heb. ix. 19. we see, that in performing this solemn service, it was necessary to offer sacrifices, and sprinkle the people, and the bond, or book of the covenant, with the blood, saying, “Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words.” That mind must be sadly prejudiced, indeed, which doth not see at once that this is a positive institution, as much as the passover, or the ordinance of the scape-goat on the great day of atonement. When all their little ones, and every individual in the nation, though absolutely incapable of performing a moral duty, were commanded to enter, in this manner, into the covenant, the service must as certainly have been a positive institution, as circumcision, or baptism under the gospel: When we add to this, the manner in which it was performed, they sacrificed, they swore with a loud voice, they shouted, mean time the trumpets sounded, and the cornets played, while the blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled on the people and on the book, with these words, “This is the blood of the covenant,” &c. Then the nature of the institution appears indisputably to be positive. I can easily allow, that some parts of this service were moral: When they swore with a loud voice, they said, “All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do, and be obedient,” Exod. xxiv. 7. This declaration was the performance of a moral duty, which every man is bound to declare; but then positive institutions have always in them some things moral. In observing the ordinance of the scape-goat, the people prayed and confessed their sins, and in keeping the passover they behoved to pray and vow to God; still these institutions were positive, because in observing them, it was absolutely necessary to perform some positive rites. This is what constitutes an institution positive, when the moral duties enjoined in that service, cannot be performed in that manner which God requires, unless we, at the same time, observe some ceremonial rite; for example,—To dedicate our offspring unto God, is a moral service; ourselves, and all that is ours, ought



ought to be devoted unto him; but, in the observation of baptism, this cannot be done according to God's appointment, unless by the sprinkling of water in the name of the Father, Son and Spirit; therefore baptism is a positive duty.—In prayer we sometimes bow the knee, which is ceremonial; but we can pray, according to God's appointment, without bowing the knee, and therefore prayer is a moral service.—In celebrating the death of Christ, we pray and vow to God; still something more is absolutely necessary in rightly observing this ordinance; we must eat bread, and drink wine, which is ceremonial; and therefore it is a positive institution. It was not enough in the ordinance of the scape-goat, that the people prayed, confessed their sins, and promised, in the strength of grace, to forsake their iniquities; they behoved to take two goats; confession must be made over the head of the goat: One is slain, and its blood sprinkled seven times before the mercy-seat, and the other led into the wilderness. These transactions are ceremonial, and therefore the whole service is called a positive institution. In like manner, when Israel covenanted, it was not enough that they declared their resolution of obeying the law, and observing all that the Lord had said unto them; this is the daily profession of every believer; they must also all be assembled together, and declare this with a loud voice, and shouting, accompanied with instruments of music; and, as sprinkling with water in the name of the Father, Son, and holy Ghost, is an essential part of baptism, so, sprinkling the book, and the people, with the blood of sacrifices, saying, "Behold, the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words \*," is no less an essential part of this institution under consideration: If ever therefore an ordinance appointed by God could be called positive, it was Covenanting under the law. Israel were then under a dispensation which was highly figurative; the apostle calls it, "a shadow of good things to come †." This mode of ratifying that covenant with the people, by the sprinkling of blood, is explained by the apostle in the ninth chapter of the Hebrews, from ver. 19. to 24. to be typical of the ratification of the covenant of grace by the blood of Christ, with which he also purifies the spiritual Israel who take hold of this covenant by faith. Their swearing with a loud voice, shouting, and instruments of music, on that occasion, were emblematical of that joy, which the

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\* Exod. xxiv. 8.

† Heb. x. 1.

ratification of the new covenant by the blood of Christ, affords the parties concerned, together with the chearful manner in which the spiritual Israel, take hold of and profess obedience to the covenant of grace. As every individual of that typical and natural seed of Abraham entered into this covenant, or typical dispensation, and were sprinkled with the typical blood by which it was ratified; so every individual of the spiritual seed of Abraham are admitted into the covenant of grace, and sprinkled, for their purification, with the blood of Christ, called by the apostle, *the blood of the covenant* \*.

