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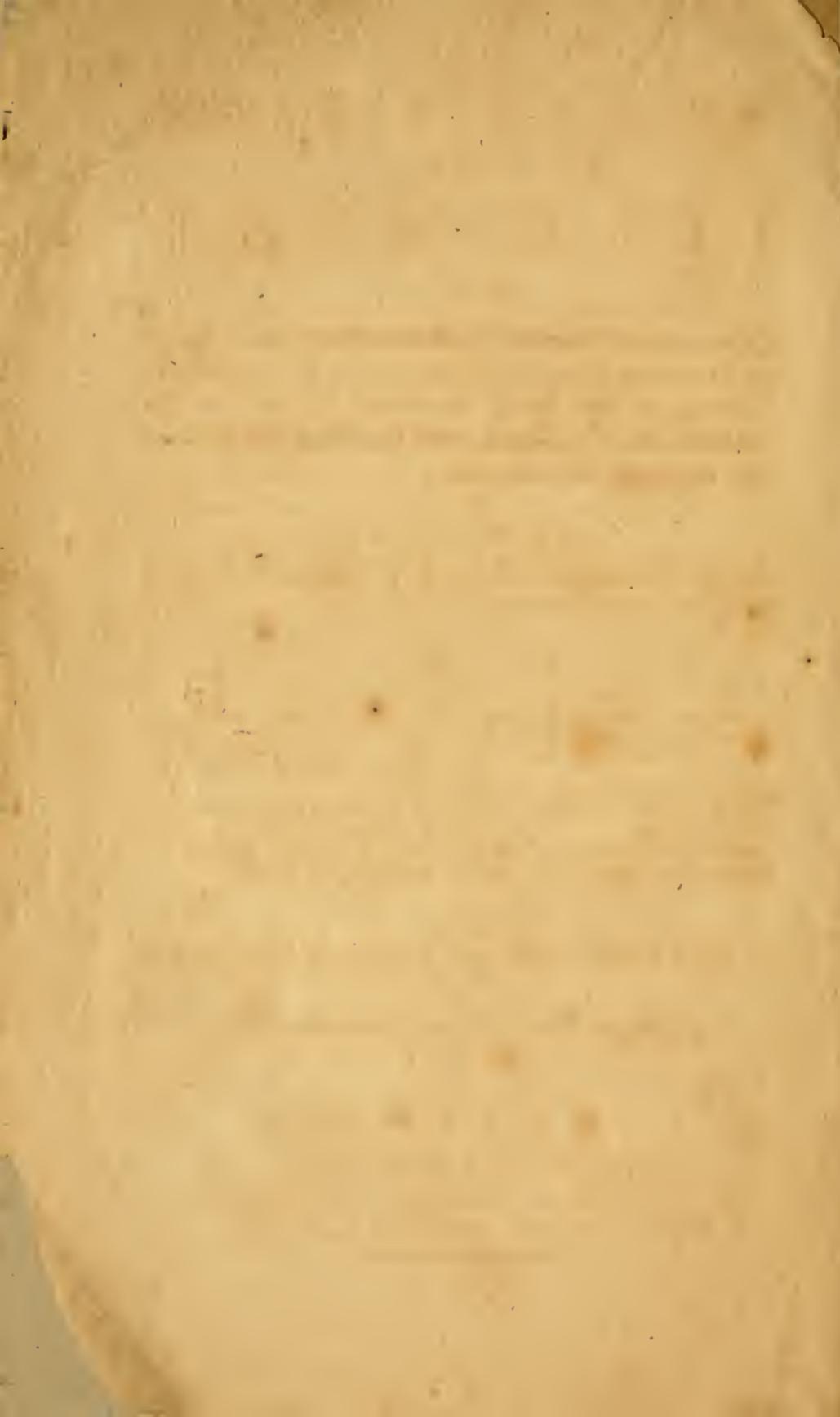
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THE
RE - EXHIBITION
OF THE
TESTIMONY:

O R,

A CONNECTED VIEW of those *Principles*, upon which a SECESSION from the *Judicatories* of the CHURCH OF SCOTLAND was stated, by several Ministers of the Gospel, in 1733; and, since that time, maintained by the ASSOCIATE SYNOD.

CONTAINING,

- | | |
|---|---|
| I. A TESTIMONY to the Doctrine, Worship, Government, and Discipline of the Church of SCOTLAND; or, REASONS, &c. &c. | DECLINATURE; with OBSERVATIONS thereon by the Associate Presbytery. |
| II. ACT, DECLARATION, and TESTIMONY of the Associate Presbytery; to which is now added, an APPENDIX. | VI. REASONS by Messrs. ERSKINE, WILSON, MONCRIEFF, and FISHER, why they have not ACCEDED to the Judicatories of the established Church. |
| III. The LIBEL which was put into the hands of the Seceding Ministers by the General Assembly, with their ANSWERS. | VII. ACT of the Associate Synod met at <i>Stirling</i> , Oct. 1747. declaring the NULLITY of the <i>pretended Synod</i> , that first met in Mr. GIB'S house, April, 10th. |
| IV. ACTS and PROCEEDINGS of the Associate Presbytery, containing their DECLINATURE. | VIII. ACT of the Associate Synod met at <i>Stirling</i> , containing a NARRATIVE of the <i>rise, progress</i> , and <i>grounds</i> of their SECESSION. |
| V. The ACT of Assembly 1739, condemning the JUDICIAL ACT and | |

WITH

A PREFACE, to this NEW EDITION of these Papers.

PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF THE ASSOCIATE SYNOD.

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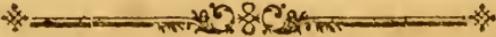
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MDCCLXXIX.



THE Editors of the following TESTIMONIES, &c.
with the corrections and additions now made to them,
are possessed of the sole right of printing, publishing,
and vending them: If any, therefore, shall presume to
print these papers, or any part of them, without their
consent, they will subject themselves to a prosecution.



EDINBURGH, 3d Sept. 1778.

THE Synod met; and, being constitute with prayer, —resumed the affair of publishing the TESTIMONIES, &c. —Appointed Messrs. John Smith, John Belfrage, William Arnot, and Robert Campbell, as a Committee to revise the *Preface* and *Appendix*, which had been laid before the Synod, together with the *Judicial Testimony*, as now corrected; with power to publish said Papers, with all convenient speed. Appointed them to meet at Dunfermline, on Monday the 28th current, for said purpose; with a power to adjourn themselves as they find necessary, 'till they have finished their work.

Extracted by

JOHN BROWN, *Syn. Cls.*

DUNFERMLINE, 28th Sept. 1778.

THE Committee appointed at last meeting of Synod, to revise the *Preface* and *Appendix*, together with the corrections made by the Synod, upon the second Testimony, met in the Session-house here. *Sederunt*, Messrs. John Smith, William Arnot, and Robert Campbell.—Made choice of Mr. Smith to be their Moderator, who constituted the meeting with prayer, and Mr. Campbell to be their Clerk. Read the minute of Synod, appointing this Committee. Read over the *Preface* and *Appendix*, and offered some observations on each.—Appointed their next meeting to be at Stirling, on Monday the 2d of November next.

STIRLING, 2d Nov. 1778.

THE Committee met.—*Sederunt*, Mess. John Smith, John Balfrage, and Robert Campbell.—Read over the Preface and Appendix, with the corrections of the Judicial Testimony, paragraph by paragraph; corrected the language in some places, unanimously approved the whole, and appointed their Clerk to write out a fair copy for the press, that these papers may be published with all convenient speed, agreeable to the order of Synod.

Extracted by

ROBERT CAMPBELL, *Com. Cls.*

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P R E F A C E,

T O T H I S

EDITION of the TESTIMONIES.

THE inspired contents of the *sacred books* are, HISTORIES and PROPHECIES, DOCTRINES and LAWS, PROMISES and THREATNINGS. If we attend to the supreme authority with which those antient oracles are delivered, the interesting subjects of which they treat, and the grand end to which they uniformly tend; or, in whatever light we view them, it will appear, with increasing evidence, that they are of the last importance to human nature in its lapsed state. Viewing them in their intrinsic value, and in their proper connection, they certainly are, what they claim to be, in spite of the groundless clamour of infidelity,—ONE UNDIVIDED SYSTEM;—THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST, *descriptive* of his adorable person and mediatorial character, and *examplified* in his finished redemption, and in the effectual application of it to the souls of men;—THE TRUTH AS IT IS IN JESUS, inseparably connected with HIS divine person, and deriving all its irresistible efficacy from HIM alone;—THE DOCTRINE WHICH IS ACCORDING TO GODLINESS, *Teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world*;—THE TRUTH;—THE FAITH;—THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS, of which no detached part can be injured, but the whole must suffer with it; and no particular branch can be candidly professed, or cordially believed, to the exclusion of another.

These great doctrines of Revelation, being the appointed means for displaying the glory of God, in the eternal salvation of men, the devil and his agents on earth have, in all ages, strenuously endeavoured, either by force or fraud, to conceal, corrupt, or exterminate them; and at the same time to contrive, introduce, and establish the contrary errors. To render their attempts the more indiscernable, though not the less successful, they have, for the most part, attacked the truth by parcels, expecting, with no small degree of probability, that the perversion

of one article, in the sacred system, would make way for the overthrow of another: and, with a degree of policy, peculiar to men of corrupt minds, they have, in the several ages and diversified circumstances of the Christian church, adapted their opposition either to the prevailing passions, or criminal ambition of the human heart.

To defeat the design of this satanical enterprize, no less dishonourable to God, than destructive to the souls of men, it is given in charge to ecclesiastical rulers in particular, as well as to Christians of the meanest rank,—to receive the holy scriptures as the record and testimony of God concerning his Son JESUS CHRIST; to learn the truth as it is IN Jesus; to get wisdom, and with all their getting to get understanding; to receive the scriptures as the infallible oracles of the great apostle and high-priest of their profession; to meditate on God's law day and night, making his testimonies the men of their council; to receive the truth in the love of it; to hide it in their hearts, that they may not sin against God; to live on the truth by the faith of the Son of God; to buy the truth, and sell it not; to account nothing too dear to be abandoned for the sake of the truth, or an excusable temptation to indulge a contemptuous neglect of it; to beware of apostacy from it; to be firmly established, rooted, and grounded in it; to keep it as a precious treasure deposited in their hands, to be conveyed pure and entire to the rising race, and as a valuable TRUST, for the management of which they must give an account unto God the Judge of all; to hold fast the word of life; to hold it forth in the most public manner, when the temper of the times requires it; and with a generous and disinterested boldness to display it before the world, as the standard which the *Holy Ghost* hath lifted up, as well for gathering sinners to *Jesus Christ*, as for distinguishing the followers of the Lamb from those of his adversaries; to confess and AVOW the truth before a perverse and adulterous generation; to walk in the truth, adorning the doctrines of God their Saviour in all things, by a blameless, holy, just, and heavenly conversation; to hold fast the truth in faith and love, by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in them; to hold fast the profession of their faith without wavering; to hold fast that

which they have, and whereunto they have attained, that no man take their crown; to fight a good fight, to keep the faith; to contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints; to set themselves for the defence of the gospel, striving together for the faith of it; and to resist unto blood for the sake of the truth, striving against sin, in opposition to every degree of apostacy from it.

When any article of divine truth meets with uncommon opposition, or is loaded with unmerited abuse, IT becomes, in these circumstances, THE PRESENT TRUTH, in which Christians ought to be peculiarly established, that they may not fall away from their stedfastness by the error of the wicked; IT is at that particular period, *the word of CHRIST's patience*, which they ought faithfully to keep in their profession and practice, as they themselves would wish to be graciously kept by HIM, in the hour of temptation. When the church, which is the city of the living God, is assaulted, either by avowed enemies or professed friends, the loyal citizens of Zion are loudly called to stand forth in defence of their common interest; and, with a lively and prudent zeal to oppose the dangerous approach of the insidious adversary. The intelligent reader of the sacred oracles cannot miss to observe, *that* holy zeal which animated our divine Redeemer, and his inspired servants, for the illustration and defence of such particular truths as were, at that time, either secretly perverted, or openly denied. In imitation of such illustrious examples, the Christian churches, in all ages, have, by mutual consent, compiled their several *Confessions of Faith*, for the defence of injured truths; while, at the same time, they wisely pointed the force of these public standards in direct opposition to contemporary errors.

While we refuse that those CREEDS and CONFESSIONS, are, in any respect the foundation of our faith, or the rule of what we are to believe towards God, we contend, that they are founded on the divine word; that they are an excellent form of sound words, which we are commanded to hold fast; that they are a comprehensive exhibition of *the analogy of faith*, according to which we are to prophecy; and that they are a connected representation of the first principles of the doctrines of Christ. View-

ed in this point of light, it will be difficult to show, that they are either improper or absurd; and notwithstanding the mean and futile reflections which have, with an unjustifiable degree of ignorance and levity, been liberally thrown upon them, by some professed ministers in the church of Scotland, not to mention those in the church of England, they are of the greatest utility in the Christian world: and even in this degenerate age, there are, it is to be hoped, not a few, who hold them in deserved esteem. Possessed of this temper and discernment, judicious Christians will be apt, under the clearest conviction to consider them as COLLECTIONS of divine truths in their proper connection; as *tests of orthodoxy*, or subordinate *criteria*, absolutely necessary for distinguishing truth from error, and for detecting the erroneous in their unmanly subterfuges; as avowed **STANDING TESTIMONIES** for truth, in opposition to error; and as **AUTHORITATIVE REPRESENTATIONS**, in an agreeableness to the word of God, of the principles and terms of Christian communion, in particular churches, intended to direct their members, how to hold comfortable and consistent fellowship with one another in the Lord. Our *Westminster* Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms, the Form of Presbyterian church government and discipline, with the Directory for worship, are, perhaps, the most excellent ecclesiastical standards in the Christian world. To renounce, therefore, any of those important truths, exhibited in these standards, must involve this nation in proportional guilt; and the more so, as we are engaged in our covenants, and other vows, to maintain and defend them against all opposition.

To stand forth for the defence of these truths, in a bold and determined opposition to an increasing deviation from them in principle and practice, was the leading design of the following **TESTIMONIES**, as will fully appear from a cursory review of the second, and is more fully expressed in the last paragraph of it. That our renowned forefathers strenuously contended for the royal prerogatives of **JESUS CHRIST**, who **ALONE** is king in Zion; and that many of them suffered imprisonment, banishment, and death; in the important struggle which they maintained against the encroachments of ambitious and enterprising

ecclesiastics, patronized by the powers of the world, cannot be denied by any who have, even a moderate acquaintance with the history of this church. But when the partizans of this new system of church polity increased in numbers, and acquired additional strength, by every new accession to the party, they published with less reserve their designs with regard to the constitution of this church, and in proportion to the success which attended their former attempts, they pursued their pernicious plan with unwearyed ardor, and repeated their assaults with more boldness and intrepidity. And as the present century hath produced a vast increase of numbers to this party within the bosom of a national church, who have attacked the inspired system of gospel truth, with a degree of virulence and audacity, almost unknown in former times, the FOUR MINISTERS who formed the *Affociation*, having, along with many hundreds of private Christians, frequently employed petitions and remonstrances without effect, found themselves obliged by the command of God, and their ordination vows, to withdraw from the prevailing party in the church; and in a way suited to their situation at that time, to publish a standing TESTIMONY to the *doctrine, worship, government, and discipline* of the CHURCH OF SCOTLAND, as these are contained at large in the *word of God*, and exhibited to all her members in her adopted *Standards*; and all this in opposition to a growing defection from these principles, either in sentiment or conduct.

In a republication of these papers, it is proper to suggest, what the judicious reader will soon observe, that the *sins and backslidings* of this church and nation, are represented in a two-fold point of view. In the *first Testimony* they are adduced as GROUNDS OF SECESSION from the present judicatories of the established church, in full consistency with the most steady attachment to all her avowed principles and constitution. To attack the conduct of Seceders upon any other ground than this, is to beg the question; and to confute them, upon these principles, hath never been attempted by their most inveterate enemies. The attempt is as ridiculous as it would be impracticable*.

* To say that *Seceders*, who have dissented from the judicatories of the established church, are either *Seſarics* or *Schismatics*, is the most palpable perversion.

In the *second Testimony*, these prevailing sins are considered as just grounds of the divine displeasure with this nation, and as the ordinary forerunners of public calamities †. In both *Testimonies*, the truths of God, which were at that time, and are still opposed, are not only plainly and peremptorily asserted, and the contrary errors positively condemned; but the too general national deviation from those truths, is particularly pointed out, as a mean to direct Seceders and others, to give glory to God, in confessing their own, and the iniquities of their fathers; and to avoid a fashionable imitation, and culpable approbation of their sins, in the present age: and to show them, that while they profess to *contend earnestly for the faith, which was once delivered to the saints*, they ought sincerely to mourn for all the abominations that are done in the midst of Zion.

It must, however, be evident to an impartial reader, whose mind is not warped by prejudice, or under the influence of faction, that the most important branch of the testimony is that in which the *truths of God* are solemnly asserted, and the contrary *errors* expressly condemned. It is properly in respect to *this*, that Seceders declare their

sion of language; and the more inexcusable that it has been often practised by men possessed of the strongest intellectual powers, whose liberality of sentiment, in every other instance, is altogether unquestionable. When Messrs. *Erskine, Moncrieff, Wilson, and Fisher*, in consequence of those rigorous measures that were then, and have, since that time, been pursued with inflexible perseverance, were actually cast out from the judicatories of the church, they did not form themselves into a distinct *Seck*, with a design to set forth new opinions; but took up their ground upon the known principles of this church, in agreeableness to the word of God; and therefore cannot be called *Seckaries*, till a new meaning shall be affixed to that word, very different from the idea which is at present conveyed by it. They never pretended to erect any new ecclesiastical constitution of their own; but declared, in the most public manner, their warmest attachment to the constitution of the national church, upon the principles of the Reformation; from which constitution they never did, and it is hoped their followers never will, make any Secession: and therefore they reject, with a generous contempt, the charge of *schism*, and think they are well able to prove, that it recoils upon those who bring it against *them*. If the reader shall be pleased to peruse Mr Wilson's excellent *Defence of the Reformation principles of the church of Scotland*, with the *Continuation*, he will find the sentiments of *Seceders* expressed with no less plainness than perspicuity. The learned and pious author of that Treatise, fixes the conduct of *Seceders*, and the nature of their Secession from the judicatories of the established church, upon such grounds as offer defiance to the united efforts of their adversaries, who have never attempted, and will never be able to overthrow them, by any species of fair argumentation.—But such is the influence of prejudice in the minds of some, that idle rant takes the place of argument, and a bold assertion is substituted in the room of rational evidence.

† See Mr. Wilson's *Continuation of his Defence of the Reformation principles of the church of Scotland*, p. 15, 16.

united confession of the truth, as distinctly represented from the holy scriptures, in our adopted standards of *doctrine, worship, government, and discipline*, in opposition to the repeated departures from this system, with which the great body of the nation is chargeable before God. Accordingly this TESTIMONY is not a new standard of church-communion, as some with a malevolent effrontery have been pleased to call it; far less is it to be considered as of equal importance with the public authorized standards of this church: but it is a plain declaration of their genuine sense and meaning, and a proper application of that sense and meaning to our conduct in the present age, in opposition to former or present defections *.

It were to be wished indeed, that all who profess to bear testimony to the truth as it is IN Jesus, had uniform and unexceptionable views of the divine favours vouchsafed to this church, in the beginning and progress

* “In the Act and Testimony of the Associate Presbytery, our received standards of *doctrine, worship, government, and discipline*, are particularly applied and laid against the errors that have sprung up in this church, and against such corruptions and defections as have taken place therein, by which our subordinate standards have been either obscured or perverted as to their genuine sense and meaning, and by which also palpable deviations have been made from them. Hence, in the assertory part of the Act and Testimony, the truths asserted are viewed as agreeable to the word of God, the supreme standard, and also as agreeable to our subordinate standards. Again, in the condemnatory part of the Act and Testimony, the errors, corruptions, or defections condemned, are viewed as contrary to the word of God, and our subordinate standards, received and adopted by this church in her reforming times: Therefore, the Act and Testimony of the Associate Presbytery is not a new standard of church-communion, far less is it to be equalled with our received standards; but it is an application and declaration of their genuine sense and meaning, in opposition to the errors, defections, and corruptions that have prevailed both in former and present times.

“The Presbytery require of all such as accede to them, or who come under their Presbyterial Inspection, that they signify their approbation of their judicial Act and Testimony; and the plain obvious meaning of this is, that they signify or declare their conjunction with the Presbytery in the same confession that they make of the truths of God, held forth from the word of God in our received standards of *doctrine, worship, discipline, and government*: And, in this respect, the Presbytery, and such as make accession to them, do state themselves a confessing body; and the confession that they make is of the truths of God, in opposition unto deviations from the same; they make no other confession but what has been made by this church, in her reforming and covenanting times; they make no other confession but what the whole church and land are obliged by the word and oath of God to make, and which this *national church*, as she goes under the name of the established church, doth refuse to make. The Confession then that is made by the Associate Presbytery, and such as are in conjunction with them, upon the footing of the judicial Act and Testimony, is a confession of the truths of our Lord Jesus, against several deviations and defections from the same, either in principle or practice, which the majority of this visible church stand chargeable with.” See Mr. WILSON’S Continuation, p. 148, 149.

of her reformation from Popery, as also of her general abuse of such distinguished privileges from age to age, that with one mind and mouth they might glorify God, by a grateful acknowledgement of the one, and a penitential confession of the other; but as this is scarcely to be expected in a militant church, and especially in *these perilous times*, it becomes those concerned chiefly to know and profess what is of the utmost importance, the certainty of which rests upon the infallible record of God himself, and not on the fallible narratives of men, which in themselves can never be a sufficient ground of our faith. To be ignorant, or mistaken, with regard to the real existence of some past transactions in the church or state, transmitted to us upon human authorities, some of which are contradicted by others of the same class, and others of them covered with a cloud of uncertainty, which to us at this distance of time, is almost impenetrable, can never be so criminal, as our ignorance or mistakes with respect to the truths of God revealed in his word, especially if such ignorance, or mistakes, proceed from groundless prejudices, or unreasonable indolence.

It must therefore be obvious to every sober and unbiassed Christian, that an attempt, as in this edition of the *second Testimony*, to elucidate some historical references, or even to omit others, which do not appear to be sufficiently vouched, cannot, with any degree of candour and justice, amount to a DROPPING of any part of the *Testimony*, AS it is a *Testimony* to the truths of God revealed in his word, notwithstanding the unprovoked abuse which some have endeavoured to throw upon such an attempt, with a manifest design to support the credit of a tottering fabric. To all such it will be sufficient to observe here, once for all, what one of the original compilers of the *Testimony* boldly avers, that unless the principles adopted by that *Testimony* are proven to be contrary to the word of God, and the received standards of this church, any critical exception to the historical narrations contained in it, does not, in the least, affect that confession of the truths of God, which is made by the whole body of Seceders, but is rather a wrangling about circumstances*.

* See Mr. WILSON's Continuation of his Defence, p. 150, 151.



A

T E S T I M O N Y

T O T H E

DOCTRINE, WORSHIP, GOVERNMENT,
and DISCIPLINE of the

CHURCH OF SCOTLAND:

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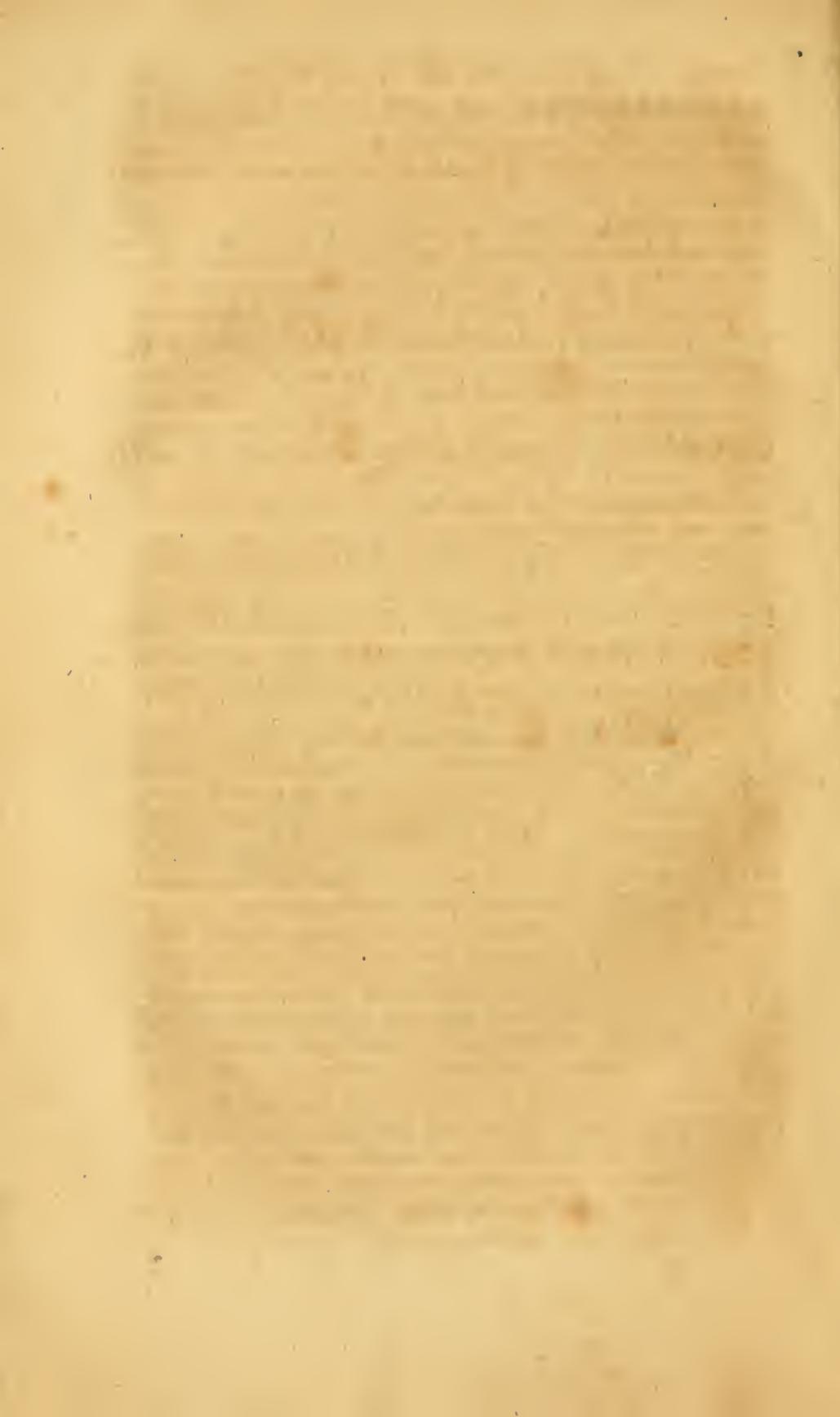
R E A S O N S

By Mr. EBENEZER ERSKINE, Minister at Stirling,
Mr. WILLIAM WILSON, Minister at Perth,
Mr. ALEX. MONCRIEFF, Minister at Abernethy,
and Mr. JAMES FISHER, Minister at Kinclaven,
for their PROTESTATION entred before the
Commission of the General Assembly, Novem-
ber 1733, upon the Intimation of a Sentence
of the said Commission, loosing their Relation
to their respective Parishes, &c.

JUDE 3. Contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.
REV. ii. 4, 5. Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left
thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent,
and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove
thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.



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T E S T I M O N Y

T O T H E

DOCTRINE, WORSHIP, GOVERNMENT, and
DISCIPLINE of the Church of SCOTLAND, &c.

I N T R O D U C T I O N .

*Containing a short NARRATIVE of the Proceedings of the
several Judicatories against the four protesting Ministers.*

THE Commission of the General Assembly having, at their meeting November last, passed a sentence against Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, minister of the gospel at Stirling, Mr. William Wilson, minister at Perth, Mr. Alexander Moncrieff, minister at Abernethy, and Mr. James Fisher, minister at Kinclaven, *losing their pastoral relations to their respective parishes, and declaring them no longer ministers of this church*; It is thought needful, that, before the grounds and reasons of the Protestation, which they entered, upon the intimating of the said sentence unto them, are laid open, the reader should know how they came to be severally concerned in this process. Therefore the following short *Narrative* of the conduct of the judicatories towards them, as also of the several steps that they found themselves obliged to take, is offered by way of *Introduction*, that the reader may have a more distinct view of this affair.

Mr. Erskine, minister at Stirling, did, in a sermon preached at Perth, October 1732. at the opening of the provincial Synod there, with some freedom and plainness of speech, express himself against some of the sins and prevailing evils of the present time; particularly against the Act of Assembly, 1732. *anent the settling of vacant churches; and the proceedings of our church-judicatories, in the settlement of ministry over reclaiming and dissenting congregations*: but

the freedom and faithfulness he used, was so disagreeable to some ministers who heard him, that, at the second diet of the Synod, they represented, That there were many things delivered by Mr. Erskine in his sermon which gave offence; and at the same time others declared, that they were not offended at any thing they heard spoken, and that they heard nothing but sound and seasonable doctrine delivered. Though the brethren who heard the sermon appeared to be of different sentiments at the first tabling of this affair, yet the matter was so far pushed, as a Committee was appointed to have the particulars which were said to have given offence, under their consideration, and to lay them before the Synod at their next diet.

The Committee having laid before the Synod, the expressions in Mr. Erskine's sermon, alledged to be offensive, he was allowed a fight of them in their clerk's hands; and even this small favour he could not obtain, without a vote of the Synod: and, having prepared some answers, he read the same in open Synod, and delivered them to the clerk.

The expressions alledged to be emitted by Mr. Erskine, together with his answers thereto, are to be found in *The true State of the Process*, published some time ago, which contains likewise a just account of the whole of the Synod's proceedings, from an extract under the hands of the clerk; and we refer the reader unto it, for his more particular information in the whole of this affair.

After *three days* were spent in *warm* reasonings upon the sermon, the Synod did, by a plurality of *six voices*, find Mr. Erskine *cenfurable* for the expressions contained in the process, and which it was alledged were emitted by him in his sermon, at the opening of the said Synod. *Twelve* ministers, and *two* ruling elders *dissented* from, and *protested* against, this sentence.

Mr. Fisher, minister at Kinclaven, son-in-law to Mr. Erskine, being excluded from judging and voting in this affair, because of his near relation to the said Mr. Erskine, judged it his duty to give *some testimony* against a sentence which he apprehended to be very unwarrantable: and, having no other way left him for his own just exoneration, did *protest* against the foresaid sentence, not only as *prejudicial* to Mr. Erskine, but as *injurious* to the truths of God's word; and *appealed* to the ensuing General Assembly. Mr. Erskine did likewise *protest* against the said sentence, and *appealed* to the next Assembly.

The Synod having found the *expressions*, alledged to be emitted by Mr. Erskine, *cenfurable*, came next to consider what the *cenfure* should be: and then, by another vote, they resolved to *rebuke* Mr. Erskine *at their bar*, and to *admonish* him to *behave orderly* for the future. But Mr. Erskine, having appealed from their sentence, finding him *cenfurable*, came not again to the Synod at this meeting.

When the Synod met at Stirling, April thereafter, Mr. Erskine was called; and when the moderator was about to execute the sentence of rebuke and admonition, passed at the last meeting of the Synod, he declared that he adhered to his appeal; and, in a paper which he

read, represented, that he was not convinced of any just ground he had given for a rebuke and admonition.

Thus this affair came before the last General Assembly; and when the Assembly entred upon it, none of the *dissenters* from the sentence of the Synod of Perth and Stirling were present, but Mr. Wilson and Mr. Moncrieff, who pled at the Assembly-bar, that they might be heard upon the reasons of their *dissent* from the sentence of their own Synod; this they judged to be their right and privilege: but the Assembly thought fit to refuse them a hearing in the cause.

Mr. Fisher did likewise give in his appeal in due time to the Committee of bills, who refused to transmit the same to the Assembly. Thus all these three brethren were precluded from laying open their reasons against the condemnatory sentence, at the time when it was very proper and necessary for them to have done it; as also from giving a testimony in open Assembly, against what they judged to be a most unwarrantable sentence: and therefore, they looked upon the step which they afterwards took, to be the more needful for their just exoneration, and that both as they were *ministers of the church of Scotland*, and *members of the Synod of Perth and Stirling*.

The extract of the whole process was read before the Assembly, and parties were heard at the bar; and then, after some reasoning among themselves, the Assembly affirmed the sentence of the Synod of Perth and Stirling, with this addition, That though the Synod took no notice of the answers Mr. Erskine had given to their charge, but had confined themselves to the expressions as they had found them to have been emitted by Mr. Erskine; the Assembly thought fit to condemn his answers likewise. Their act and sentence against him is in the following terms:

At Edinburgh, May 15th, 1733.

The General Assembly having, at a former diet, considered an appeal entred by Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, minister at Stirling, from a sentence of the Synod of Perth and Stirling, wherein the said Synod had found ground to censure him, and appointed him to be rebuked, on account of several indecent expressions uttered by him in a Sermon preached before the said Synod in October last, tending to disquiet the peace of this church, and impugning several acts of Assembly, and proceedings of the church-judicatories; and had appointed him to be admonished to behave orderly for the future.—The Assembly found these expressions vented by Mr. Erskine, and contained in the minutes of the foresaid Synod's proceedings, with the answers thereto made by him, to be offensive, and to tend to disturb the peace and good order of the church: therefore, they approved the proceedings of the Synod, and appointed him to be rebuked and admonished by the moderator at their own bar, in order to terminate the process; which was done accordingly.

When the above sentence was intimate to Mr. Erskine, he declared he could not submit to a rebuke and admonition, in regard he was neither conscious to himself, nor judicially convicted, of transgressing

the bounds of his ministerial calling, or of uttering any thing in his sermon contrary to the word of God, or the approven standards of this church; and then gave in the following signed protestation:

Although I have a very great and dutiful regard to the judicatories of this church, to whom I own my subjection in the Lord; yet, in respect the Assembly have found me censurable, and have tendered a rebuke and admonition to me, for things I conceive agreeable unto, and founded upon the word of God, and our approven standards; I find myself obliged to protest against the foresaid censure, as importing, that I have in my doctrine, at the opening of the Synod of Perth, October last, departed from the word of God, and the foresaid standards; and that I shall be at liberty to preach the same truths of God, and to testify against the same, or like defections of this church, upon all proper occasions. And I do hereby adhere unto the testimonies I have formerly emitted against the act of Assembly 1732, whether in the protest entred against it in open Assembly, or yet in my synodical sermon; craving this my protest and declaration to be insert in the records of Assembly, and that I be allowed extracts thereof.

May 14th, 1733.

EEENEZER ERSKINE.

The two dissenting ministers from the sentence of the Synod of Perth and Stirling, judged it their duty likewise to declare themselves against the above decision of the Assembly: their reasons for doing so, are contained at large in the *Representation* they gave in to the Commission of the General Assembly that met in August thereafter, where they say, *If this cause had been Mr. Erskine's personal cause, we should have been silent, and never opened our mouths against the decision of the General Assembly; but we judged it a cause wherein all the ministers and members of this church are very nearly concerned, the decision of the General Assembly in this case, being, as we thought, a plain directory to all the inferior judicatories of this church how to behave, if any minister should, upon proper occasions, lament from the pulpit the sinfulness of that Act of Assembly, (viz. the Act 1732.) and of other unwarrantable proceedings of this church in the settlement of ministers; then, and in this case, they must be brought to the bar of their respective Presbyteries, and there they must be rebuked and admonished.* For this, and other weighty reasons contained in their said *Representation*, they signed an adherence to Mr. Erskine's protestation in the following terms;

We undersubscribing ministers, dissenters from the sentence of the Synod of Perth and Stirling, do hereby adhere to the above Protestation and Declaration, containing a testimony against the Act of Assembly 1732, and asserting our privilege and duty to testify publicly against the same, or like defections, upon all proper occasions.

WILLIAM WILSON.

ALEXANDER MONCRIEFF.

Mr. Fisher, minister at Kinclaven, &c. on the very same grounds, with his other two brethren, sign the following adherence:

I, Mr. James Fisher, minister at Kinclaven, appellant against the sentence of the Synod of Perth in this question, although the Committee of Bills did not think fit to transmit my reasons of appeal, find myself obliged to adhere unto the foresaid protestation and declaration.

JAMES FISHER.

After the above protestation, with the adherence thereto, was given in, the brethren withdrew; and the Assembly, having taken the same under their consideration, ordered the four protesting brethren to be cited to their next diet, and appointed a Committee to consider the paper they gave in, and their conduct in this affair, and to bring in, by an overture, what might be fit for the Assembly to do upon the whole.

The four brethren, having received a summons by the Assembly's officer, about eleven of the clock the same night, to compare before the General Assembly, at their meeting ten of the clock next day: and, having accordingly appeared before the Assembly, a Committee was appointed (without any question put unto them) to retire immediately, and to endeavour to persuade them to withdraw their paper and protest; and they, having waited on the Assembly's Committee, laid before them some of their reasons why they could not withdraw their protestation. The Committee returned and made report, *That the four brethren continued fully resolved to adhere to their paper and protest.* But none of the reasons they offered unto the Committee were reported to the General Assembly; and, immediately upon the above report made by the Committee, the brethren were ordered to remove, and wait the Assembly's judgment.

When the four brethren were removed, the Committee appointed at the preceding diet of the Assembly, offered their overture upon the whole affair; which being read and considered, the Assembly, by a very great majority, enacted and appointed as follows:

The General Assembly ordains, That the four brethren aforesaid, appear before the Commission in August next, and then show their sorrow for their conduct and misbehaviour, in offering to protest, and in giving in to this Assembly the paper by them subscribed; and that they then retract the same. And, in case they do not appear before the said Commission in August, and then show their sorrow, and retract, as said is: the Commission is hereby empowered and appointed to suspend the said brethren, or such of them as shall not obey, from the exercise of their ministry. And further, in case the said brethren shall be suspended by the said Commission, and that they shall act contrary to the said sentence of suspension: the Commission is hereby empowered and appointed, at their meeting in November, or any subsequent meeting, to proceed to a higher censure against the said four brethren, or such of them as shall continue to offend by transgressing this act. And the General Assembly do appoint the several Presbyteries, of which the brethren are members, to report to the Commission in August, and subsequent meetings of it, their conduct and behaviour with respect to this act.