This subject might be carried much farther. These plain and indisputable principles open up a large and beautiful field, instructive and entertaining. It is truly lamentable to see how far our Christian brethren in the Secession, have been left to misinterpret this subject, in order to confirm their followers in their favourite peculiarities. To misrepresent the Relief scheme, is wrong; but to misrepresent the Old Testament scheme, is far worse. The principles they have long maintained concerning Covenanting under the law, involve the whole dispensation in darkness and confusion. Long have they preached to their people, and much have they written to convince the public, that Covenanting under the law was not a positive, but a moral service. Mr. Walker collected five of such arguments as might be expected, in proof of this absurd and dangerous tenet; and indeed, with equal ease, he might have numbered fifty. If Covenanting be a moral duty, then I am ready to prove, that the passover, the ordinance of the scape-goat, feast of Pentecost, &c. were moral duties: This is a necessary consequence, and would be established by the same arguments; then the typical signification of that dispensation is intirely destroyed, and the principal arguments and comments from the Old Testament, in the epistle to the Hebrews grossly absurd. The Secession neither saw, nor intended these dangerous consequences, but they are obviously connected with their principles, which I sincerely beg, that, for their own sake, and the sake of religion, they would now renounce.

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\* Heb. x. 29.

## SECTION IV.

*Of Covenant Obligations on Posterity.*

**M**Y present undertaking is exceedingly disagreeable, but important and necessary; earnestly to contend for that faith which was delivered to the saints; is an indispensable duty, a fundamental article of which is destroyed by the doctrine of covenant-obligations, as maintained by the Secession. I am sorry to be obliged so often to condemn the conduct and principles of these brethren, but the interests of truth and society, render it necessary. The doctrine which they maintain is this, "Posterity are bound by the religious oaths of their ancestors, prior to their probation of, or acquiescence in their deed." Our worthy ancestors swore to abide by Presbytery, and never to embrace Episcopacy; Seceders maintain, that if any of their descendants apostatize from the Presbyterian church, and profess Episcopacy, though they had never approved of their father's deed, yet, in consequence of their father's oath, they are guilty of perjury. This appears to me to be contrary to the fundamental principles of both natural and revealed religion. Although in temporals, the conduct of parents affects their posterity, for they are bound by their legal deeds, yet in spirituals it is not so: In this every man must stand or fall for himself. Fathers cannot choose for their children, in matters of religion; for no man can be a Christian but by a voluntary choice: In this every rational creature must choose for himself, and abide by the consequences. Parents may command their children to observe the moral law; they may exhort them to embrace their own system of principles, but cannot compel them to believe; nor can the divine authority, which is complete, be strengthened by the covenant-deeds of men. Every individual is as solemnly bound by this, to believe and obey all that the Lord hath spoken, as if his ancestors had sworn a thousand times. From the scriptures it is evident, that the human race never had, nor can have any covenanting heads, except the two Adams; and that neither the faith and obedience, nor the unbelief and disobedience of our fathers can be imputed unto us, until our own conduct declare that we are men of the same principles and practice. In the one case, the scriptures intimate, that we derive advantages

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from being the children of godly parents, and in the other, disadvantages by being the wicked seed of evil doers.