When this severe sentence was passed, without ever hearing them in open Assembly, upon the relevancy of the crime alledged against them to infer such a high censure, they resolved, upon the intimation of it, to read the following short paper as their joint speech; and, when they began to read it, the Assembly's officer was called to take them to the door, which obliged them to lay it down upon the table with an instrument: It is as follows;

In regard the venerable Assembly have come to a positive sentence without hearing our defences, and have appointed the Commission to execute their sentence in August, in case we do not retract what we have done, we cannot but complain of this uncommon procedure, and declare, that we are not at liberty to take this affair to an avisandum.

The four protesting brethren, being cited by the above sentence to the meeting of the Commission in August thereafter, compeared accordingly; and having prepared their written defences, according to their different situations before the Assembly, as appellants from, or protesters against, the sentence of the Synod of Perth and Stirling, they designed to give them in by way of *representation* unto the Commission; but the Commission, upon their appearance at the bar, entered upon a resolve, neither to receive nor read any conjunct paper that might be offered by the protesting brethren; but that they should be obliged to give an answer *separately*, and *viva voce*, if they were now willing, in obedience to the last Assembly, to retract their protestation, and to declare their sorrow for their conduct and behaviour. This resolve of the Commission obliged them to give in their several *representations* with an instrument. Both *representations* are now published to the world, and contain their reasons for protesting against the sentence of the last Assembly; as also their reasons why they could not retract their protestation, or declare their sorrow for their conduct and behaviour.

Mr. Erskine, being first called, was interrogate according to the above resolve of the Commission; to which he answered, -*That he, with his other brethren, had drawn up their answers in writ, which were now lying upon the table; and craved that they might be read.* A considerable time was spent in urging him to give an answer to the question about retracting his protestation, and declaring his sorrow for his conduct and behaviour: but he pled, That it was his just right and privilege to chuse which of the ways he thought proper for his own defence, whether to answer by *word* or by *writ*; and, that he and his brethren having agreed upon their joint written and subscribed answers, he did not incline to give up with this his just right and privilege; and therefore, he still referred to his written answers. Mr. Erskine being removed, a vote was stated about the reading of his paper, and it carried in the affirmative by a great majority. Then he was called in, and allowed to read the *representation* signed by him and Mr. Fisher; which he did accordingly, and laid it down again upon the table: and, being desired to take it up, he refused, in regard it was given in with an instrument, as necessary to be ingrossed in the *process* for their vindication.

Mr. Wilson and Mr. Moncrieff being called, and interrogate as above, referred to their written and signed *representation*, as containing their answer to the Commission's question, and which they craved might be read. But a Committee was appointed to meet with all the four brethren, who accordingly met with them, and endeavoured to persuade them to retract their protestation: but the reasons that were offered by the Committee did not convince them; and therefore, it was reported to the Commission, That they still refused to retract their protest, or to declare their sorrow for the same. And the moderator having enquired at Mr. Wilson and Mr. Moncrieff, if they agreed to the truth of the said report; they answered in the affirmative: upon which, advantage was taken to refuse a reading to their written and signed *representation*; and they were likewise desired to take it up, which they declined to do, because they likewise judged it necessary to be ingrossed in the *process*.

Mr. Wilson and Mr. Moncrieff, being allowed to make their defences before the Commission, *viva voce*, declared they could not retract their protestation against the decision of the last Assembly, nor profess their sorrow for the same: and, having offered some reasons for their refusal, they referred, for other reasons, to the *representation* they had given in, and to which they still adhered; and then protested, *That any sentence of suspension, or of a higher nature, that should be inflicted upon them, should be held and reputed as null and void in itself; and that it should be lawful and warrantable for them to exercise their ministry as hitherto they had done, and as if no such censure had been inflicted upon them, in regard they were not convicted of departing from any of the received principles of this church, or of counteracting their ordination vows and engagements; but, on the contrary, were sentenced to censure by the late General Assembly, for protesting against a decision whereby injury was done to some truths of God, which they were obliged to own and confess; and whereby they were brought under new and unwarrantable terms of ministerial communion, inconsistent with the word of God, and their ordination vows and engagements; as their representation more fully bears.* To this protestation Mr. Erskine and Mr. Fisher adhered.

There were *petitions* and *representations* given in to the Commission from the Presbyteries of Stirling, Dumblain, and Ellon; as also from the Magistrates and Town-Councils, and from the Kirk-sessions of the Burghs of Perth and Stirling, craving a *delay* of the execution of the Assembly's sentence against the *protesting brethren*: but, by a *vote* of the Commission, these several petitions were *refused a hearing*, because, as it was alledged, the persons offering them were not proper parties in the present question; and, although a considerable number in the Commission were for a delay, yet the majority judged the sentence of the Assembly was *peremptory*, and therefore, behoved to be obeyed. And when the *vote* was stated, *Suspend the four protesting brethren from the exercise of their ministerial function, and all the parts thereof, or delay this affair?* it carried, *suspend*. From this

sentence, some ministers and elders, members of the Commission, *disfented*. The sentence of *suspension* being intimate to the *four brethren*, they gave in the following *protestation* :

We hereby adhere to the protestations taken by us before this Court, for ourselves, and in name of all the ministers, elders, and members of the church of Scotland, and of all and every one in our respective congregations, adhering to us ; bearing, That this sentence is in itself null and void ; and, that it shall be lawful and warrantable for us to exercise our ministry as hitherto we have done, and as if no such censure had been inflicted : and that, if, in consequence of this sentence, any minister or probationer shall exercise any part of our pastoral work, the same shall be held and reputed as a violent intrusion upon our ministerial labours. And we do hereby protest for extracts of the papers given in by us, and of the whole of the Commissions procedure against us ; and hereupon we take instruments.

EBENEZER ERSKINE.
ALEX. MONCRIEFF.

WILLIAM WILSON.
JAMES FISHER.

Likewise some *elders* from the several congregations concerned in the said ministers *reclaimed* against the above sentence ; and, by their several *protestations*, declared their adherence to their ministers, notwithstanding of the sentence of *suspension* inflicted upon them. Their *protestations* are to be found in *The true State of the Process*, published some time ago.

The *four brethren*, being cited to the meeting of the Commission in November, compared accordingly ; and, when they were first called to the Commission's bar, they offered to read the following *protestation* ; but, being interrupted, it was laid down upon the table with an instrument.

Edinburgh, November 14th 1733.

We do hereby protest, That our present appearance before the Commission shall not be construed a falling from the declarations we emitted, and the protestations entred, both before and after the executing of the sentence of suspension against us, by the Commission at their meeting in August last : To which protestations and representations, given in by us to the said Commission, we still adhere ; and hereupon take instruments.

EBENEZER ERSKINE.
ALEX. MONCRIEFF.

WILLIAM WILSON.
JAMES FISHER.

The Commission did at their first diet, November 14th, appoint a Committee to commune with the brethren, in order (as was said) to remove their mistakes : they met with the Committee betwixt the forenoon and afternoon's meeting of the Commission, who dealt with them to retract their protestation ; but no satisfying arguments being offered them more as by former Committees of this kind, they continued still to adhere to their protestation. And the Committee reported at the afternoon's meeting of the Commission, that they had

conferred with the four brethren, but without success; and the said brethren being called, were interrogate about their obedience to the sentence of the Commission in August last, suspending them from the exercise of their ministry; and every one of them plainly owned, That, as they had protested, both before and after the said sentence of suspension was execute upon them, That it should be held and reputed null and void, for the reasons contained in their several representations; so they had exercised all the parts of their ministerial office, as if they had been under no such censure.

Addresses, representations, and letters from several Synods and some Presbyteries, relative to the Commission's proceedings in the affair before them, were read; the Synods of Dumfries, Murray, Ross, Angus and Merns, Perth and Stirling, craved the Commission might delay proceeding to a higher censure; the Synods of Galloway, and Fife, and the Presbytery of Dornock, addressed the Commission for lenity, tenderness, and forbearance, towards the suspended ministers; and the Presbytery of Aberdeen represented unto the Commission, That they judged the sentence of suspension, inflicted upon the foresaid ministers, was too high, and that it was a stretching of church-authority. Likewise, many members of the Commission did reason for a delay, and pled, That the act and sentence of the last Assembly did not oblige them to proceed to a higher censure at this meeting of the Commission: and therefore, the question was put, Proceed immediately to inflict a higher censure upon the four suspended ministers, or delay the same till March? And, the votes being numbered, they were found equal on both sides; whereupon, Mr. John Goldie the moderator did cast the balance, by giving his judgment to proceed immediately to a higher censure. From this sentence of the Commission, several ministers and elders, members of the Commission, dissented; and the following Declaration and Protestation was lodged with an instrument in the clerk's hands, by the ministers subscribing the same, and who were not members of the Commission.

DECLARATION and PROTESTATION of some ministers upon the affair of Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, &c. given in to the Commission of the General Assembly met at Edinburgh the 14th day of November, 1733.

• We undersubscribing ministers, members of the church of Scotland, having formerly looked upon the affair relating to Mr. Ebenezer Erskine and his adherents, that has been in dependance before the Assembly and Commission, as a matter of vast consequence and concern to all the ministers and members of this church: though we had no occasion regularly to sign the same papers with these brethren, yet not only did some of us, as well as others present at the last General Assembly, openly and judicially adhere to the Protestation and Declaration given in by them, as containing a testimony against the act of Assembly 1732, anent planting vacant churches, and as asserting our privilege and duty to testify publicly against the same, or like defections, on all proper occasions; but also at the last Commission, met in August, offered our verbal adherence,

as several others did, unto the protestation, these brethren entred against the sentence of the Commission, suspending them from the exercise of their ministry: whereby we intended to testify our concurrence with, and adherence unto, the severall Representations given in by them to the Commission under form of instrument.

Although we yet desire, so far as we can with a safe conscience, to maintain communion with this church, and in a way of communion to plead with our mother; yet the conduct of the last General Assembly and Commission, and what has followed thereupon, does more and more open the melancholy scene, and gives us special occasion to reflect with grief upon the deep defection into which this church has fallen, and is likely further to fall, if the Lord in his sovereign mercy prevent not. And in particular, we cannot but think upon it, as both a sad evidence of the Lord's having in a great measure departed from this church, and a cause of his further departing from and contending against her, that her supreme judicatory, and the Commission thereof, have been left, first to threaten us and severall of our brethren with high and severe censures of this church, for our essaying, according to our measure, to bear testimony for the Lord, his truths and interests, and our refusing to submit to what appears from the Lord's word, and our received standards founded thereon, to be unlawful impositions upon our consciences; and then actually to lay four of our brethren under a sentence of suspension from the exercise of their ministry, and continue to lay both them and us open to further censure, yea, us in particular to the highest censures of the church, (which evidently imports no less than the greater excommunication) for nothing else than the above-named grounds. And further, that they have not only gone into a course of oppressing the Lord's heritage, by violently thrusting in men upon congregations, without the consent and contrary to the declared will of the people; but also do materially excommunicate a great number of sober, serious, and religious people through the land, who either will not tamely take the yoke upon them, by submitting to the ministry of these obtruded on them; or whose consciences are so much offended with the violent measures taken by judicatories, that they cannot reap benefit by the ministry of those who have a direct hand, or join in such courses; and therefore do withdraw from their ministry.

Upon all which accounts, and many others that might be mentioned, as we would desire to keep our garments clean, and not to be involved in the guilt of these and the like defections, and to be found upon the Lord's side, and cleaving to his way in a declining time, and acting in a suitableness to our general as well as particular commission of feeding Christ's Lambs; we find ourselves obliged in this manner to declare our adherence, likeas we hereby do adhere to the *Representations* given in by Mess. Ebenezer Erskine, William Wilson, Alexander Moncrieff, and James Fisher to last Commission, and the *Protestations* then taken by them, as they contain a testimony against the iniquous sentence past against them,

• and against the sinful restrictions laid upon them and other mini-
 • sters, from declaring fully the counsel of God upon proper occasions.
 • And we do further protest, That it shall be lawful and warrantable,
 • for us to hold ministerial communion with these our brethren, not-
 • withstanding any sentence or censure against them upon this process,
 • as looking upon these censures to be without warrant from, yea,
 • contrary to the rule of the Lord's word, and so done, *clave errante*,
 • and null and void in themselves. As also we protest, That it shall
 • be warrantable for us, in the exercise of our ministerial office, to
 • use our best endeavours, in all lawful ways, for the relief of the op-
 • pressed flock of Christ in this land, and their partaking of church-
 • privileges to their edification and comfort: and that, whatever
 • bad effects may follow upon the unwarrantable measures at present
 • taken by judicatories, we shall not be chargeable with them. Upon
 • all which we take instruments.'

RALPH ERSKINE.

THOMAS MAIR.

At the next diet of the Commission, November 15th, it was moved,
 That it should be marked in the minutes, *That it carried only by the*
moderator's casting vote, to proceed to a higher censure against the four
suspended ministers: but this motion was vigorously opposed by the
 moderator himself, and some others; which gave occasion to another
protest by some members of the Commission.

At the meeting of the Commission in the afternoon, it was moved,
 That a Committee should be appointed once more to commune with
 the protesting brethren, before the Commission should proceed to fur-
 ther censure against them; and a Committee being named accordingly,
 they instantly retired, and met with the brethren about six of the
 clock, and reasoned with them till about ten at night. *Two different*
proposals were made by the reverend Committee; but, some objec-
 tions being made against the first of them, it was not insisted upon:
 the *other proposal*, which the brethren took under their consideration,
 is as follows;

If the next General Assembly shall declare, that it was not meant by
the Act of the last Assembly to deny, or take away the privilege and duty
of ministers to testify against defections; then we shall be at liberty,
and willing to withdraw our protest against the said act of Assembly;
and particularly, we reserve to ourselves the liberty of testifying against
the act of Assembly 1732, on all proper occasions.

When the above *proposal* was made unto the *four brethren*, as it
 was *new* unto them, they offered to retire for a short time, and to
 return an answer unto it; but the *Committee desired* them to take it
 for that night under their consideration, and said, They would ob-
 tain it of the Commission to delay the affair till the next day. The
 brethren, in compliance with the Committee's desire, agreed to take
 it for that night under their consideration, with this express *declara-*
tion, That the reason of their doing so, was, because it was late,
 and because they did not at that time fully understand the import of
 it. And the next morning they made answer in writ to the Com-
 mittee's *proposal*, the tenor whereof follows:

As to the proposal made by the Committee to us, that we should withdraw our protestation, in case a subsequent Assembly should declare, that it was not meant, by the act and sentence of the last Assembly in Mr. Erskine's affair, to deny, or take away the privilege and duty of ministers to testify against defections. After serious and mature deliberation, we have no freedom to go in to the said proposal, and that because the obvious sense and meaning of the said act and sentence appears to us to lay a restraint on ministerial freedom and faithfulness, in testifying against the act of Assembly 1732, and the like defections in this church, upon proper occasions. And as this was the ground of our protestation, so any declaration that a subsequent Assembly can make, cannot remove the ground upon which we protested against that decision; in regard that any act and declaration of the following Assembly, though agreeable to the word of God, can never take away the ground of protesting against a wrong decision of a preceding Assembly.

The above proposal has been represented as a very great condescension made to the four brethren, but their answer declared plainly the reason why they could not fall in with the same. The protesting brethren, in their Review of the Narrative, published by a Committee of the Commission, observe, 'That the foresaid proposal was so far from being any condescension unto them, that it still insists upon the retracting of their Protestation; and this they could by no means yield unto, because the Act of Assembly protested against, in the plain obvious sense and meaning of the words in which it is framed, gave evident grounds for their said Protestation: and a Declaration of an ensuing General Assembly, though it were more particular than the Committee's proposal bears, would be so far from clearing their way to retract their protestation, that it would be a material approving and justifying of the same.' Likewise they observe, in the foresaid paper, 'That to depart in the least from a testimony that they had given, is very dangerous; especially at this time, when the current of defection and backsliding is so violent and strong.'

At the next diet of the Commission, November 16th, the Committee reported, That they had met with the four brethren, and that they have declared their resolution, to continue of the same mind as formerly, and declined to go in to any proposal offered unto their consideration by the Committee. This report being made, the Commission came to their final sentence against the four protesting ministers, and it stands in their minutes in the following terms;

'The Commission caused to be read the act of the late General Assembly, also the sentence of the Commission in August last, likewise the resolve past in this meeting of the Commission upon Wednesday last, relative to the said four ministers: and after full reasoning, and mature deliberation, and calling in the brethren to join in prayer for light and direction in this affair; the Commission agreed upon the following state of the question: 'Loose the relation of the said four ministers to their several charges, and declare them no longer ministers of this church, and prohibit all ministers of this church to employ them in any ministerial function; or depose them

' *simpliciter*?' And the vote being put, *loose* or *depose*? it carried
 ' *loose*, by a great plurality *. And therefore, the Commission of
 ' the General Assembly did, and hereby do, loose the relation of
 ' Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, minister at Stirling, Mr. William Wilson,
 ' minister at Perth, Mr. Alexander Moncrieff, minister at Abernethy,
 ' and Mr. James Fisher, minister at Kinclaven, to their said respective
 ' charges; and do declare them no longer ministers of this church;
 ' and do hereby prohibite all ministers of this church to employ them,
 ' or any of them, in any ministerial function. And the Commission
 ' do declare the churches of the said Mr. Erskine, Mr. Wilson,
 ' Mr. Moncrieff, and Mr. Fisher, vacant from and after the date of
 ' this sentence; and appoints that letters from the moderator, and
 ' extracts of this sentence, be sent to the several presbyteries within
 ' whose bounds the said ministers have had their charges, appointing
 ' them, as they are hereby appointed, to cause intimate this sentence
 ' in the foresaid several churches, now declared vacant, any time
 ' betwixt and the first of January next; and also, that notice of this
 ' sentence be sent, by letters from the moderator of this Commission,
 ' to the magistrates of Perth and Stirling, to the Sheriff-principal of
 ' Perth, and Baillie of the regality of Abernethy.'

Upon the passing of the above sentence, the following *Protestation*
 was given in by Mr. Gabriel Wilson, minister at Maxton, with the
 adherence unto it.

Edinburgh, November 16th, 1733.

' I, Mr. Gabriel Wilson, minister at Maxton, do hereby, in mine
 ' own name, and in name of all those that shall adhere to me, pro-
 ' test against this sentence of the Commission in the case of the four
 ' brethren; and that it may be lawful for me to complain of the said
 ' sentence, and of the several acts of Assembly that have occasioned
 ' the same, to any subsequent Assembly of the Church of Scotland:
 ' as also, that it may be lawful for me, in a becoming manner, on
 ' all proper occasions, to bear testimony against the same, with all
 ' other defections and severities of this church in her sentences.
 ' And finally, That I may in the mean time, as in providence I shall
 ' find opportunity, hold ministerial communion with my said dear
 ' brethren, as if no such sentence had been past against them. Upon
 ' all which, I take instruments in the clerk's hands.

GABRIEL WILSON.

The above Protest is adhered to by us,

RALPH ERSKINE, minister at Dunfermline.