If the covenant transactions of our fathers be binding on their posterity, it is allowed to be purely in virtue of the oath.\* An oath is called an act of religious worship, because there is, or ought to be, a solemn invocation of the name of God. He is solemnly invocated as a WITNESS, for the confirmation of some thing in doubt; by swearing we acknowledge him to be the infallible searcher of our hearts, and the powerful avenger of all falshood and perjury. An oath then, in religion, as it respects God, is an appeal, like Peter's, to his omniscience, as to the integrity of the heart, and sincerity of our profession: As it respects the church, it is the highest satisfaction she can receive, that the professor is no hypocrite, until the practice of individuals determine the thing in doubt: But how can this affect posterity? Every individual is bound by his own oath, to abide by his profession, and the church to believe his integrity, if his practice bring it not under suspicion; but it is impossible, in the nature of things, that it can extend unto posterity. No man can make this appeal unto God for another; nor can the church have any more cause to trust any of her members, because their father took the oath. Apply the principles unto the Lord's supper: Our profession at the Lord's table is no less binding and solemn, than the deed of Covenanting: If the latter be binding on posterity, so must the former. The oath is virtually taken. All who eat the Lord's supper, are considered as having solemnly vowed unto God, and Seceders generally call vows the same with swearing; but it is obvious, that the observation of this ordinance cannot bind posterity, neither can covenant vows or oaths. The reasoning will apply to the one, as much as the other: It will equally extend to personal dedication and solemn prayer. By whatever method we profess our faith, and vow unto the Lord, we bind posterity by the deed, as much as by formal Covenanting. The ceremonial part of lifting up the hand, of subscribing our name, or changing our vows into the form and order of an oath, cannot affect the nature of the deed, or bind either ourselves or posterity, more than the solemn vow. These circumstances may affect the mind of the worshipper with more solemnity, but cannot, in their effects, descend to posterity. If we admitted this dangerous principle

\* Synod's Catechism.

eiple into religion, the distinction between Adam as a covenanting head in the covenant of works, and his relation to his posterity after the fall, would be for ever lost. If we open the door to covenant-obligations upon posterity, a torrent of deeds both good and evil rush in upon mankind, to the destruction of all religion natural and revealed: Admit the one, and it is easy to prove the other. Bonds of iniquity, and cursed oaths, will descend upon the same principles, as might be shewn from the arguments used to prove this dangerous tenet. Were not the scriptures sadly wrested, as usually is the case, to support this principle, I would not deem the arguments urged in favour of covenant-obligations worthy of observation.

I sincerely wish that the polemical writers in the Secession, when they find a strong inclination to prove all their peculiarities from the scripture, would begin their quotations Gen. i. 1. and proceed regularly in applying the scriptures as they lie in order, without any comment or explanation; for example, when a polemical divine in that church finds an irresistible inclination to write, his first effusion is likely to be, "Our *Judicial Act and Testimony* is all founded on the scriptures; proof Gen. i. 1."—"The Relief scheme is a chaos of confusion; proof Gen. i. 2."—"Our covenants are a moral duty, and binding on posterity; proof Gen. i. 3.—Or the writer, in place of quoting a single verse, may take a whole chapter at once: This method established as the rule of disputation, would be a great ease to the divine, and a less injury to religion. My reader, I hope, will entertain the same opinion, on viewing the scriptures which are urged to prove covenant-obligations upon posterity. Mr. Walker collects the principal arguments in favour of this point, but mangles them sadly in his illustrations. The first is, "Public covenants are binding on posterity on account of their being considered as included in their covenanting ancestors; proof Heb. vii. 9." Although I have purposely avoided entering into any dispute concerning the signification of particular texts of scripture, yet the importance of this subject, the dangerous tendency of the doctrine, and the difficulties which have been found in this passage, induce me to offer an explanation of this text. The apostle is here shewing the Hebrews, that the priesthood of Melchisedeck was more excellent than that of Levi. He argues according to their own principles: It was a maxim with the Jews, that they who received tithes, were greater than those