THOMAS MAIR, minister at Orwell.

JOHN MACCLARINE, minister in Edinburgh.

JOHN CURRIE, minister at Kinglassie.

JAMES WARDLAW, minister at Dunfermline.

THOMAS NAIRN, minister at Abbotshall.

* N. B. It carried by a *great plurality*, in regard a great many members of the
 Commission had not freedom to vote either *loose* or *depose*; as is evident from the
 moderator's casting the balance in the former vote.

When the four brethren were called in, and the sentence of the Commission was intimate unto them by the moderator, they read the following *Protestation*; and, after reading it, they gave it in to the clerk, with an instrument taken thereupon by every one of them.

Edinburgh, November 16th 1733.

‘ We do hereby adhere to the *Protestation* formerly entred before
 ‘ this Court, both at their last meeting in August, and when we
 ‘ appeared first before this meeting. And further, we do protest in
 ‘ our own name, and in name of all and every one in our respective
 ‘ congregations adhering to us. That, notwithstanding of this sen-
 ‘ tence past against us, our pastoral relation shall be held and repute
 ‘ firm and valid. And likewise, we do protest, That, notwithstand-
 ‘ ing of our being cast out from ministerial communion with the esta-
 ‘ blished church of Scotland, we still hold communion with all and
 ‘ every one who desire, with us to adhere, to the principles of the
 ‘ true Presbyterian, covenanted church of Scotland, in her doctrine,
 ‘ worship, government, and discipline; and particularly, with every
 ‘ one who are groaning under the evils, and who are affected with
 ‘ the grievances we have been complaining of; who are, in their fe-
 ‘ veral spheres, wrestling against the same. But, in regard the *pre-*
 ‘ *vailing party* in this established church, who have now cast us out
 ‘ from ministerial communion with them, are carrying on a course
 ‘ of defection from our reformed and covenanted principles; and
 ‘ particularly, are suppressing ministerial freedom and faithfulness in
 ‘ testifying against the present backslidings of the church, and inflict-
 ‘ ing censures upon ministers for witnessing, by protestations and o-
 ‘ therwise, against the same: therefore we do, for these and many
 ‘ other weighty reasons, to be laid open in due time, protest, That
 ‘ we are obliged to make a *secession from them*, and that we can have
 ‘ no ministerial communion with them, till they see their sins and
 ‘ mistakes, and amend them. And, in like manner, we do protest,
 ‘ That it shall be lawful and warrantable for us to exercise the keys of
 ‘ doctrine, discipline, and government, according to the word of God,
 ‘ and Confession of Faith, and the principles and constitutions of the
 ‘ covenanted church of Scotland, as if no such censure had been past
 ‘ upon us: upon all which, we take instruments. And we hereby
 ‘ appeal unto the first free, faithful, and reforming General Assembly
 ‘ of the church of Scotland.

EBENEZER ERSKINE.

WILLIAM WILSON.

ALEXANDER MONCRIEFF.

JAMES FISHER.

The above *Protestation* contains several things, which must be set in a due light, for the satisfaction of such as are not prejudiced, and who are willing to receive information. In the bosom of it we promise, to lay open in due time, the reasons and grounds of our *Secession from the prevailing party in the church, who are carrying on a course of defection from our covenanted Reformation*: this is the chief design of

what follows in this paper:—and therefore, after we have *promised some historical observations*, concerning the state and condition of this church, both in her reforming and declining periods;—we shall lay open the *grounds* of our *Secession* from them whom we have designed the *prevailing party*:—and then we shall offer our *reasons* for the *validity* of our *pastoral relation* to our respective congregations, notwithstanding of the above sentence of the Commission:—as also, we shall *prove* the warrantableness and necessity of our *exercising the keys of government and discipline* in our present situation, according to the *word of God*, our *Confession of Faith*, and the *principles* of the *covenanted church of Scotland*:—and, for the reader's ease, these several heads shall be distinguished into so many different Sections.

S E C T. I.

Some Historical OBSERVATIONS on the State of the Church of SCOTLAND, both in her reforming and declining Periods.

THE *history* of this church informs us, how God was graciously pleased to make the light of the *everlasting gospel* very early to shine upon this land: when our *fathers* were bowing down before *dumb idols*, and *worshipping the host of heaven*, the *day-spring* from on high visited us; either in the *apostolic age*, according to some; or in the beginning of the next, according to others: and so powerful and prevalent was the *light of the gospel*, that, about the year 205, the *king* and many *peers* of the land embraced *Christianity*; and in a short time thereafter the *whole nation* became *Christian*, and was blessed of God, for several generations, with professors and pastors, eminent for piety and learning; until at last this nation, with most of the nations in Europe, was involved in *popish darkness*.

As *God left not himself without witness* amongst us, during that period of Antichristian darknesses and idolatry; so he was pleased again to clear our sky, by the ministry of Mr. Patrick Hamilton, Mr. George Wishart, Mr. John Knox, and others; insomuch, that, in the year 1560, the *Reformation* was established, and our *first Confession of Faith* ratified, the *Covenant* three several times sworn, before the year 1597, for bearing down the *throne of iniquity*, that opposed the advancement of the *kingdom of Christ* in the land. At which time the Lord was known in a remarkable manner in the assemblies and dwelling-places of our *Zion*; and, upon all the glory there was a *defence*: the *doctrine* being sound and lively; the *worship*, pure and spiritual; the *discipline*, powerful and impartial; the *government* was beautiful as *Tirzah*, and comely as *Jerusalem*, for order and unity; and all accompanied with the rich breathings and influences of the Spirit of the Lord: so that, in this period, the *church of Scotland* was spoken of among foreigners, as one of the brightest candle-sticks among the churches of Christ.

When after this, the *powers of hell* and *earth* had so far prevailed,

as to introduce a course of *defection*, for about the space of 40 years, wherein error, superstition, and *prelatick tyranny* prevailed; it pleased God, in the year 1637, to stir up the spirits of a few of his *faithful witnesses*, and so far to own them by his powerful providence, that in the year 1638, notwithstanding of the utmost effort of the *gates of hell*, almost the whole land, in a few months, subjected themselves to the *oath of God* for reformation; which was countenanced from heaven, with a more than ordinary display of the divine presence, and down-pouring of the Spirit from on high on judicatories, and on the assemblies of his people for worship, infomuch that, *in his temple every one did speak of his glory*. How did the church of Christ, in this return of the *Sun of righteousness*, look forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners? With what life, zeal, and courage, did judicatories go to work, (notwithstanding of very great opposition) reviving and approving the registers and acts of former free and lawful Assemblies, condemning and annulling six pretended Assemblies, which had transgressed the laws of Christ, changed the ordinances of his house, and broken the everlasting covenant?—The unlawful oaths imposed upon intrants in times of defection, the *service-book*, the *book of canons*, the *book of ordination* and *high commission*, were all condemned; *prelacy*, and the *five articles of Perth*, abjured; and the *prelates* deposed and excommunicate; all monuments of Popish idolatry and prelatie tyranny and superstition abolished.—Then was the government of the church set upon its proper basis, *the foundation of the prophets and apostles*, *Christ himself being the chief corner-stone*: and, by the good hand of God upon his servants at that time, the reformation was advanced and carried on, and at last ratified and confirmed by king and parliament, in the year 1641. Under this period, *viz.* from 1638, to 1650, *Kirk-sessions*, *Presbyteries*, *Synods*, and *General Assemblies*, were established in their full power and privilege; laws both civil and ecclesiastick were enacted, not only for purging the house of God, but for preserving judicatories, civil and ecclesiastick, free of corruption; *patronages* were repealed, and the settlement of ministers was appointed to be with the call and consent of the congregation concerned; likewise the rights of the church of Christ in this land were asserted and recognized by the *National Covenant*, sworn by all ranks of persons.

The remarkable countenance that the Lord gave at this time to the reforming and covenanting church of Scotland, (if we may allude to the practice of Judah and Israel, Jer. l. 5.) did excite our neighbours in England and Ireland to say, *Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord, in an everlasting covenant, never to be forgotten*. Accordingly, in the year 1643, the *solemn league and covenant* was sworn, for maintaining, and for advancing, and carrying on a work of reformation in all the three lands: this covenant was afterwards renewed in Scotland, with a *solemn acknowledgement of sins*, and engagement to duties, in the year 1648.

The Lord having performed his great work in mount Zion, he did reign among his antients gloriously; till, through the influence of

a party, disaffected to the work of reformation, a gap was opened by the *public resolutions*, for men of malignant spirits to get in to places of public trust, civil and military; and by this means also to wind themselves into ecclesiastical judicatories. Against this step of defection, a considerable body of eminent ministers, and judicious elders and professors, have transmitted a faithful testimony to us their posterity. And the disaffected party having, by the foresaid public resolutions, got themselves into places of power and trust, a foundation was thereby laid for innumerable evils, which brake in like a flood, and sullied that glorious work of Reformation; and the Lord was provoked, in a way of righteous judgment, to let loose the malignant spirit, and to put such power in their hands, as to cast this church into a hot furnace of persecution, for the space of twenty-eight years; from which he again delivered us by his glorious and surprizing appearance for us at the *Revolution*, whereof the Prince of ORANGE, afterward proclaimed King, was the happy instrument.

When God did again break the *yoke of prelatick tyranny and arbitrary power* from off our necks, and allow us, under the protection of authority, to meet in a National Assembly; it might have been expected, that the *glorious work of Reformation, attained to in the former period, from 1638, to 1650.* should have been recognized; especially considering, that many ministers and others, who had *seen the temple in its former glory*, were yet alive. We do not here intend, to detract from that regard that is due to the memory of these worthy ministers, and others, who came out of the furnace of a hot persecution, and did bear a part in our first General Assemblies after the Revolution; they no doubt did what they thought proper and seasonable to be done in their present situation: yet we cannot conceal, yea, we must in duty to the present, as well as succeeding generations, mention some considerable *omissions*, of which both ministers and others have complained, and which we cannot but look upon as *standing grounds* of the *Lord's controversy* against us, and as one of the causes and springs of many evils that have since befallen us: as for instance, besides what is already observed,—That the work of reformation, attained to in the former period, was never recognized by any of our General Assemblies since the Revolution;—we must add, That although, in the *causes* of the *national fast*, appointed by the Assembly that met 1690, it is owned, *That the supremacy was advanced in the preceding reigns, in such a way, and to such a height, as never any Christian church acknowledged*; yet, that unwarrantable *supremacy*, usurped by the powers of the earth over the house of God, was not *absolutely* condemned, and the sovereignty and headship of Christ in his own church, was never asserted *expressly* by any *particular act*, in *opposition* to the bold encroachments made thereupon in the late times of lamentable defection and grievous persecution: and particularly, these sinful and self-contradictory *oaths*, viz. the *oath of supremacy*, and that called the *test*, whereby Christ was sacrilegiously robbed of his royal crown and dignity, and the whole land involved in the dreadful sin and guilt of perjury, were never *expressly* and *particularly* condemned and mourned over; neither have these,

and several *other sinful oaths* imposed during the foresaid period, nor the subversion of our *covenanted Reformation* by *parliamentary deeds*, which laid a foundation for the tyranny and blood-shed which followed thereupon, been *particularly acknowledged* in any of our *acts* appointing *national fasting* since the *Revolution*.—The *obligation* of our *covenants, national and solemn league, and their binding force upon posterity*, has never been *expressly* asserted by any *particular act* of our *Assemblies*; though this was the more necessary, considering how they were so *openly violate*, and ignominiously *burnt* in the former period.—Likewise the faithful *testimonies* of many of the Lord's servants and people, even unto death, for the headship of Christ and our covenants, national and solemn league, have not been *particularly* justified and approved.—And so far were we from purging the house of God, according to the example of the preceding reforming period, that a number who had complied with prelacy, and who had been involved in the blood-shed and perjury of the late persecuting times, were received into ministerial communion with this church, and had place in her judicatories, without requiring any evidence of their repentance, and sorrow for their hainous guilt.—When these and the like evils are seriously considered, have we not reason to say, *We with our fathers have sinned, we understood not his wonders, nor remembered the multitude of his mercies? And though he saved us for his Name's sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known; yet, have we not mingled ourselves with the enemies of a covenanted Reformation, and learned of them their works?*

It was alledged, that the land was then no way *ripe* to return by solemn national covenanting unto the Lord; and, that it was not a *proper time and season* to be *too particular* in mentioning our public national sins, and in condemning the gross defections and heinous backslidings of the former period, or in justifying the wrestlings and contendings for the covenanted testimony of the church of Scotland, unto imprisonments, banishments, spoiling of goods, cruel tortures, and even unto death itself; and that by a great cloud of witnesses, from the noble Marquis of Argyle down to the late *wonderful Revolution*. But, in *waiting* for a *proper time and season*, we came to *lose* the season and opportunity altogether; particularly when by the *treaty of Union*, Anno 1707, we were brought under the more immediate influence of our *neighbours*, whose principles as to church government and discipline, and in many points that concern the worship of God, do differ widely from ours; as also, when by the said *treaty* we were *incorporate* with them, upon *terms opposite* unto that *covenant-union*, which was reckoned the honour and glory of the three lands in a former period. Hence, instead of making progress in a work of Reformation, we came in a short time to fall under the weight of some *new and very heavy grievances*: as for instance,

In the year 1712, the *right of presentation to patrons*, subversive of the *right of election* belonging to *Christian congregations*, by the word of God, and the constitutions of this church, was *restored*; and an *almost boundless toleration* was granted, by which the government and discipline of this church was greatly weakened, and a door

was opened for laxness in principle, which never fails to bring along with it looseness in practice; superstition and will-worship have thereby spread further through the land, than in any period since our Reformation: a *wound* was also given, and a *breach* made amongst the ministry of this church, which is not to this day healed, when, by the foresaid act of *toleration*, the *oath of abjuration* was imposed. The most part of the ministers of this church, apprehending it brought them under no other obligation but allegiance to the *Sovereign*, and an engagement against a *Papish Pretender*, and to the succession in the Protestant line, had freedom to take the said oath; when *several ministers*, judging it did *homologate* the *united constitution*, *opposite* to our *covenant-union*, though they were equally well-affected to the Protestant succession with their brethren, yet, for this, and other reasons of this kind, they have not to this day had freedom to swear it.—Likewise, the *sacramental test*, and conformity to the *hierarchy*, *liturgy*, and *ceremonies* of the church of England, came to affect such as are members of this church, while serving the Sovereign in England and Ireland.—Countenance is also given to a superstitious observation of *holy-days*, by the *vacation* of our most considerable civil courts, in the *latter end* of December.—Likewise, a superstitious form of *swearing* is introduced amongst us from England, by laying the *hand* upon, and *kissing* the *gospels*; a very gross innovation in that solemn piece of divine worship, and contrary to the scripture-pattern.—And the judicatories of this church, and members thereof, are precluded from addressing the honourable *house* of *Peers*, unless addresses are directed unto the *Lords spiritual*, which is not agreeable to our known principles.—All these things, together with the more frequent resort of persons of all ranks into England, and their *occasional conformity* to the *liturgy* and *ceremonies* there, have very much blunted that edge and concern, manifested in former times by this church and land, for the purity of divine institutions; and they cannot fail in process of time, (if the Lord do not mercifully prevent it) to make this and the rising generation more and more easy and indifferent about the worship, government, and discipline of the Lord's house.—Thus our spiritual beauty is daily departing from us, our *gold becomes dim*, and our *most fine gold is changed*: *The crown is fallen from off our heads, wo unto us, for we have sinned.*

When thick and dark clouds were covering our *horizon*, and when ruin and destruction threatned any good work that the Lord had wrought for us by the late merciful *Revolution*, the Lord was graciously pleased to scatter the clouds, and to revive our spirits, by the seasonable accession of our *late Sovereign King GEORGE* to the throne of these realms: and no sooner was this deliverance given us, than an *unnatural rebellion* broke forth in our bowels*; the interest of a *Papish Pretender* was openly espoused, and a banner was displayed against the *Revolution-interest*, our *Sovereign King George*, and the *Protestant succession* in his *royal family*, and that by a set of men who were always declared enemies to Scotland's *covenanted Reformation*: but the Lord was graciously pleased to break their measures, to pour

* Alluding to the rebellion in the year 1715.

shame and contempt upon our enemies, and to turn *war into peace in all our borders.*

When the hand of the Lord was so remarkably seen in working manifold deliverances for us, it might have been expected that something should have been done for carrying on Reformation-work amongst us, and that the proper means should have been used for the redress of these grievances that we were groaning under: but though several Synods and Presbyteries (especially after king George I. his accession to the throne) did by their *instructions* often desire, that the General Assemblies of this church might *address* his Majesty for the redress of the *grievances* that we were brought under; and though we had reason to expect success in addresses of this nature, when it is considered that the *toleration* and *patronage* acts were brought upon us at a time when the *Protestant succession* was in the *greatest danger*, and with an evident design to strengthen the *episcopal* party, the known favourers of the *Pretender*, and to weaken the hands of the Presbyterians, the *only firm friends* to the Protestant succession in Scotland; yet this has been neglected from time to time, to the very great prejudice of this church; but, instead of using proper means for obtaining a redress of our grievances, we have, like *Issachar*, *couched down between two burdens*, and *bowed our shoulder to bear.*

Further, as if we had been delivered to add iniquity to our former trespasses, *corruption* in-principle and practice has never more abounded in the land, so far as we know, as since our *deliverance* from the late *unnatural rebellion*; and it is to be feared, that too many are tainted with the damnable and pernicious principles of a *sett of men*, who have lately employed their tongues and pen to run down *revealed religion*, and to raze the grounds and foundation of our Christian faith.—It is evident, that Arian blasphemies, and Arminian errors, have been vented in one of our most considerable *seminaries* of learning, where the youth are trained up for the holy ministry; *conversion* and *regeneration* are ridiculed by many; serious godliness, and the supernatural work of the Spirit of God upon the souls of men, in their effectual calling, have been treated even from the *press*, and otherwise, in a very ludicrous manner; the power of religion is daily decaying amongst us; the very form of it is despised by some, and rested upon by others.—These *nurseries* of prophanity, wickedness, and wantonness, *viz.* the diversions of the *stage*, *night-assemblies*, and *balls*, have prevailed in the *principal city* of the nation, and elsewhere; the common impressions of God are in a great measure worn off the spirits of men, and the holy Spirit of God is very much restrained, both from our assemblies for worship and discipline.—We are consumed, and yet we know it not: though the *ministers* of the *sanctuary* ought to *sanctify a fast*, and call a *solemn assembly*, especially when iniquity abounds; yet *national fasting* has been laid aside for several years, as if we are altogether innocent, though the necessity of it has been represented from year to year, to our National Assemblies.