by whom they were given. When Abraham was separated from his kindred, and received the promises and seal of the covenant, he also received that priesthood which descended to the tribe of Levi. The office was still the same, whether vested in the person of Abram, Jacob, or the tribe of Levi. Now, Abraham, who was the priest of his own family, as Levi of Israel, and Melchisedeck met: As an evidence of the inferiority of his priesthood to that of Melchisedeck, Abraham payed tithes to that priest. Had Melchisedeck's priesthood been inferior, that king would have payed tithes to Abraham. This is the apostle's argument. He intimates that he was not literally to be understood; and says he, as I may so say, *i. e.* to use a particular mode of speech. Levi, also, *i. e.* the priesthood of Levi, to whom tithes are payed, in the person of Abram, payed tithes to Melchisedeck. Had Levi then been alive, and invested with the office, he would have done the same thing; but ver. 10. he was only in the loins of his father. To use Levi for the priesthood which he obtained, is a mode of speech not uncommon in the scripture; Abraham said to the rich man, "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them\*." Moses and the prophets were dead, but they are here used for their writings, as Levi for his office. As an evidence that the apostle is here speaking of the Levitical priesthood, as having an existence before that tribe was appointed to officiate, it is said in ver. 11. that "under it the people received the law:" Now, we all know, that the law was given before the tribe of Levi was substituted in place of the first-born to serve God at the altar; therefore the office, though performed by different persons, was the same from the days of Abraham down to that time. This view of the text, which appears very natural and consistent with the apostle's chief design, ruins the argument founded on it by the Secession, in favour of covenant-obligations; it does not countenance it in the smallest degree.

The next argument is founded on the well-known story of the Gibeonites. The absurdity of applying a legal deed, in civil affairs, to the subject under consideration, will appear, at first view, to a very superficial reader. Although a son cannot overturn the legal deed of his father, will ever this fact, in civil affairs, prove that religious oaths are binding on posterity? The validity of a deed consists in its conformity to the laws of the country in which it is executed.

\* Luke-xvi. 29.



cuted. Israel made over to the Gibeonites certain privileges, which, according to the custom of the ancients, were confirmed by an oath made in the form of a covenant: Had the custom been to transact a deed of that nature on parchment, subscribed by the parties, in presence of witnesses, it would have been no less binding on posterity than their covenant and oath; therefore it was not because an oath in itself is binding on posterity that the deed stood valid, but because that was the established custom of executing a binding deed. Saul afterwards endeavoured to destroy the Gibeonites, and to wrest from them those privileges to which they had a legal right; God punished that act of violence and injustice. When the sacred historian narrates this story, in a parenthesis, he mentions the peace they obtained with Israel, and the legal right they had to the privileges which they possessed: But all this is as foreign to the subject, as the *Magna Charta* in the constitution of Great Britain. What renders this abuse of scripture altogether inexcusable is this fact; Saul and that generation bound themselves to abide by the deed of their ancestors. The condition on which the Gibeonites held their privileges, was, that they should serve the Israelites; when that generation accepted of these services, they bound themselves to fulfil their own part, as much as if they had sworn. When Saul accepted of the kingdom, he was solemnly bound to maintain the constitution, of which this was a part; by ascending the throne he stood bound to protect the Gibeonites, according to the tenor of that covenant which his ancestors made with these people; and therefore to shew the injustice of his conduct, it is said, "that the children of Israel had sworn unto them," 2 Sam. xxi. 2. Nothing therefore can be more absurd than the argument founded on this passage of holy writ, to prove covenant-obligations on posterity. Equally inconsistent is the application of Jer. xxxv. where the children of Jonadab are commended for their obedience to the advice of their father. The story is this; Jonadab advised his children not to drink wine; they approved of their father's counsel, and not only obeyed his command, but persuaded their sons to observe this good advice; and from one generation to another they continued to live in the same abstemious manner, in conformity to the request of their father Jonadab. Though every generation prevailed with their own children to abstain from wine, what does this prove? Only that these children were obedient in this to their parents, and approved of the wisdom and counsel of their progenitor.

genitor. It is amazing to see how eagerly clergymen catch at the slightest appearance of a proof, when they labour to establish their own inventions. These dear children of their brain, must be carefully protected and nursed up at any expence. Rather take a priest's Bible from him, than his favourite tenets. These must be defended, although the scripture in their support should suffer a thousand injuries. A man of genius and good sense, with a mind unbiaſſed with system, would never attempt to establish this doctrine under consideration from these passages of holy writ. Israel's disregard of God's counsel is here contrasted with that respect which Jonadab's posterity evidenced for his advice. Their obedience and affection to their father is mentioned as a striking reproof to the Jews, who discovered no esteem for their God, nor regard to his laws. When the Rechabites are commended for this, it is not in the least intimated that they were bound to abstain from wine by virtue of their father's command; such an inconsistent supposition mars the beauty of the passage: When we consider that the high opinion which they entertained of Jonadab's wisdom, and the esteem they had for his advice, were the great motives which induced them to persevere so steadily in that abstinence from wine, then we see the propriety and beauty of the comparison. This view of the subject discovers at once the nature and force of the reproof.

## SECTION V.

### *Concerning Covenant Bonds.*

**O**UR fathers made a bond, but they were not infallible: We must not approve of that deed merely because it was performed by eminently good men. They lived in perilous days; religion and their civil privileges were in imminent danger. To associate together and solemnly engage to defend our holy religion, and their privileges both civil and religious, was certainly commendable. To engage not to submit to tyranny, or an irrational and unscriptural form of worship and government, was truly great and brave; but in these days they were too much agitated and tried to be able to adjust every measure and article in the ballance of the sanctuary: They had no model to assist them in forming their bond;

bond; they had no certain example to regulate their measures. The book of the covenant to which the Old Testament church engaged, could not be adopted by the New. The manner in which this service was performed by the Jews, could not be imitated by the Christians. In such circumstances they must have been more than men, if they had not erred. The nature and form of their bond therefore cannot be an infallible standard; besides, we must be in the very same circumstances which they then were, before we have the same reasons for the same conduct. I therefore wish that our modern bond-makers would seriously consider, that if it is formed without divine authority; if the church receives the human INVENTION, and swear to believe and obey its contents, she is guilty of idolatry, and breaks the second commandment of the moral law. Those who think it their duty to observe this form of worship, take for their warrant the example of the Old Testament church. It is evident that their bond was the pure and unaltered words of revelation, and nothing else: They read the laws of God, and declared with a loud voice, "All that the Lord hath said, we will do, and be obedient." Seceders read a law of their own making, without any warrant or scriptural example, and swear to believe and obey it, in a manner for which they have no authority. The people in that church may swear to do all that their clergy have said in this bond, and be obedient to them; but they cannot say that they will do all that God hath said, and be obedient to him; unless it be with this reserve, so far as the words of the Lord agree with the words of our priests. This is, I think, a dangerous liberty taken in the church of Christ. If one church be at liberty to fabricate a system, and oblige her members to engage as solemnly to observe it, as if it were an immediate revelation from heaven, so also may every church, in every generation, and thereby innumerable innovations will creep into the house of God. Human compositions may be good, but it is dangerous to put them in the place of infallible inspiration. All who wish well to religion, and desire to transmit it pure to posterity, should lift up their voice like a trumpet against every fatal precedent of this kind in the church. A fair examination of that bond which was fabricated in the Secession, to all which they solemnly swore faith and obedience, is enough to convince every Christian of the fatal tendency of this invention. I believe that some of its parts will gorge the stomach of a sensible Christian,



Christian, as much as the Solon goose did an Englishman in Glasgow\*.

Among the many unwarrantable articles to be found in this bond, I shall mention one. In it all Latitudinarian principles are renounced. Do their people know what these are? if they do not, how can they pretend upon oath to renounce them? But the clergy are at liberty to explain the word, and the people must renounce these principles which *they* call Latitudinarian. This is by their priests explained to be the Relief scheme: The common epithet which is given to Relievers in some parts of our country is Latitudinarians. In this sense the word is understood by many who have taken the bond: They therefore solemnly swear to renounce the Relief scheme; which I have shewn to be the original constitution of the Church of Scotland. I feel for these poor deluded people, who mean well, but have fallen into this grievous mistake. These dangerous traditions in the church of Christ, are matter of deep lamentation.