But, to all the above-mentioned evils we must add, that ruin threatens the church of Scotland, from the *want of due caution* and

tenderness in the licencing of young men, as probationers for the holy ministry; as also from the corrupt and undue entries of many into the ministry, particularly by the acceptance of presentations: this course has a visible tendency to increase, in all corners of the land, a ministry utterly unacceptable, and so not fit to edify and rule the flock of God, and to strengthen the hands of our enemies, who may design to model the church according to their own mind: and this ruin is wholly from ourselves, the blame of it must be laid at our own door; especially when it is considered, that the parliament, in the year 1719, inserted a clause into the patronage-act, which might have been improved for good to the church of Scotland: for, as it was declared by the said act, *That a presentation was not valid, unless accepted*; so it was then thought, that none who owned themselves Presbyterian, would follow this course; and consequently it was judged, that the settlement of parishes would have run in a more agreeable channel than formerly: and for some time the acceptance of a presentation was not so much as heard of amongst us, till some, whose station and character laid them under the strongest obligations to assert and maintain the liberties, and the just rights and privileges of the church of Scotland, did sinfully and shamefully lead the way for a conditional acceptance of presentations. And, when this was not checked in the bud, it soon became fashionable for intrants into the ministry to follow this course; and herein they were supported by the decisions of the Commission of the General Assembly in their favours, appointing their settlement in parishes, when *most part* both of elders and people were reclaiming. Yea, settlements have been appointed in a very arbitrary manner over dissenting congregations, even when there was no presentation in the case; and, when the Presbyteries concerned could not proceed to such violent settlements, Committees of the Commission were named, and invested with a Presbyterial power, to try and ordain men to the office of the holy ministry: and, if Presbyteries refused to inroll them after they were ordained, or if ministers dispensed sealing ordinances to the people of these congregations, who cannot submit to the ministry of such as are intruded upon them, in both these cases the highest censures of the church are threatned to be inflicted.

And, that our ruin may be more effectually carried on, the General Assembly did by their act 1732. anent the settlement of vacant churches, lay a yoke upon the neck of the church and people of God, heavier, in some respect, than that of the patronage-act itself; but, since this will bear a part in the following Section, we shall not insist upon it here.

By reason of the above-mentioned proceedings of our church-judicatories, the cry of violence and oppression is still louder and louder from all corners of the land: and, as if all these evils were not enough, if ministers from the pulpit regret them, if they expose the sinfulness of them, and the danger that they threaten our Presbyterian constitution, they must be brought to the bar of church-judicatories, and there be rebuked and admonished: though the danger is evidently seen, yet the watchmen upon our Jerusalem's walls must be silent;

they must hold their peace, and not give the alarm to the city of God. This is the case of Mr. Erskine, who was appointed by the last Assembly to be rebuked and admonished at their bar, for testifying, in his sermon at the opening of the Synod of Perth, against the foresaid act of Assembly as sinful, and against the unwarrantable proceedings of our church-judicatories in the settlement of ministers; and this sentence of the Assembly, gave occasion for the Protestation mentioned in the preceding Introduction, and which was resented by the Assembly, in the manner that is there narrated.

We shall only add, that such is the state and condition at present of what is reckoned the established church of Scotland, that there is no outward appearance of any change and alteration in her circumstances to the better; especially when it is considered, that the judicatories, particularly the General Assemblies and their Commissions, are filled with such as have been either intruded into congregations themselves, or who are the avowed and declared supporters and abettors of violent intrusions: and, what can be expected from such who are thrust in upon congregations, but that they will, to the utmost of their power, promote the same course, and bear down whatever opposition is made by doctrinal or judicial testimonies against the same?

This is a short hint at the present deplorable situation of the church of Scotland, once famous amongst the churches for purity, comely for order and unity, and beautiful through some measure of the divine presence in her judicatories and assemblies for worship: but her beauty is in a great measure departed from her; she is losing her purity, and destroying her own comely order and unity; so that, in many respects, *Ichabod* may be said to be written upon her. And, this will further appear from the grounds of our present secession from the prevailing party in the established church, who are carrying on, with a high hand, a course of defection from our Reformation and covenanted principles; and these we are to lay open in the following Section.

S E C T. II.

REASONS by the Protesting Ministers for their SECESSION from the prevailing Party in the established Church.

THE Commission of the General Assembly, by the sentence that they have passed against us, declare us to be no longer ministers of this church; and they prohibit all the ministers of this church to employ us in any ministerial function. This sentence of the Commission carries not in it any one ground for such a singular and uncommon censure; but, as it stands in connection with the act and sentence of the last General Assembly against us, it is because we protested for our just right and privilege to testify against the act 1732, and the like defections of this church. And being suspended from the exercise of our ministry, because we could not retract the said protestation, and de-

clare our grief and sorrow for the same; yet, notwithstanding of this, we continue to exercise our ministry, as we have already narrated in the preceding Introduction: therefore the Commission did proceed to the above sentence against us; and, when it was intimated unto us, we did protest, that, *Notwithstanding of our being cast out from ministerial communion with the established church of Scotland, we still hold communion with all and every one, who desire with us to adhere to the principles of the true Presbyterian covenanted church of Scotland, in her doctrine, worship, government, and discipline; and particularly with every one, who are groaning under the evils, and affected with the grievances we have been complaining of, and who are in their several spheres wrestling against the same. But, in regard, the prevailing party in this established church, who have now cast us out from ministerial communion with them, are carrying on a course of defection from our reformed and covenanted principles, and particularly, are suppressing ministerial freedom and faithfulness in testifying against the present backslidings of this church, and inflicting censures upon ministers for witnessing by Protestation, and otherwise, against the same: therefore we do, for these, and many other weighty reasons to be laid open in due time, protest, That we are obliged to make a secession from them; and that we can have no ministerial communion with them, till they see their sins and mistakes, and amend them.*

We own, that *secession* from ministerial communion with such as bear the character and office of ministers of the gospel, ought to proceed upon *weighty* and *important* grounds; yet, as it cannot be refused, that a *secession* from ministerial communion with such, has been found, in some cases, both *necessary* and *justifiable*, so we hope it will be evident to such as consider the matter without partiality and prejudice, that our *present secession* is both *warrantable* and *necessary*: our *Protestation* doth limit and circumscribe the same, and it plainly characterizeth them from whom it is made. Our *secession* is not from the church of Scotland; we own her doctrine, contained in her *Confession of Faith*; we adhere to her *covenanted Presbyterian church-government, discipline, and worship*: neither is our *secession* from these who are cleaving unto our covenanted *principles*, and who are affected with the grievances we complain of, and are in their several spheres wrestling against the same; but it is from a party who have got the *management* in their hands, and who have got the *majority* on their side in the *judicatories*, particularly in our *Assemblies* and *Commissions*, and who are *carrying on a course of defection* from our reformed and covenanted principles, and are *suppressing ministerial freedom and faithfulness* in testifying against their present backslidings, by *insisting censures* upon ministers for witnessing, by *Protestation* and otherwise, against the same.

And, that we may more fully and plainly declare ourselves upon this head, and satisfy such as are unprejudiced, about the necessity and warrantableness of our present conduct; we do affirm, *That the prevailing party in the judicatories of the church of Scotland, particularly in our Assemblies and Commissions, are breaking down our*

beautiful Presbyterian constitution;—and pursuing such measures as actually corrupt, or have the most direct tendency to corrupt, the doctrine contained in our excellent Confession of Faith;—and that they are imposing new terms of ministerial communion, by restraining ministerial freedom and faithfulness, in testifying against these sinful and church-ruining courses; and all this contrary to the solemn engagements they have come under at their ordination to the holy ministry:—and likewise, these corrupt courses are carried on with a high-hand, notwithstanding that the ordinary means have been used to reclaim them, and to stop the current of their defection;—till at length matters are come to such a height, that we are excluded from keeping up a standing testimony against their defection and backsliding, in a way of ministerial communion with them. —And therefore, it is not only necessary for us, but present duty, to make a secession from the said prevailing party, till they see the sins they are guilty of, and the mistakes that they are under, and reform and amend the same.

The charge that we have now laid against the *prevailing party* in the judicatories of the established church of Scotland, we own, is very heavy; and, as we are heartily sorry that we should have so much ground for it, so we can say, that we sincerely wish matters were otherwise. It is not very pleasant unto us that we are obliged to lay open the sinful and unwarrantable steps of such, who profess to be of the same Presbyterian denomination with ourselves, and to own the same Confession of Faith with us: but since the measures that are followed at present are so opposite unto our professed and declared principles, and since the *party* from whom we have made a *secession* are going on in the said measures without relenting, and since the whole of their unjustifiable conduct towards us appears to be a loud and clear call in providence unto us; therefore, for these reasons, we judge it our duty to exoner ourselves after this manner before the world, and to bear *testimony* before the present, as well as for the sake of succeeding generations, against a course of defection and backsliding from our covenanted Reformation.

We shall now proceed to *prove* the several *parts* of the above charge; and all that we desire is, that every thing may be weighed impartially in the *balances of the sanctuary*, and that both they and we may be tried and judged according to the word of God, and our Reformation and covenanted principles agreeable thereto, laying aside prejudice that blinds the mind, and a partial regard to any sect of men whatsoever.

I. The *first thing* that we have charged against the *present prevailing party* in our judicatories, particularly in our General Assemblies and Commissions, is, *That they are breaking down our beautiful Presbyterian constitution.* This will appear, if their conduct, in the following instances thereof, is seriously considered.

1st, The General Assembly, at Edinburgh, Anno 1639, do, by their Act, August 20th, ordain, 'That no novation, which may disturb the peace of the church, and make division, be suddenly proposed and enacted, but so as the motion be first communicate

‘ to the several Synods, Presbyteries, and Kirks, that the matter
 ‘ may be approved by all at home, and Commissioners may come
 ‘ well prepared to conclude a solid deliberation upon these points in
 ‘ the General Assembly.’ This Act is renewed by the General As-
 sembly 1695; and the General Assembly 1697, do, for preventing
 any *sudden alteration or innovation*, or other prejudice to the church,
 in either doctrine or worship, discipline or government, appoint,
 enact, and declare, ‘ That, before any General Assembly of this
 ‘ church shall pass any Acts which are to be binding rules and con-
 ‘ stitutions to the church, the same be first proposed as overtures to
 ‘ the Assembly; and, being by them passed as such, be remitted to
 ‘ the consideration of the several Presbyteries of this church, and
 ‘ their opinion and consent reported by their Commissioners to
 ‘ next General Assembly, who may pass the same into acts, if the
 ‘ the more general opinion of the church, thus had, agree there-
 ‘ unto.’

The church of Scotland had been taught, from sad experience,
 that even General Assemblies, upon some occasions, might be *consti-
 tute of such members* who might bring in dangerous innovations upon
 her; and therefore, this *fence and guard* is wisely contrived upon
 our doctrine, worship, government, and discipline, that *overtures*,
 as to any acts that are to be binding rules to the church, should be
approved by all at home, and that they should be past into acts, *only
 if the more general opinion of the diffusive church of Scotland agree
 thereunto*: but the *prevailing party* in this established church have
broken down this necessary *fence and guard* upon the just rights and
 privileges of this church, and the members thereof. We might upon
 this head mention the case of Mr. Simpson professor at Glasgow,
 who was convicted before our Assemblies of gross blasphemies against
 the *great God our Saviour*. The *process* was transmitted by the As-
 sembly 1728, to the several Presbyteries, for their judgment upon
 the *censure* which he deserved; and when the *majority* of Presbyteries
 by far did give their judgment, that he should be *deposed* from the
 office of the holy ministry, yet the Assembly 1729, thought fit to *rest
 in a suspension*. We know it is alledged, That, in this case, there
 was no binding rule and constitution made; but we are sure this was
 a matter of the greatest moment and importance to the whole church
 of Scotland, a matter wherein not the maintenance of the doctrine
 contained in our Confession of Faith only, but the honour of him who
 is *God over all, blessed for ever*, was nearly concerned: and besides,
 to *transmit the process to Presbyteries* for their judgment upon the
censure, and yet not to regard them, appears to be as much inconsis-
 tent with itself, as it was a plain counteracting the judgment of the
diffusive church of Scotland. But, not to insist further upon this at
 present, we offer the *two following instances* of *binding rules* and con-
 stitutions unto this church, that deserve a particular consideration:
 the *first* is the *act of Assembly 1732*, concerning the *settlement of va-
 cant congregations*. This was so far from being *approved by all at
 home*, or from being agreeable to the *more general opinion of the*

church, that the most part of Presbyteries did declare themselves against it in the terms in which it now stands; yet it was passed into a *standing and binding rule*, contrary to the above acts of Assembly, regulating the manner of passing acts of general concern to the church. As for the *matter* of the said act, we shall consider it under another head. The other *instance* we give, is the Act of Assembly 1730, discharging the *recording of reasons of dissent*, against the determinations of church-judicatories. This act was passed without ever transmitting the same to the several Presbyteries; and the act now mentioned is of greater importance and of more dangerous consequence than many apprehend, in regard, it deprives all the ministers and elders of this church at once, of the liberty of entering their dissent, with the reasons thereof, into the church's *records*, and that upon the most urgent occasions. This is a privilege belonged unto them by acts of former Assemblies, and by immemorial custom and practice: and it is most just and reasonable, useful and necessary in many respects, that *dissents*, with their *reasons*, should stand *recorded*, as *testimonies* against such determinations as appear unwarrantable, and of a dangerous tendency; otherwise our posterity, that may see the records of our church-judicatories, can form no just judgment concerning the opposition that is made to sinful and unwarrantable decisions. And we may reasonably judge, that there was no transmission of the said act as an overture to the respective Presbyteries, because the *prevailing party* did easily see that it would meet with a *vigorous opposition*, and that the *majority* of Presbyteries would not readily agree unto it: this was evident from the *representations* against it from many Presbyteries, and the *instructions* that were given in for the *repeal* of it to subsequent General Assemblies. And we must also add, That the passing of this act so summarily and irregularly, at a time wherein the present sad and threatening aspect of affairs in this church, rendered the maintenance and exercise of the just rights and privileges of the members thereof more necessary than at any time since our late happy Revolution, cannot miss to have a very bad appearance; and we cannot otherwise construct of it, than as *done with a design, to bury all faithful testimonies against the backslidings of this church in oblivion*, so that generations to come may have no knowledge of our present contentings, and may be ready to imagine, that we in this period have been upon a *joint conspiracy to betray the work of God*. And the act itself plainly argues, that the *prevailing party* are themselves under a *secret jealousy*, that their *determinations*, according to the channel in which they run at present, *are not able to stand a fair trial* at the bar of God's word, and the principles of the church of Scotland founded thereupon. *Every one that doth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved, or discovered, as in the margin: But he that doth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God, John iii, 20, 21.* If they were not afraid of a standing testimony against their determinations, why should the members of the church-judicatories be precluded the freedom and liberty allowed in all free

courts whether civil or ecclesiastical, yea, in the high court of Parliament itself?

To conclude this head, every unprejudiced and impartial reader may judge if the present *prevailing party* do act a very consistent part, in casting us out from ministerial communion with them, for *protesting*, and that for our just exoneration, against a particular sentence and decision of the General Assembly; when yet they themselves, if it serves to carry on their own ends and purposes, do *confidently tread upon the authority of the church*, expressed in the act of her General Assemblies, and in such acts as are framed for a fence and guard against dangerous innovations, that may be introduced by a corrupt party, which may sometime bear the majority in our General Assemblies, and make acts and constitutions contrary to the sentiments of the diffused church of Scotland.

2dly, It is a received Protestant principle, as well as one of the known principles of this church, that 'The Lord Jesus Christ is the only Lord and Lawgiver unto his church and people; and that he alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are in any thing contrary unto his word, or besides it, in matters of faith or worship.' Conf. chap. 20. sect. 2. and the scriptures there cited: As also, it is one of the received principles of this church, That the power and authority that the Lord Jesus has given unto the office-bearers of his house, in their judicative capacity, is not an *absolute* and *illimited* authority; that it is not a *lordly* and *magisterial* power, but that it is a *ministerial* and *stewardly* power and authority; an authority and power that must run in a direct line of subordination unto the word of God; an authority for edification, and not for destruction: And that all the *decrees of councils* are to be examined by the word, and their determinations are to be received with reverence, *if consonant to the word of God*; according to our Confession, chap. 1. sect. 10. and chap. 31. sect. 3. and the scriptures cited. But the *prevailing party* in the judicatories of this church, have *usurped a legislative power and authority* over the house of God, in making *laws and constitutions*, that not only *have no manner of warrant* from the word, but are *contrary* unto it; and they *exercise a lordly and magisterial power over the flock and heritage of God*, in *binding their decrees upon the consciences of the members of the church*, by *threatning and actually inflicting the highest censures of the church upon them*, if they do not submit to their *arbitrary impositions*: And this we judge to be a *thrust at our constitution*, and that in a most sensible manner.—The truth of all this will evidently appear from the following particular instances,

1. By the act of Assembly 1732, anent the *settlement of vacant congregations*, a *legislative power and authority is exerted beside the word, and contrary unto it*; in regard this act is conceived in such terms, That a *conjunct meeting of heritors and elders may impose a minister upon a congregation*, willing to chuse a gospel-pastor, when they are *dissenting and reclaiming*: Yea, if *heritors bear the majority* in the conjunct meeting, they may impose a minister upon a congregation, when both elders and people are *dissenting and reclaiming*.

As this practice is condemned by the word of God, which in matters of this kind admits of no difference betwixt *the man with the gold ring in goodly apparel*, and the *poor man in mean raiment*; so it is contrary to *apostolical practice and example* recorded in the New Testament, according to which office-bearers were given unto the church, at the very first erection and constitution of the New Testament church, with the *choice and consent* of the flock and heritage of God, Acts i. 15. to the close; and vi. 1,—7. chap. xiv. 23. and sundry other texts of scripture. And we cannot but look upon *apostolical practice and example recorded in the New Testament* (as all the reformed churches have hitherto done) to be *equivalent unto a positive precept*. Likewise, by the foresaid act of Assembly, this church has taken into her bosom, those that are openly disaffected unto our Presbyterian constitution and covenanted Reformation, as well as declared enemies to our sovereign king George, and the Protestant succession in his royal family; in regard the *protestant heritors*, without any other qualification, are thereby vested with an *ecclesiastical right and privilege* of electing and calling ministers unto all the vacant congregations in Scotland where they have interest; and, if they are supernumerary to the well-affected heritors and elders in these congregations, (which is frequently the case) they may impose ministers upon these well-affected congregations, though dissenting and reclaiming. We must further observe upon this head, That this *new rule*, laid down about the settlement of vacant congregations, is contrary to our *books of discipline first and second*; it is contrary to the act of Assembly 1649.; yea, it is not agreeable to the act of Parliament 1690. This act was not a church-rule; yet, since it is pretended that the act 1732 is agreeable thereto, we must observe, ‘That though it is ordained by the said act of Parliament 1690, That *heritors and elders shall name and propose one to the congregation, to be approved and disapproved by them*; yet the said act does not give an *elective* power to the conjunct meeting of heritors and elders, neither does it determine the election to be finished before the person is approved or disapproved by the congregation, as is done by the act of Assembly now complained of: Seeing then that the said act differs so much from any rule hitherto known in this church about the settlement of ministers, we may ask our *managers* if they can point us to any *act or constitution* in any of the *reformed churches* that runs parallel unto it: Has ever any *church but ours*, delivered such a valuable trust and privilege into the hands of their avowed and declared enemies? Would not that *city* be reckoned infatuate, and would she not be looked upon as bringing destruction and ruin upon herself, that should put it into the hands of her *enemies* to set watchmen upon her walls? And, would not the enemy of such an infatuate city know well how to improve such an advantage against her? And, would they not chuse such to be set upon the walls of the city, who would readily entertain a familiar correspondence with them; and who might sometime or other *betray the City* with all her rights and privileges into their hands?