## SECTION VI.

### *Of the Seasons proper for Covenanting.*

**T**HE Secession represent Covenanting as a moral occasional duty, only to be performed in certain seasons, when we have a particular call in Providence; but what these particular times are, and how this call in Providence may be known with certainty, is not yet determined. Some candidly confess, that the scriptures do not determine this affair. It is very remarkable, that none of these seasons occurred in our Saviour's days, nor in the days of his apostles. The primitive Christians never were able to discover any of these seasons; nor did they occur in the New Testament church until the 16th century. Mr. Hutchison who disapproves of Covenanting under the gospel, as unwarrantable, produced

\* Unacquainted with the nature of that fowl, the Englishman eat voraciously; unable to digest his morsel, he sickened and threw up. In great distress, he swore, that he had often heard of the Solemn Leg and Covenant in Scotland, but never before of the Solemn Goose; heartily cursing both, he declared that he thought they were most terrible and dangerous food; and protested, that, if God kept him in his right senses, neither the Solemn Leg, nor the Solemn Goose of Scotland, should ever come again within his lips.

produced this fact as an argument against the mode of worship. As Mr. Walker determines this service to be a duty of the first table of the law, Mr. Hutchison urges the seasonableness of that duty in our Saviour's days, and insists, that according to the reasonings of his antagonist, our Lord did not fulfil all righteousness, but neglected the performance of a moral duty; thinking this opinion fatal to Christianity, he prays that it may not be believed. This argument appears to gravel Mr. Walker; As affected contempt is usually the last refuge of chagrine, so this gentlemen betakes himself to railing, for which he seems better qualified than for reasoning, and instantly charges his opponent with a vile profanation of God's name; then he earnestly entreats his brethren to rebuke that profane sinner, who had vexed him so heartily with common sense and scripture. Mr Hutchison, ashamed of having entered the lists with such antagonists, seems determined to leave them on the field of battle, to make of their covenants, terms of communion, and other peculiarities, what they please. Although I occasionally touch this tender point, yet it is far from my intention to carry on a dispute with Messrs Walker and Ramsay, or gentlemen of their complexion.—If these accomplished warriors will fight, I wish they may not disturb the peace of the church, but combat one another. The subject before us is well worthy of their quill. The battle was begun some time ago; it ended sooner than might have been expected.—The Antiburghers maintain, that times of division in the church, are proper seasons for Covenanting. Mr Ramsay, the great champion of that church, printed a sermon, which was extorted from him by the importunate requests of several congregations; he also had a call in Providence to publish that important discourse, for the edification of the church, as we learn from an advertisement on the front of the work. In that valuable sermon Mr Ramsay urgeth five stout arguments to prove, that a time of division among professed Christians is a proper season for Covenanting.—The Burgher season is a time of peace and unanimity. Divisions are an insurmountable obstacle in their way of performing this service, which Mr. Walker, the Goliath of that church, proves at large, in his no less important sermon on Covenanting, pages 29, 30. If the din of war still delight your ears, ye noble warriors! return to the conflict, and defend your cause; you are excellently matched with one another; think not

of turning your arms any where else. In place of five, let the first encounter be made with fifty arguments on every side: May none of these great champions prevail, till, wearied of this species of warfare, they both agree to throw down their arms, and never more engage on the field of controversy. Religion will gain by such a resolution. Her institutions are not regulated by the whimsical caprice of the clergy, as is the performance of this much contested service. I sincerely wish, that contending parties would consider that Christianity is beautiful on account of her simplicity, as Judaism was grand in her ceremonial institutions. To argue from the one to the other, as to the mode of worship, is seldom safe. Every Christian who believes that the form, as well as the matter of our worship, is prescribed by God, will be jealous of all modes of service which is not stamped with the divine signature. Expecting therefore that the Secession, whose system of principles respecting Covenanting, hath hitherto been erroneous, and exceedingly dangerous in their consequences, (as hath been clearly shewn in these sections,) will soon exhibit a new system on this important subject, I decline offering any opinion, in this publication, concerning the propriety or impropriety of religious and public oaths under the gospel.

I shall here bid an adieu to my Antiburgher brethren, earnestly wishing they may yet flourish as a reformed church of Christ, and be by the holy Spirit guided into all truth. With this view, I have endeavoured to mark your imperfections, and hope you will strive to amend. Farewel!