2. A *second* instance we give of a *magisterial and lordly power exer-*

cised over the flock and heritage of God, is, the violent intrusions of ministers upon Christian congregations, that have taken place by the order of some late Assemblies and their Commissions, not only upon the footing of the act 1732, but even of the *patronage-act* itself, where the least *concurrence* could be obtained; and sometimes (as in the case of Kinross) settlements have been ordered *contrary* to both these rules. Now, whatever disputes have been about the right of the Christian people to elect their own pastors, yet we know few or none, that have pretended to defend the warrantableness of *imposing a minister upon a dissenting and reclaiming people*; but *such violent intrusions* are very common at this day, whereby the great end and design of a gospel-ministry, in the edification of souls, is defeated; innumerable divisions and convulsions in the body of Christ, occasioned; the spirits of the godly grieved, and their affections alienated; and the peace and the unity of the church broken and ruined: and, though the blame of all these bad consequences, is most unjustly laid upon the back of these who bear faithful testimony against these, and the like sinful measures, as if they were the only *troublers of our Israel*; yet it was one of the principal grounds, not only of separation, but of suffering in the late times of persecution, that these of the Presbyterian persuasion could not join in public worship with the ministers intruded upon them by the *bishop and patron*, without the *free choice and consent* of the people: and we can see no material difference between a minister imposed by a *bishop and patron*, and his being intruded by an *Assembly or Commission of Presbyterian ministers*, joining hands with a patron, or a few disaffected gentlemen not of our communion, except, that it is agreeable unto the principles of the *first*, but inconsistent with the known principles of the *last*.

3. Not only is a *lordly and magisterial power* exercised in the violent settlement of congregations in all corners of the land, but the *prevailing party* in the judicatories of the church, have most unwarrantably proceeded to *inflict one of the highest censures of the church*, even *excommunication from sealing ordinances*, upon such as have not freedom to submit to the ministry of those that are intruded upon them; as also, they have threatened the *highest censures of the church* upon ministers that shall *admit to sealing ordinances* the people who cannot submit to *intruders*. This is done by the Act of the last Assembly, discharging the Presbytery of Dunfermline, under pain of the highest censure, to admit any of the parish of Kinross to sealing ordinances, without the permission of the present *incumbent*; and also, in connection herewith, they appointed them to read from their pulpits, the Act of Assembly 1647, *against such as withdraw themselves from the public worship in their own congregations*; which act was made with reference to those who were regularly called to the holy ministry by the judgment of the Presbytery, and consent of the congregation, and who besides had the qualifications mentioned in the same act; but we cannot conceive, that the act was ever intended to countenance the design for which it was recommended by the last Assembly, namely, to oblige the people of every congregation to submit to the ministry of those who are violently imposed upon them

by the judicatories of the church; and also, to expose to censure these brethren who should admit to sealing ordinances, these who have not freedom to own the ministry of such intruders. Now, the Assembly's appointing such severe censures to be inflicted upon their Christian brethren, both ministers and people, who have not freedom to give countenance to the ministry of such as are intruded upon Christian congregations, appears to us to be an unwarrantable *narrowing* of the terms of *Christian*, as well as *ministerial* communion; and also a piece of *tyranny* upon the *consciences* of men, vastly unbecoming a church that bears the name of Protestant: and as it is contrary unto the command of the head of the church, by the apostle, 1 Pet. v. 3. *Neither as being lords over God's heritage*; so it is cross to one great end and design of church government and discipline, *viz. the edification of the body of Christ.*

4. A fourth instance that we give of the *magisterial* and *arbitrary proceedings* of the *prevailing party* in the judicatories of the church, is the *act and sentence pass'd against us by the last Assembly.* The Synod of Perth and Stirling having condemned in *bulk* several propositions emitted by Mr. Erskine, without regarding his *answers* to their charge, the assembly thought fit to *affirm* their sentence, as also to *condemn his answers* to the Synod's charge, and then they appoint him to be *rebuked* and admonished at their own Bar: and all this without any regard had to the *form of process*, which ordains, chap. 1. §. 4. 'That nothing be admitted by any judicatory as a Ground of process for censure, but what hath been declared censurable by the word of God, or some act or universal custom of this national church agreeable thereunto.' Tho' the *act and sentence* of the last Assembly does not bear, that Mr. Erskine was convicted of any thing declared to be censurable by the word of God, or any act and custom of this national church agreeable thereto; yet the *solemn censure* of rebuke and admonition is pronounced against him: And, for what is he rebuked? It is said, for *indecent expressions*: but what these indecent expressions are, the act and sentence does not mention; only we are told in general, it is for *indecent expressions, tending to disquiet the peace of this Church, and impugning several acts of assembly and proceedings of the church-judicatories.* And when this is compared with the expressions of his sermon, condemned by the Synod of Perth, and afterwards by the Assembly, and his answers thereunto, which were likewise condemned in gross by the Assembly, it is evident the great quarrel was, his *testifying freely from the pulpit against the act of Assembly 1732, and the violent settlements of ministers* in all corners of the land: This the Assembly reckoned an *indecent freedom*, that could not be borne; and therefore they appointed him to be rebuked and admonished at their bar. The fore-said sentence of rebuke and admonition, appearing evidently to us to lay restraint upon that freedom and faithfulness in *testifying against publick sins and defections*, which is required of ministers by the word God, and by acts of former Assemblies, particularly by the act of Assembly 1648, intituled, *An act for censuring ministers for their silence, and not speaking to the corruptions of the times*, unto which they are also

bound, by their ordination vows and engagements; we therefore judged it our duty, upon intimation of the above act of Assembly, to *protest for our just right and privilege, to testify, upon all proper occasions, against the act of Assembly 1732, or the like defections*: and this is reckoned to be such a heinous crime, that, without once hearing us upon the cause, we were summarily sentenced by the Assembly, to be *suspended* from all the parts of our ministerial office by the Commission, at their meeting in August, if we did not retract our protestation, and declare our sorrow for the same. But, what is our crime? and wherein have we offended? Is it the *matter* of our *protestation* that is found fault with? Yet, since the forefaid act of Assembly, and the above-mentioned proceedings of the judicatories of this church, with others which we shall yet name, are both sinful and unwarrantable; then our protestation, as to the matter of it, is both lawful and warrantable: but, if it is because we offered our *testimony*, under the *form of a protestation*, that the Assembly have proceeded against us with such uncommon rigour, then we affirm, that, when there was a *recorded censure*, for that which we are persuaded was *necessary and seasonable duty*, there was no other way for giving an *equivalent testimony* for injured truth, and against an unwarrantable restraint upon ministerial freedom, but by entering our *protestation*; this is the only habile way for having a *testimony recorded*, that thereby our just rights and privileges may be asserted, the honour of truth may be preserved, and a testimony for the same may be *legally* transmitted to succeeding generations.—Where is then our crime? The Assembly condemn us to be *suspended*, and appoint a *higher censure* to be inflicted, in case we did not obey the sentence of suspension. If we had disowned any article in our *Confession of Faith*, if we had impugned any of our known and received principles, the Assembly might have very justly censured us; but this is not so much as alledged in the sentences past against us. Are we guilty of despising the just authority and power of the judicatories of the church? Nay, our *protestation acknowledges the same*; and we have declared, in our several Representations given in to the Commission, that it was a *protestation* for our *exoneration*, or our *attested declaration and testimony against the wrong exercise of ecclesiastical power and authority*. If ever church-authority was krewed up to an uncommon height, if ever church-censures were inflicted in an arbitrary manner, it is in this case. Our *Form of Process*, as we have already observed, ordains, ‘That nothing be admitted by any judicatory, as a ground of process for censure, but what hath been declared censurable by the word of God, or some act or universal custom of this national church agreeable thereto.’ We ask the present managers, is a *protestation* for *exoneration* against an act or sentence of a General Assembly, censurable by the word of God, or any act of this national church? If they say it is, let them produce that passage of the word of God, or let them point out unto us an act of any of our General Assemblies declaring so much; or, if they say it is by universal custom, we are ready to instruct the contrary, and that protestations have been entered against acts and sentences of our General

Assemblies by some eminent ministers of this church, and yet we do not find that they were censured for doing so. Yea, our first Assemblies, after the *Revolution*, had such a regard to the protestations entred against the Assemblies, after the year 1649, that they allowed none of the acts and proceedings of these Assemblies to be entred into the printed records of this church: and the General Assembly 1690, do by their thirteenth act declare, ‘ all sentences past against any ‘ ministers *hinc inde*, by any church-judicatory, upon the account of ‘ the late differences among presbyterians (that is, for the protestations entred against the then Assemblies and their proceedings) ‘ from ‘ the year 1650, till the reintroduction of Prelacy, to be of themselves ‘ void and null to all effects and intents.’ And indeed no reformed church, before now, has made it a *term of communion* with them, that none of their members should ever *protest* against any of their proceedings; nor could any man, with a safe conscience, be member of any court whatsoever, unless the privilege of *dissenting* and *protesting*, in some cases, were allowed him; because these are the only means in a *judicatory* whereby a man can exoner his own conscience, and do justice to truth, when it is injured, and doth not import a contempt of authority *lawfully* exercised, but only a pleading and contending for the free exercise of the laws and privileges of the society: and therefore, it is matter of regret, that the *prevailing party* in the established church should attempt to secure their authority by such an unlawful mean, to accomplish which, they have proceeded against us with such rigour, as cannot be paralleled in any church that renounceth the title of *infallibility*.

3dly, Our Presbyterian Constitution, is likewise *subverted* by the *unwarrantable and arbitrary proceedings of the Commission of our General Assemblies for some years by-past*; and, *herein they are supported and countenanced* by the *prevailing party* in the several Assemblies of this church. The truth of this may be evident to all who seriously consider the proceedings of the Commission of late, and how they have, in a most *arbitrary and absolute* manner, decided causes referred to them, in opposition to the *rule of the word*, and the *principles and constitution* of the church of Scotland; as is manifest in the cases of Baltrou, Hutton, West-kirk, Kinross, and many others: and it is very dangerous and pernicious to the interest and kingdom of Christ in this land, that it is pled, upon all occasions, that their *sentences*, however *unjust*, are yet *irreversible*; which makes the *will and pleasure of that court, the rule and measure of right and wrong*, and of almost the whole public affairs of this church, seeing our Assemblies now-a-days, determine few causes themselves, and these frequently of the smallest moment, but refer most of their affairs to the Commission. And this plea for the *irreversibleness* of their sentences appears the more unjustifiable, when it is considered, that no plausible reason can be advanced, why a *delegate court*, such as the Commission is, and which has no manner of *foundation in the word*, unless considered as a Committee of the former Assembly, should be accountable to the *following* for their conduct, and yet their decisions should not be *reversible* by them, even though they are found by the Assembly

to be such as are not agreeable to the rules of this church: yea, that this is most unreasonable, is plain from the *nature of the thing*, and from older and latter acts of Assembly regulating the powers of the Commission. And likewise, the said court, that they may the more effectually invade and bury the liberties of all concerned in causes referred to them, have assumed to themselves a power of erecting *sub-commissions*, contrary to the common maxim, *delegatus non potest delegari*; and have invested them with powers they had not committed to themselves by the Assembly their *constituents*, and which it is not in the power even of the Assembly to give them, to wit, to invade the rights of Presbyteries, who are *radical judicatories*; to *take trial of the gifts of young men*, and to *settle them* contrary unto the declared mind both of the Presbyteries in which, and of the Parishes over which, they are settled, without waiting the judgment of the ensuing Assembly, and having their authority interposed thereunto, though *protestations* for liberty to complain to the Assembly had been entred in due time and form.

The above conduct of the Commission, appears to us to strike at the very root of our *Presbyterian constitution*, and to be a piece of *tyranny* equal to any thing exercised by the *Diocesan Prelates* when they were in power and authority in the land. It is a *Presbyterian principle*, founded upon the word of God, that the *authoritative mission* of men unto the work and office of the holy ministry, by the trial of their gifts and qualifications, and the setting of them apart to that sacred office, by prayer and imposition of hands, belongs unto a *constitute Presbytery*. It is also a received principle amongst us, that the power of superior courts over a Presbytery is not a *privative*, but a *cumulative* power and authority; that is, neither Synods, nor Assemblies, nor their Commissions, can deprive Presbyteries of these inherent rights and privileges that belong unto them, or of that power and authority that they have received from the Lord Jesus, the only *Head and King* of the church, but that they ought to *protect* and *support* them in the exercise of the same: but the *present management* of the Commissions of our several General Assemblies, in appointing Committees, with a *power of trial and ordination*, is a taking of *that power* out of the hands of Presbyteries, which *properly belongs* unto them; and at the same time an erecting of a court, with a power of mission unto the work and office of the ministry, that has no manner of foundation in the word of God. If it is said, That this is done because Presbyteries are *disobedient* to the sentences of the Commission, who are their superiors: the plain matter is, it is done because Presbyteries cannot comply with the *sinful and unwarrantable orders* of the Commission; such as the *wick moderation* of calls, as every reasonable man must judge the sentence of the Commission in August last to have been, appointing the Presbytery of Auchterarder to moderate in a call for the presentee to the parish of Muckhart, *exclusive of any other*; it is done, because they cannot, in a consistency with Presbyterian principles, proceed to the settlement of ministers upon the foot of *presentations* and otherwise, when the congregations concerned are *dissenting and reclaiming*.—For these, and the like

reasons, the *Commission* takes the settlement of parishes out of the hands of *Presbyteries*, and lodges the power of trial and ordination in a committee of their own naming, and frequently many of them are *not members* of the Commission, but all of them are *select and pickt men*, who they know very well will yield *ready obedience* to the orders of the *prevailing party*.

May we not, upon the whole, ask our *present managers*, What difference there is betwixt *fourteen Diocesan Prelates*, their taking the power of trial and ordination out of the hands of all the *Presbyteries* in Scotland, and a Commission of the General Assembly, whereof *thirty one makes a quorum*, their divesting all the *Presbyteries* of Scotland of this inherent right and privilege, when their sinful and unwarrantable orders are not obeyed? For our part, we know none, except that the *former* exercise this lordly dominion over the heritage of God, in a plain consistency with their declared principles; when the *latter* do it under a *Presbyterian mask*, but in a direct inconsistency with their professed and known principles.—Hence it is, that the flock of Christ are wounded and grieved, scattered and broken through the land; the wicked are hardened, and this church is become the derision of her enemies.

We must here likewise observe, That these arbitrary and unwarrantable proceedings of the Commission, by which the liberties of particular congregations, and the rights of *Presbyteries*, are invaded and borne down these several years bypast, have been *supported by the Assemblies of this church*, in so far as they have resolutely refused all applications to *reverse* any one of the most iniquitous of their sentences: so that all corners of this church have been left to groan under the load of their oppression, with no other alleviation but that the *Assemblies* of the church *disapproved*, in some cases, of the Commission's conduct; that is, they owned that the complaining congregations and *Presbyteries* were wronged and oppressed by that court, but would do nothing to relieve them from such a grievous calamity.

Now, that we may conclude what we intended for the *proof* of the *first branch* of the *general charge* against the *prevailing party* in the established church: Since it is so, that they are *breaking down the fences and guards* against innovations in our doctrine and worship, government and discipline; and seeing they *exercise a legislative power and authority* over the house of God, in opposition to the laws and ordinances of the Lord and Master of the house, and bind their iniquitous decrees upon the consciences of the children of the house, by inflicting the *highest censures* upon them, if they do not submit to their unjust and arbitrary sentences; and since *prelatick dominion and tyranny* has crept in, and is carried on under the mask of *Presbyterian church-government*; must not every sober and unprejudiced person judge, that they are *subverting our beautiful Presbyterian constitution*? And, though the keys of government and discipline are committed unto the office-bearers of the church, by Christ her glorious head, for the edification of his body, for the preservation of the institutions of Christ in their purity, for the maintenance of that *liberty wherewith Christ has made his people free, that they may not*

be intangled with any yoke of bondage, for the purging of the house of God of unsound ministers and members, for the removal of offences, whereby the flock of Christ may be hurt or *stumbled*, for the restraining the open enemies of Christ and his kingdom, for the *catching of foxes that spoil his tender vines*, and for separating between the holy and profane, that the valuable privileges of God's children may not be *cast unto dogs*: Though, we say, the keys of government and discipline are given to the ministers and elders of the church, for these and the like great and excellent ends; yet, are they not perverted by our *present managers* to quite opposite ends and uses? Is not the door cast open, by an ecclesiastical ordinance and constitution, to a corrupt ministry to enter into the church of Christ? Is not the heritage of God oppressed by a continued series and tract of unprecedented intrusions upon them? Is not the edge of discipline turned against these (both ministers and people) that testify a regard to the laws, ordinances, and institutions of the head of the church? Are not such as are in principle declared enemies to our covenanted reformation, and in practice profane and scandalous, if they bear the name of *Protestant*, received into the bosom of the church, and intrusted with one of her most sacred and valuable rights and privileges? And therefore, though we have the *form* of Kirk-sessions, Presbyteries, Synods, and Assemblies; yet, what is the *form of government*, but like the *form of godliness*, when the life and power of it is gone? It is no more than as the shadow without the substance, or as the body without the spirit, or as a carcase without life; and that it should be so in the church of Scotland, once so famous among the churches, ah! that it should be *told in Gath*, or *heard in the streets of Askelon*.

II. We proceed now to the *second branch* of *general charge* that we have laid against the *prevailing party* in the judicatories of the church, *viz.* 'That they are pursuing such measures as do actually corrupt, or have the most direct tendency, to corrupt the doctrine contained in our excellent *Confession of Faith*.'

Although this church hath been famous in former times for purity of doctrine, and for witnessing against every thing that had a tendency to obscure or pervert the simplicity of the gospel, and so answered the character of being the *pillar and ground of truth*; yet we cannot but notice it with regret, that she has now fallen in a great measure from her *former zeal* that way. Although many of the precious and *fundamental truths* of our holy religion, which touch the eternal salvation of souls, have been *attacked*, and pernicious soul-ruining errors of late *vented*, both in our *neighbourhood* and within *our own bosom*; yet this church's zeal hath not moved her, according to duty, to *display a banner for truth*, that it might be given to *them that fear him*: yea, gross errors and erroneous persons are countenanced and encouraged, in so far as no *suitable testimony* is given against them. But the truth of what is laid in our general charge will more fully appear, if the following particular instances are seriously considered.

1. When the Arian *heresy* was some years ago, like the *noisom pestilence*, running through England and Ireland, and our orthodox brethren there were contending in the *high places of the field*, for the *independency* and *supreme deity of the Son of God, our glorious Redeemer*; it might have been expected, that this church should have come up, at that time, *to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty*, by lifting up the standard of a faithful testimony, for the honour of Christ, the encouragement of our brethren, and for preventing the contagion of that heresy, its entering into our own borders: but, though this was moved, yet nothing suitable to such a call in providence was done; and therefore, God, in a way of righteous judgment, suffered that blasphemous heresy to enter so far into our borders, as to poison one of the *principal seminaries* for the holy ministry in this church; as is evident from the *process* against Professor SIMSON, who was brought before the bar of our Assemblies in the years 1727, &c. And when it was found clearly proven, 'That, in teaching his students, he had denied the necessary existence of our Lord Jesus Christ; and that he had affirmed, That his necessary existence is a thing we know not; and that the term, *necessary existence*, was impertinent, and not to be used when talking of the Trinity; and that the three persons of the adorable Trinity are not to be said to be *numerically one* in substance and essence; and that the terms, *necessary existence, supreme deity*, and the title of the *only true God*, may be taken, and are by some authors taken, in a sense that includes the personal property of the *Father*, and so not belonging to the *Son*:' We say, when these articles, whereby he had attempted to *depose the Son of God from his true and supreme deity*, were found clearly proven; and, to express it in the words of the Rev. Mr. Boston, now deceased, (when offering his protest against the Assembly's determination in that matter) 'The *Son of God* was, as it were, appearing at the bar of that Assembly, *craving justice* against one who had derogate from his essential glory, and blasphemed his name, at which every knee should bow;' yet the concern of this church for these foundation-truths of our holy Christian religion, went no higher than a *bare suspension* of the blasphemer from teaching and preaching, and all exercise of any ecclesiastical power and function, *leaving the door open* to another Assembly to relax him from the said sentence. As the Assembly 1729, did rest in the above sentence of *suspension*, contrary to the declared mind of the most of the Presbyteries in this National Church, so the *censure* inflicted was nowise *adequate* to the grossness of the errors that had been proven against the said Mr. Simson; yea, such countenance is given him, as that he continues still to bear the character of a minister of the established church; and he is possessed of his *benefice*, to the great prejudice of the church, which is thereby precluded the benefit of an *orthodox* professor in his place, for training up men for the ministry, in the sound principles of our holy religion.

2. Whereas the said professor Simson was processed before the judicatories of this church, in the years 1715, and 1716, for several gross and dangerous errors; the General Assembly, in the year 1717,

did find, 'That he had vented some opinions, not necessary to be taught in divinity; and that had given more occasion to strife than to the promoting of edification; and that he had used some expressions that bear, and are used by adversaries in a bad and unsound sense; and that he had adopted some hypotheses different from what are commonly used among orthodox divines, that are not evidently founded on scripture, and tend to attribute too much to natural reason and the power of corrupt nature; which undue advancement of reason and nature,' says the Assembly, 'is always to the disparagement of Revelation and efficacious free grace.' And, for those reasons, the Assembly did *prohibite and discharge Mr. Simson to use such expressions, or to teach, preach, or otherwise vent such opinions, propositions, or hypotheses.* And when he was brought under process for the above damnable heresies, mentioned in the former head, the General Assembly did in the year 1726, by their act for the preserving the purity of doctrine, appoint the Presbytery of Glasgow, with a Committee they had named for their help and assistance, to enquire how the said Mr. Simson had obeyed the injunctions of the General Assembly 1717, as to the points which they had then prohibited him to teach; and the said Presbytery having found ground for a *process* against him, for *contraveening the Act of Assembly 1717*, the same was carried on by a Committee appointed by the Assembly 1727, who found by the depositions of witnesses, that Mr. Simson had taught his students, 'That the heathen, by the light of nature, including tradition, may know that God is reconcilable to sinners; and that they may know there is a remedy for sin provided, which may be called an *implicit* or *obscure* revelation of the gospel; and that it is probable, that none are excluded from the benefit of the remedy for sin, provided by God, and published twice to the world, except these who by their *actual* sin exclude themselves, and slight or reject either the clearer light of the gospel revealed to the church, or that obscure discovery and offer of grace made to all without the church; and that, if the *heathen*, in the use of the means they have, would seek the knowledge of the way of reconciliation, God would discover it to them.'—As also, that he taught, 'That there are means appointed of God for obtaining saving grace; which means, when diligently used, with seriousness, sincerity, and faith of being heard, God hath promised to bless with success; and that the going about these means, in the fore-said manner, is not above the reach of our natural abilities and powers:—and that he used these words, '*Ratio est principium & fundamentum theologiæ*, which bear, and are used by adversaries in an unsound sense, though he disowned the unsound sense of them;'—and likewise, that he taught, 'That there was no proper covenant made with Adam; and that Adam was not a *federal* head to his posterity; and that it is inconsistent with the justice and goodness of God, to create a soul without original righteousness, or dispositions to good; and that the souls of infants, since the fall, as they came from the hands of their Creator, are as *pure* and *holy* as the souls of infants would have been created, supposing man

‘ had *not* fallen; and that they are as pure and holy as Adam’s was created, except as to these qualifications and habits which he received as being created in an adult state; and that it is more than probable, that all baptized infants, dying in infancy, are saved; and that it is manifest, that, if God should deny his grace to all or any of the children of infidels, he would deal more severely with them than he did with the fallen angels.’—And likewise, that he taught, ‘ That, were it not for the prospect of happiness, he could not, and therefore would not serve God; and that there will be no sinning in hell after the last judgment.’

The Assembly’s Committee, having found it proven, that Mr. Simson had taught the *above pernicious errors*, laid the whole of their proceeding before the Assembly 1728; but neither did that Assembly, nor the *following*, who concluded the process against him, *take any notice of these gross errors*; and though there is just ground to fear, that many have imbibed them, to the endangering of the purity of the doctrine of this church; yet no regard is had to these things, but all is passed over by our Assemblies ever since, with a *profound silence*; and this omission we judge to be the more culpable, in regard he had taught the above errors in *contravention of the Act of Assembly 1717*. The common maxim, *Qui tacet consentire videtur*, was very much pled in the Assembly 1732, to bring in these Presbyteries, who had sent up no opinion with respect to the overture ancient planting vacant congregations, as *consenters* to it; and this was made use of as a handle for voting it into a standing act: but we are much mistaken, if it be not far more applicable to the case in hand, considering the trust committed by the Lord to the judicatories of his church, with respect unto damnable errors openly vented and found proven before them, especially by a *professor of divinity*.

3. Although our General Assemblies have been frequently addressed, by *representations and instructions* from many Synods and Presbyteries, representing the necessity of an *assertory Act*, affirming and owning the truths injured and opposed by the above-mentioned dangerous errors vented by Mr. Simson; as also, that a *solemn warning might be emitted*, discovering the evil and dangerous tendency of them: yet the *prevailing party* in our judicatories have given a *deaf ear* to all these representations, and *disregard* all such reasonable and necessary instructions; and we cannot but look upon this conduct as most injurious to the great and precious truths of God, that have been attacked in such a bold and daring manner. Truth has for many years bypast been lying *wounded and bleeding in our streets*, craving that justice may be done her, particularly by the *church-representative*, which is in a peculiar manner the *pillar and ground of truth*, 1 Tim. iii. 15. and to whom it belongs, in a special manner, to publish and declare, to uphold and defend, all the truths of God delivered in his word, against open and avowed enemies, or secret underminers of the same: yea, as it is a debt that one generation owes unto another, to transmit the truths of God in their purity to posterity; so these truths that are *opposed and assaulted* ought to be delivered off our hands to the rising generation, with some more

peculiar and solemn testimony unto them. And therefore, we cannot but look upon the above omission of our General Assemblies to be an injury done to truth, to be contrary to our solemn covenant-engagements, to be injustice done to our posterity, and to have no small tendency towards the hardning of such as may be tainted with the above errors, as also towards the spreading of this corrupt leaven amongst others.

4. A *scheme of erroneous principles* has likewise been *vented* of late by Mr. Archibald Campbell, professor of church-history in St. Andrews, in some late prints emitted by him, having a manifest tendency to *subvert revealed religion*, and to expose practical serious godliness, under the notion of *enthusiasm*, as in his *discourse* proving that the *apostles* were not *enthusiasts*, and the *preface* thereto prefixed; as also to advance *self-love* as the *leading principle* in all our actions whatsoever, as in his *enquiry into the original of moral virtue*: and he has the *assurance* to affirm, in his *Latin discourse* before the University of St. Andrews, That ‘the being of God, and the immortality of the soul, cannot be known by the light of nature, without the aid and assistance of tradition,’ contrary unto the express doctrine delivered in the 1 Sect. of the 1 Chap. of our Confession of Faith, and Psal. xix. 1, 2, 3. *The heavens declare his glory, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work, &c.*; yea, *The invisible things of him from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and God-head*, Rom. i. 20. And though these, and other errors, vented by the said Mr. Campbell, are open and notour from the books published by him, and have been sufficiently exposed by several private hands; yet, instead of commencing any process against the author, he is carried and countenanced in our Assemblies, as being a *fit man* for the purpose of our *ruling side*, who are carrying on the present course of defection.

5. We reckon also, that a *wound was given*, by the sentence of Assembly 1733, to several *precious truths*, emitted by Mr. Erskine in his *synodical sermon*, and in his *written answers* given in to the Synod, which the Assembly, by the *foresaid act*, thought fit likewise to *condemn*, as though they were *offensive*, and *tended to disturb the peace and good order of this church*; though they be founded upon the word of God, and agreeable to our approved standards, as was cleared in one of the *Representations* given in to the Commission in August last: by which it appears to us, that these *perilous times* are now come in our land, wherein *men cannot endure sound doctrine*, but *turn away their ears from the truth*, and look upon such as enemies to the established church, who declare the truth, and bear testimony to it from the pulpit, when it is wounded and falling in our streets.

6. Although *this church owns* the Westminster Confession of Faith, and all *intrants* into the ministry be obliged to *subscribe* it as the confession of their faith; yet, *how little of that scheme and order of doctrine is taught at this day?* particularly, by *many preachers and ministers* that have *lately entered* into the church, while there is as little of *Christ* to be found in most of their discourses, as in Plato’s

or Seneca's morals; and, if he be at all preached, he is preached as the *pattern*, not of *gospel-holiness*, but of *abstracted morality*; at best, as the *author* of a *new gospel-law*, enjoining faith, repentance, and new obedience, as the *conditions* of a new covenant, and of a sinner's justification before God. People are generally pressed to the practice of duty, as if their abilities for obedience at the creation were not entirely lost by the fall of Adam. Though man be naturally married to the *law* as a *covenant*, and be seeking life and righteousness upon the footing of his own obedience; yet, how little care is taken to preach the *law* in its *spirituality*, *extent*, and *severity*, condemning every man to death and the curse, that *continues not in all things written in the book of the law to do them*, in order to discover the depravation of nature, and the utter impotency of fallen man to please God by his obedience? How little digging into the cursed root of *original sin*, imputed and inherent, or laying open the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the heart, that so sinners may be brought off from the covenant of works, unto him *who is the alone foundation that God hath laid in Zion*, and who is become *the end of the law for righteousness unto every one that believes*? And, though they profess to own and acknowledge the inviolable and perpetual obligation of the righteous and holy law of God upon the regenerate, as well as the unregenerate, which we believe and hold as a most firm and certain truth; yet, how little are the duties of obedience to it preached in a *gospel-way*? How little are they enforced from gospel-motives, or pressed for gospel ends and purposes? How little is the necessity of a vital union with Christ discovered, in order to our yielding acceptable obedience to the law? How little of free justification, by the imputed righteousness of Christ, is taught, or of the gospel-mystery of sanctification, as inseparably connected with justification, and maintained and carried on by a *life of faith on the Son of God, who is made of God unto us, not only righteousness, but sanctification*?—These, and the like supernatural mysteries, are in a great measure exploded and discarded by our *modish haranguers*, and a dry, sapless, and lifeless descanting upon the moral virtues introduced into the room thereof: by which means, they who have *their senses exercised to discern good and evil*, are set wandering for the bread of their souls, where they can have it; and others, who have their ears tickled with an *empty sound of words*, left to perish for lack of the knowledge of the gospel, and of the way of salvation by Christ in a covenant of grace.

Now, to shut up this head, we must observe, That an *overture* against this dangerous *innovation*, both in the method and strain of preaching, was referred by two several General Assemblies, *Annis 1726, 1727*, to the respective *Commissions*, to be considered and prepared by them in order to be turned into an *act*: yet *nothing was done*; it was *dropt*, through the influence of the *ruling party*; and by this means these evils are on the growing hand, and therefore are *justly chargeable on the management of the prevailing party*, who are carrying on the present course of *desecration*.

From all the above *instances*, it is evident, that the *present pre-*

vailing party in the judicatories of this church, are pursuing such measures as do actually corrupt, or have the most direct tendency to corrupt, the doctrine contained in our excellent Confession of Faith; in regard, that no full and free testimony has been given for the truths of God, and against the dangerous errors that are vented and propagated unto the prejudice and subversion of the same: and in regard, that no adequate censure has been inflicted upon erroneous and corrupt teachers; yea, such are held and kept in ministerial communion, and have no small regard shown them in our supreme judicatories: and seeing the church of Scotland is in such circumstances at present, through the influence and management of the *prevailing party*; there is too much ground to fear, that in a little time, if God do not prevent, this *established church* shall only be *orthodox*, in the same sense that the church of England is so, by subscribing the 39 Articles, which are truly Calvinist in the doctrinal parts, while yet Arminian doctrine is every where taught by her clergy: upon which account, we judge this generation, and our poor posterity, in the utmost danger of losing the gospel in its power and purity, through the prevalence of a corrupt and unsound ministry. If a man have any little acquaintance with what they call the *belle-lettre*, or gentlemanly learning; if he have the art of making his compliments and addresses to a person of quality; if he can accept of a presentation from a Patron, and be a fit tool to carry on the measures of the ruling party of the church, that is the man that shall find encouragement in our Assemblies and Commissions, though he know not how to speak a word in season to a weary soul. No regard is had to a man's acquaintance with experimental religion, and the power of godliness upon his own soul, according to the acts of the church in former times: but, on the contrary, if there be a man who has an air of piety and religion, however well polished by the Lord for edifying the body of Christ, and for overthrowing the works of the devil, for which purpose the Son of God was manifested; the prevailing party have an evil eye of jealousy upon that man, as a person of dangerous and divisive principles: and, if a clear gospel-call to such a man offer from the body of a Christian people, he must be set aside, and the hue and cry raised against him, as though an enemy were coming into our borders.—By these, and the like methods of management, it looks as if a faithful ministry, in a few years, shall be gradually wormed out of Scotland, and our posterity left without the knowledge of the gospel, and a covenanted work of Reformation buried in perpetual oblivion.

III. We proceed now to the *third branch* of the general charge against the *prevailing party* in the judicatories of this church, viz. 'That sinful and unwarrantable terms of ministerial communion are imposed, by restraining ministerial freedom and faithfulness, in testifying against the present course of defection and backsliding; and that in this, as well as in the former things charged against them, they counteract the solemn engagements they came under at their ordination to the ministry.'

The truth of this will be evident, if it is considered, that the last

Assembly have made it a ' term of ministerial communion, that ministers shall not, from the pulpit, testify against the Act of Assembly 1732, or any other proceedings of the judicatories of this church; in as much as they did *approve of*, and *ratify* the *sentence* of the Synod of Perth and Stirling, finding Mr. Erskine censurable for testifying against the said act, and other defections of this church, in his Sermon at the opening of the said Synod in October 1732; and did *rebuke* and *admonish* him accordingly at the bar of the said Assembly.' From which it evidently appears, that it was the judgment of that Assembly, That ' no minister of our communion ought to testify, from the pulpit, against the Act of Assembly 1732, or any other sinful and unwarrantable proceedings of the judicatories of this church,' unless he resolves to become obnoxious to censure. It cannot be justly alledged, that it was *merely* for the *indecent* expressing of things, which might be otherwise lawfully said, that the rebuke was tendered; in regard the Assembly *approved the proceedings* of the Synod of Perth and Stirling, finding Mr. Erskine *culpable* for several *indecent expressions* uttered by him, in a sermon preached before the said Synod, tending to disquiet the peace of this church, and *impugning several acts of Assembly and proceedings of the church-judicatories*, as the said Assembly represent the matter in their *act and sentence* passed against him. By which it is plain, that the thing which was reckoned *indecent* in Mr. Erskine, was his *impugning*, from the pulpit, the *Acts of Assembly* and the *proceedings of church-judicatories*: this was the *great quarrel* the Synod had against him; and the Assembly do, upon this very ground, *approve* of the Synod's proceedings, as their act and sentence bears: therefore it was for *saying* such and such things, that the *censure* was administered, and not *merely* for the *way and manner* of emitting them.—From whence it still follows, as was said, That ' the last Assembly have established ' it is a term of ministerial communion, that no minister shall, upon ' any occasion, testify from the pulpit against any Act of Assembly, ' be it never so sinful; or against any of the proceedings of the judicatories, be they never so unwarrantable.'

This *limiting of ministerial freedom* is unreasonable in its *own nature*, and inconsistent with *faithfulness* in the exercise of the ministry. There is nothing more plain, than that every minister is bound to *declare the whole counsel of God*: As he is to teach the *observance of all things contained in the word*; so, he is to *show Israel their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sin*: and, if the sin be committed by the *officers* of the church, it is so much the more *dangerous* to the whole body, and therefore ought to be testified against; because that, when the *leaders of the people do cause them to err*, they that are led of them are *destroyed*, Isa. ix. 16. And this is so much the more reasonable, when the judicatories of a church, by their practices and statutes, are making visible encroachments upon the privileges of the members thereof, because the public *regretting* of these unwarrantable practices and laws, has a native tendency to excite all that are serious and godly, to the exercise of *servent prayer and supplication to the Lord*, who has the hearts of all men in his hands, that

he would, in his own time and way, bring about their relief from these grievances under which they groan. And this lamenting of, and testifying against the defections of this church, has been the practice of the prophets under the old, and of our Lord himself and his apostles under the new Testament, Mat. v. vi. vii. and chap. xxiii. 13. to the end of the chapter; and Stephen and Peter, when before the Jewish Sanhedrim, Acts vii. 51, 52, 53. chap. iv. 10, 11.; see also chap. x. 11. and chap. ii. 23. Nor indeed can a minister be faithful to his trust, if he can be a *silent spectator* of the threatened ruin of the church of which he is a member; for it is the duty of every faithful *watchman* to give warning of approaching hazard, upon his peril, Ezek. iii. 17, 18. And this was so far from being thought *culpable by this church*, that her former *Assemblies* have strictly enjoined every *minister*, in an agreeableness to this charge from the Lord, to *reprove the sins*, and to *press the duties of the times*, as they would not expose themselves to the censures of the church, even the length of suspension and deposition, Assembly 1647. session 19. and Act of Assembly 1648. session 26. intituled, *Act for censuring ministers for their silence, and not speaking of the corruptions of the times*.—From which it still more evidently appears, that the injoining of silence, as to public defections, is a *new* term of ministerial communion in this church.