It only remains to rebuke and dismiss in peace, with suitable exhortations, the Burgher Association.



## THE CONCLUSION.

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To the BURGHER CLERGY.

BRETHREN,

AS that gospel which we preach, is called “the gospel of peace;” our Master, “the Prince of peace;” and his servants, “Messengers of peace;” the unprejudiced cannot but ask, “From whence ariseth all this unhallowed strife, so long maintained by the clergy?” It is in favour of our hearers, that they are not chiefly to blame: The most sensible and religious detest the manner in which the preachers of the gospel contend against one another, and occasion these unhappy divisions. They justly blame their motives, and other conduct, and loudly call for union and concord. Though there are valuable ministers in every denomination, who act from the best of motives, yet I am fully convinced that many have not truth and religion at heart, but maintain our shameful contentions from pride and resentment, or for gain. I do not mean, gentlemen, to fix this censure on you in particular: I only wish to dissuade you from such measures as will not fail to raise in the minds of the impartial, strong suspicions. I might urge your serious and unprejudiced attention to the subjects here discussed, by arguments drawn from your interest and characters, the honour and peace of your followers, the success of religion, and your own eternal concerns; but that, I trust, would be superfluous to men of your discernment and reflection. — It cannot be denied, that in all this strife you have been the aggressors. Though the Burghers have preached and written not a little against the Relief Church; though that synod have given an uncharitable and unjust account of her principles and practice, yet, conscious of her innocence as to the crimes with which she is charged, no reply, reproach, or even complaint was ever returned by her to you. Individuals have spoken, but not the church herself. Your conduct towards us does not discover so much of that peaceable, meek, and

charitable temper of mind, which we think is incumbent on the followers of our Lord and Master. What service can you expect to do to religion by traducing the characters and misrepresenting the principles of other Christians? Can you expect to protect a tottering fabrick, by criminating other churches? Have you considered the nature and importance of love and charity as described in 1 Cor. xiii. throughout, and endeavoured to regulate your conduct according to that principle? Alas! brethren, that your testimony for God should discover a temper so inconsistent with Christianity. Do you expect to meet with us in heaven? Are none of those men whom you abuse heirs of salvation? Have you forgot what our dear Redeemer said, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of them, ye did it unto me?" If ye take us for enemies either to your own selves, or religion, it is a great MISTAKE. We are your FRIENDS, your BRETHREN: We love, and pray for you, even though we have been greatly injured. Can it be any crime in us to preach the gospel to our countrymen? Are ye angry with us because we endeavour to reclaim the ungodly, and encourage the good? We wish you God's speed, and think there is work enough for us all in the vineyard of Christ. Listen to the reasons which induced us to differ from you in several articles, and you will find, that at least we act as honest men, according to the light which is given us. Why then do you pretend to judge our hearts, and declare them unconscionable, and without principle? Suppose that in some things we had been wrong, ought you not to have instructed us in the spirit of meekness and love? Should you not in some measure have covered the weakness of less enlightened brethren, till they arrived nearer your own stature? Compare your conduct towards the Relief Church with our Saviour's on the cross; there he prayed for his very murderers, yea, and apologized for them to his Father, saying, "They know not what they do." You call him Lord and Master, but with the same breath charge those who profess to be his and your friends with base crimes, of which you have before you the clearest evidences that they are not guilty. Alas! brethren, I am afraid that this Testimony with which you make so much noise in the church; will testify against your own selves before both God and man.—Were two brethren, the sons of an affectionate father, together in a deep and dangerous water,

water, ought they not to stand by and mutually help one another. Suppose their father present, exhorting them to perform mutual good offices, what would you think of the eldest, if Cain-like, he rose up against his brother, and hung a mill-stone about his neck to sink him to the bottom? If his younger brother, at that very time, were holding out his arms to do him good, and breathing affection and love, would not this circumstance aggravate the crime of his murderer? Is it possible that such a cap as this can fit a Christian church? View it with attention. You and we are two churches, who, though imperfect, yet have many good things about us, of which, I hope, God will approve. Many of his dear children are in each of the churches, the objects of his tender care. We are together in a perilous state, stand much in need of help and comfort from one another; our own weakness, the powerful opposition we have to struggle against, and many discouragements from within and from without, require our mutual aid. Our heavenly Father, is present, earnestly exhorting us to perform all the kind offices of love and sympathy. The Relief Church opened her arms and welcomed you to all the intimacies of love and friendship: She called you brethren, and in expectation of sitting down with you, and other saints, in our Father's kingdom above, declared her desire of holding communion with you on earth. While thus we wished to strengthen your hands, and comfort the hearts of one another; after much murmuring and calumny from the pulpit, you suddenly fixed your Testimony, like a mill-stone, upon our reputation, and endeavoured to murder our character, as a church of Christ, in this world. Is not our reputation and character more precious than life itself? If that be ruined, can we be any more serviceable to God on earth? I appeal to every good man who acts in a public station, if he would not rather suffer an excruciating death, than have his character and usefulness blasted, and sit with folded arms idle and ignominious. If, brethren, your cruel and unprovoked attack upon the Relief scheme and her members had been successful, that church would have been totally sunk in the doleful waters of ignominy and abhorrence. Still you persevere in making your members swear at the altar their belief of, and adherence to this Testimony, though the heavy charges which it contains be contradicted by the most clear and undoubted facts. Thus your people, undesignedly help you



to murder the character and usefulness of brethren. Our innocence in this is our comfort. Thousands can testify for us, that the heavy charge is without foundation. It is a foolish presumption, gentlemen, to suppose that the vulgar (as they are often called in contempt) are not qualified to criticise our reasoning, candor, and the spirit of our writings. The eyes of your people now begin to open. Many valuable Christians in your communion are men of learning and taste. They now begin to feel their own reputation injured, in having gone too far against inoffensive brethren. Their own eyes and ears make them doubt the truth of your long creed. Should you write, and preach, and pray incessantly against the Relief, your people, in general, are now convinced that we all preach the same gospel, serve the same Master, profess obedience to the same laws, are subject to the same form of government, and worship God in the same manner. They see with their own eyes, and hear with their own ears, that the ministers in the Relief Church are no less zealous for the grand distinguishing doctrines of the reformation, and design of the covenants, than their own pastors. Cease then, brethren, to persecute us further, least your people, ashamed of having joined with you in this too long, leave your churches empty. Throw down this unwarrantable wall of separation, and let there be no breach, no contentions between us. If, dear brethren, a regard to religion; if obedience to our heavenly Father, who forbids us to injure one another; if the commands of our dear Redeemer, requiring love and peace, can soften and influence your hearts, lay aside your unreasonable prejudices, and let us unite in love and peace. I know you regard these things as sacred, pray weigh their force, and be influenced with them. The most intelligent and religious of both denominations sincerely desire our union. Notwithstanding of all the injuries we have suffered, still our arms are open to receive you, and our hearts disposed to friendship and harmony. Let the time past more than suffice you, in this affair, to have wrought the will of the flesh. Wanton, and truly wicked, must every endeavour be to widen or even continue the breach. Alas! brethren, Why did you make it? The whole blame still lies on your shoulders, if our division stand a moment longer. Though hard and disagreeable the task, I have endeavoured to point out your follies, errors, and the injuries you have  
done

done to fellow saints. These I have not spared, because I love you, and ardently wish your reformation. If any amendmen<sup>t</sup> follow, your brother will be amply recompensed for all his toil: If my labours, respecting you are lost, a conscious sense of having endeavoured to discharge my duty in this affair, will secure me from inward pain. I now wish to dismiss you in peace. Believe me to be sincerely your friend. In hopes you will study to correct your mistakes, and make reparation, I shall continue to pray for your success. Farewel.

*T H E E N D.*

1787