And we must also add, That we reckon this *silence*, enjoined us, and other ministers, *inconsistent with our ordination vows and engagements*, by which we are bound to assert, maintain, and defend the doctrine, worship, Presbyterian government, and discipline of this church: For, how can we be faithful to our ordination vows and engagements, and yet be *silent spectators* of the deep wound that is given to our Presbyterian constitution, not only by the act of Assembly 1732, but by all the other above-mentioned proceedings of the judicatories of this church? Shall we be witnesses to the measures that are taken, and which have a direct tendency to corrupt the doctrine of this church, and yet be *restrained* from *lamenting* the same, upon proper occasions, from the pulpit? Shall we tamely yield to a *censure*, shutting our mouths, when the heritage of God is oppressed, and the cry of violence is going up to heaven from the several corners of this church and land; and especially when representations and instructions to our General Assemblies are nowise regarded? If we suffer ourselves to be bound up from regretting, on *proper occasions*, the unwarrantable and sinful proceedings of this *declining church*, How can we answer for it to our *Lord and Master*, to our own *consciences*, to *succeeding generations*, and to the *flock* over which we are set as watchmen?—And, to conclude this head, As all the ministers of this church, when they are ordained to their office, do solemnly promise and engage, and subscribe it with their hands, ‘That they shall, to the utmost of their power, in their station, assert, maintain, and defend the doctrine contained in our *Confession of Faith*, and our Presbyterian church government and discipline; and that they shall never endeavour, directly or indirectly, the prejudice or subversion of the same:’ Can the *prevail-*

ing party have the assurance to affirm; or, if they should affirm it, will any that are not blinded with prejudice, or under a powerful bias, believe that the above particular *instances*, which we have condescended upon to make good the *charge* laid against them, have neither a *direct* nor *indirect tendency* to the *prejudice* and *subversion* of the *doctrine* contained in our *Confession of Faith*, or of our *Presbyterian church government and discipline*?

IV. The *fourth thing* contained in our *general charge* is, ‘That these corrupt courses are carried on with a high hand, notwithstanding that the ordinary means have been used to reclaim them, and to stop the current of the present defection.’

It is what cannot be refused, that, for many years by-past, the above-mentioned *arbitrary steps*, that are so plainly levelled against our *Presbyterian constitution*, have been *complained of* by *representations* and *instructions* from Synods and Presbyteries, to our several *General Assemblies*; and also the threatening signs that we are under of corruption in doctrine, and of *innovations* both in the method and strain of preaching, have been freely represented: There has been a *loud cry* from Presbyteries and Synods, in different corners of this church and land, that *justice might be done to injured truth*; but, how are these representations and instructions treated? They are *once read in a Committee of instructions*, but *no more regarded*. And, when Presbyteries did instruct their Commissioners to the two or three last preceding Assemblies, That, if the Committee should not transmit their *mournful complaints* to the *General Assembly*, they should, as they would be answerable to their constituents, bring them in to *open Assembly*; yet, when this is done, they are *borne down* by superior numbers: They are told, *The Assembly's time is over*; or, that the Assembly has no time to enter upon the consideration of these things.—The *last Assembly found time to intrude ministers into the parishes of Stow and Kingoldrum*, and to pass *severe and unjust sentences* against some ministers in the *Presbytery of Dunfermline*, and the *four protesting Brethren*; but *had no time to consider the weighty grievances* that the flock of Christ are groaning under: we must say it with regret, *They found time to oppress* them more and more, but *not to help or relieve them*. As representations and instructions have been frequently sent from Synods and Presbyteries, concerning the above lamentable course; so a *Representation and Petition*, signed by above *forty ministers* and some *elders*, (with whom we did concur) was given in to the Assembly 1732, concerning most of the above-mentioned grievances; but the *Assembly's Committee of bills refused to transmit the same*: and, when we offered our *Representation* at the *Assembly's bar*, we were *refused a hearing*; which obliged us to enter our *Protestation*, as ministers and members of this church, for our just rights and privileges so manifestly encroached upon. Representations and instructions to our several Assemblies, are the means that the *prevailing party* own should be used; but, how long have they been tried without success? To say we should use them, and yet in the mean time to disregard and despise

them, is a *mocking* of the ministers and members of this church with a witness.—When these, and the like means have been so long tried by Synods, Presbyteries, and some particular ministers and members of this church, but to no purpose; and when the Lord has been dealing with us, to reclaim us, both by threatened judgments, and also by a series and train of merciful providences; our condition seems to be the same with that of sinning and backsliding Israel, of whom the Lord complains, *Hos. vii. 1. When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria.*

V. The *last thing* contained in our *general charge* is, ‘That matters are come to such a pass in this church, that we are excluded from keeping up a proper testimony against the defections and backslidings of the prevailing party, in a way of ministerial communion with them.’

When petitions, representations, and instructions to our several General Assemblies are not regarded, ought we not *doctrinally* to discover the evils that prevail amongst us, and lament over them in our several congregations before the Lord? Ought we not *judicially* to *protest* against the sinful measures that are taken, not only for our own exoneration, but that a *legal testimony* against sin and defection, and for the truths of God, may be transmitted to posterity? And that both these are warrantable, we have already shown. But the *prevailing party* in our church-judicatories, as they do not regard our representations and petitions, so they will not allow us to give either a *doctrinal* or a *judicial testimony* against their defections and backslidings: if we testify in a *doctrinal* way against the same, then, according to the *act* and *sentence* of the *last Assembly*, we must be brought to the bar of church-judicatories, and there be *rebuked* and *admonished*: and if we *protest* against such a censure, so nearly affecting the free and faithful exercise of our ministry, or if we *protest* for our just right and privilege to testify against the defections of this church, upon all proper occasions, then, according to the *foresaid act* and *sentence*, we must be *suspended* from the exercise of our ministry: if we cannot yield obedience to a sentence of suspension inflicted in an arbitrary way and manner, because of our testimony in the public cause of God, then we must be *cast out of the church*; we must be *declared no ministers of the established church*.—From all which it is plain, that the *prevailing party* will not allow us to maintain a proper testimony, in a way of ministerial communion with them, against their present steps of defection and backsliding; and therefore, it is not only *warrantable* for us, but we are laid under a *necessity*, to lift up a testimony, in a way of *secession* from them, against the present current of defection, whereby our constitution is subverted, our doctrine is corrupted, and the heritage and flock of Christ are wounded, scattered, and broken; that we may not partake with them in their sins, and may do, what in us lies, to transmit unto succeeding generations these valuable truths that have been handed down to us by the contendings and

wrestlings of a great cloud of witnesses in Scotland since the dawning of Reformation-light amongst us.

But, because our present situation in providence, with reference to this church, considered abstractly from the word, cannot be the rule of our duty; therefore we turn our eyes to the *unerring rule of the word of God*, looking toward the great *high Priest of our profession*, who hath the URIM and THUMMIM, *all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge* in his breast, that he may instruct and teach us in the way that we should go: and we think, and are persuaded that his voice to us from the word, is that, Rom. xvi. 7. *Now, I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them: where the Apostle, under the conduct of the Spirit, characterizes the disturbers of Christian society, these that cause divisions and offences, contrary unto the doctrine that we have learned.*—We in this church have learned from our fore-fathers, in a consistency with the word of God, that the LORD JESUS is the *Lord, King, and Law-giver* unto his church and people; and that the *office-bearers* of his house have no *lordly power and authority* over the flock and heritage of God; that the right of *electing ministers* belongs unto the people over whom they are to have charge; and that *by all means it is to be avoided, that any minister should be thrust in upon a Christian congregation*:—We have learned, that, in the *kingdom of Christ*, there is no difference between the *man with the gold ring in gay clothing*, and the *man with the vile raiment and attire*; that *bond and free, master and servant, are one in Christ*:—We have learned, that it is unlawful to confer the rights and privileges of true church-members upon them who are *open enemies* to a covenanted work of Reformation:—We have learned, that it is an iniquity to *strengthen or set up the right-hands of the wicked*, or give them power or occasion to oppress the Lord's people, either in their civil or sacred privileges:—We have learned, that ministers ought to be free and faithful, in giving warning against prevailing corruptions, either in the practice of judicatories, ministers, or private Christians; and that, instead of being *enslaved*, they ought to be *encouraged* in so doing:—We have learned, that a *banner* should be displayed for truth, against the rising and prevailing errors of the time; that the *confutes* of the church, such as rebukes, admonitions, suspensions, and the like, should be inflicted upon *evil doers or erroneous teachers*, and not upon those who *tell the truth*, and are *sound* in doctrine and morals:—We have learned, that *protesting* against defections in an Assembly or church, is lawful and warrantable.—These and the like doctrines we have learned in this church: they that *cause divisions and offences* are these, who either in principle or practice counteract or deny them, and who cannot endure them; but who, by the majority of their numbers, having got the key of discipline in their hands, study with all their might to smother and bury these, and the like doctrines, by rebukes, admonitions, suspensions, and higher censures. In which event the duty pointed out to us, by the inspired apostle, is twofold:

first to *mark* them; the word signifies to *observe* them, as a watchman set upon a high tower, in order to descry the enemy that comes in to invade and disturb the city of God: 'He is diligently to *mark* all comers, and to give notice accordingly for the safety of the city;' as the continuators of Pool upon the place express it: and this is what we judge to be our duty, as we are watchmen set upon the walls of the city of God.—The second duty incumbent upon us, by the direction of the Holy Ghost, is, to *avoid* them; or, as it reads in the margin, *turn aside* from them. The sum is, according to expositors, that *sound Christians should turn away from them, and shun their society, that they may be ashamed*: and this we judge warrants us in our *secession* from ministerial communion with them, which is the only way we have now left us to *avoid* them.

The same *duty* we find also laid upon us by an *express command*, and that with great *solemnity*, as we would not counteract the authority of the *King of Zion*; 2 Thess. iii. 6. *Now, we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which ye have received of us.* Expositors tell us, That the word rendered to *withdraw*, alludes to a mariner that steers his ship from the rocks; and so it implies the *danger* of not withdrawing, which may be the reason of the solemnity of the command about it: and it is not from a heathen man, but a *brother*, one that is of the church; and it is *every* brother, whether rich or poor, high or low, who *walks disorderly, not according to the traditions received of the apostles.*—And whether *these brethren*, who are driving on the present defection, *be walking orderly*, according to the rule of God's word, and the principles of this church founded thereupon, we leave it to the world to judge, from the several particulars above condescended upon. What remains then, but that we should *withdraw from them*, seeing no other means, by instructions, petitions, representations, and protestations, will stop them in their career of backsliding?

The same *precept* we have repeated, 1 Tim. vi. 3, 4, 5. 2 Tim. iii. 5. Tit. iii. 10. 2 Epist. of John, ver. 10.; and many other places of scripture which we might adduce.—When a church declines the pure ways of the Lord, it is the duty of them that would be found faithful, to *stand and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and to walk therein*, Jer. vi. 16. And when they change from the good ways of the Lord, to ways of their own devising, that have no foundation in the word, none is obliged to walk with them, Prov. xxiv. 2. When they *say a confederacy* with the avowed enemies of the cause of Christ, so far especially as to make a complement of the rights of the church, and liberties of the kingdom of Christ unto them; in that case we must not *say a confederacy* with THEM, but must *stand fast in the liberties wherewith Christ hath made his people free*, Gal. v. 1. When truth is wounded in the streets, and men censured for publishing it, as though it were lies or error, in that case we are to *contend earnestly*, [or, as in an agony,] *for the faith once delivered to the saints*, Jude, ver. 3.; Rev. iii. 11. Jer. xv. 10.—From all which

we judge, that this step of forbearing ministerial communion with the prevailing party in this established church, in our present situation, is abundantly warranted.

Having thus considered our *present situation*, in the adorable providence of God, and the *warrant* we have for our *present practice*, from the unerring rule of the *word*, we cannot but upon the whole declare,—That seeing the *prevailing party* in the established church are *breaking down* the necessary fences and guards upon our doctrine, worship, government, and discipline;—seeing they *exercise* a *legislative power* and authority over the house of God, by enacting laws *inconsistent* with the *laws of Christ*, to the hurt and not the edification of his body;—seeing the *prevailing party*, by the Act 1732, and commonly in all the settlements of Christian congregations, *join themselves* to the *avowed enemies* of a Presbyterian interest, who are suppressing the true friends thereof;—seeing a lordly and magisterial power is exercised over the flock of Christ, which he *gathers with his arm*, and *carries*, with the greatest tenderness, *in his bosom*, by inflicting the highest censures of the church upon the people of these congregations, who cannot submit to the ministry of such as are intruded upon them, and by threatening to inflict the highest censures upon ministers who dispense sealing ordinances unto them;—seeing church-discipline is exercised after this manner, so as to screen such as are justly censurable, and to *censure men* for the *faithful discharge of their duty*;—and seeing prelatie dominion and tyranny has crept in and is carried on, by divesting Presbyteries of their inherent right and privilege, if they cannot concur in the *violent settlement* of congregations, and Committees are appointed, with a Presbyterian power, to intrude ministers upon *dissenting and reclaiming congregations*, and Presbyteries are appointed to receive and inrol such intruded ministers amongst their members, by all which proceedings, our *Presbyterian constitution is subverted*;—seeing also, the *prevailing party*, instead of *contending for the faith once delivered to the saints*, or the purity of doctrine, suffer error to be published without any notice taken thereof;—seeing no due and adequate censure has been inflicted upon erroneous teachers, yea, seeing such are held and kept in ministerial communion with the established church;—seeing the *prevailing party* have *altered* the terms of *ministerial communion*, by making every man liable to censure, who adventures to preach against their present defections;—seeing they have *cast out* thousands from communion with the church, in her sealing ordinances, who cannot join with *intruded hirelings*;—and seeing these who are intruded into the ministry, and who are very active in carrying on the present defections, though in the mean time they have no lawful call to act as ministers of this church, make such a *considerable part* of her judicatories;—and seeing, to crown all, the Assemblies of this church are become so *arbitrary* in their proceedings of late, as to have no regard to instructions, petitions, and representations against a course of defection, but *à contra* do commence processes, do rebuke, admonish, suspend, and threaten higher censures upon ministers who *preach and protest*

against the above defections; and since *ministers* are not only *suspended*, but *cast out* from ministerial communion by the *prevailing party* in the established church, merely for *protesting* for their *just rights and privileges*, to *testify against these and the like defections*; and because they refuse to *retract* their said *protestations*, or submit to a mere *authoritative suspension* for their *testimony* in a cause of *public concern*.—We do then upon the whole conceive, that although we have hitherto continued contending and wrestling, in a way of church-communion, with our brethren, yet now, finding that there is no stop put to the backsliding measures, and that the current of defection runs with such an impetuous torrent, and that we are excluded from keeping up a testimony against their many sinful and unwarrantable proceedings, in a way of church-communion with them; therefore, we judge it our duty to make a *SECESSION* from ministerial communion with the present prevailing party in the established church, till they are sensible of their above-mentioned sins and mistakes, and reform and amend the same.

But, notwithstanding of this our present *Secession* from the *prevailing party* in the judicatories of this church, yet we hereby declare, as our *Protestation* bears, That we are willing to ‘hold communion with all such as desire with us to adhere unto the principles of the true Presbyterian covenanted church of Scotland, in her doctrine, discipline, worship, and government; and particularly with every one who are *groaning* under these evils, and affected with these grievances that we have been complaining of, and who are, in their several spheres, wrestling against the same;’ and we hope that there is a goodly number of such in the several corners of this church.

We make no doubt, but the odious charge of *schism* will be laid against us, especially by such as are carrying on this lamentable course of defection. This present breach began first on *their side*, and not upon ours; in so far as the Synod of Perth and Stirling, condemned several truths emitted by Mr. Erskine in his synodical sermon, and appointed him to be rebuked at their bar for the faithful discharge of his duty; and the late General Assembly appointed us every one to be *suspended*, and that because we *protested* for our just right and privilege to testify, on all proper occasions, against the sins and defections of this church; and, in case we should not obey the sentence of suspension, a *censure of a higher nature* was appointed to be inflicted upon us: and the Commission having, at their meeting in August last, *execute* the said sentence of *suspension*, as we did *protest* both before and after the execution of the same, that it should be *held and reputed null and void*; and that it should be ‘lawful for us to exercise our ministry as formerly we have done, and as if no such censure had been past; in regard we were not convicted of any thing, in doctrine or practice, contrary to the received principles of this church, or our ordination vows and engagements;’ so we did accordingly *exercise* our ministry notwithstanding of the said sentence, and could not submit to a sentence by *mere church-authority*; and, because of our testimony in the public cause of God, discharg-

ing us to exercise that ministry which we have received from the Lord: And therefore the Commission of the General Assembly did, at their meeting in November last, *declare us to be no longer ministers of the established church.*—Thus we have continued contending and wrestling against the present defections and backslidings, in a way of church-communion, till the *prevailing party* have thrust us out from among them; therefore the charge of *schism* cannot be justly laid at our door.

But, besides, when the *nature of schism* is particularly considered, we hope it will be evident unto all who are unprejudiced, that we cannot be justly charged with the same.—*Schism* is a *causeless separation* from a church, well constitute, sound in doctrine, pure in worship, impartial in discipline, and acting in the government according to the laws of Christ: otherwise a peaceable departure from, or leaving the communion of a church, when there is *just cause* for it, is not a *schism*; for *schism* must needs be theirs, whose the cause of it is; and the *wo* runs against these that *give the offence*, not against these who are *offended* at backslidings.—Now, that our present forbearance of ministerial communion with the *prevailing party* in this established church, is not *causeless*, will be pretty evident to any who impartially consider what is already said. *Schism*, in this *organised and covenanted church*, is a *departure* from that order and unity in the Lord, to which we in this land are so solemnly bound and engaged; and therefore the charge of *schism* turns against those who are *renting and breaking through* the said *covenanted order and unity*, by destroying, instead of edifying, the body of Christ, by scattering the Lord's flock, instead of gathering them; by pulling down the *carved work* of Reformation, instead of building it up; and by restraining ministerial freedom and faithfulness, in testifying against the prevailing corruptions, instead of encouraging it.

But now, because we know, that, notwithstanding of all that is said above, we shall still be branded with the odious name of men of *erroneous and unsound principles*, particularly by those against whom this our *testimony* doth point: Therefore we judge it expedient to make the following *Confession and Declaration* of our PRINCIPLES before the world.

1. We own the *Scriptures* of the Old and New Testament to be the word of God, and the only rule of faith and manners; as also, we own the Protestant reformed doctrine, according to the same, publicly professed in the church of Scotland, summarily contained in our Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms, approved by the Assembly 1647; in opposition to Popery, Arianism, Socinianism, Arminianism, Quakerism, Libertinism, Antinomianism, Baxterianism, Burignianism; and all other errors contrary to the *for-said doctrine*, and inconsistent therewith.

2. We declare our sincere and hearty adherence to the *form of worship* received and practised in the church of Scotland, approved and enjoined in the acts of the General Assemblies thereof, held forth in the *Directory* for worship; and condemn and reject whatever is not according to the same.

3. We believe with our hearts, and confess with our mouths, That our Lord Jesus Christ, as he is the alone HEAD and KING of his church, so he hath appointed a *particular form of government* therein, to continue to the end of the world unalterable: and we do receive and embrace *Presbyterian church-government*, by Kirk-sessions, Synods, Presbyteries, and Assemblies, as that form of government which we judge to be agreeable to, and founded upon the word of God, as described in our *books of discipline*, and the *propositions* concerning church-government, received and approved by the Assembly 1645, session 16. And we hereby condemn all Sectarian errors whatsoever, contrary unto, or inconsistent with, the foresaid government, instituted and appointed by the Lord Jesus in his house.

4. We believe, That the *visible church*, which is also catholic and universal, under the gospel, consists of all these through the world, that *profess* the true religion, and of their children; and is the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, and house and family of God, unto which Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting the saints in this life to the end of the world.

5. After that the Lord was graciously pleased, by the Spirit of his mouth, and the brightness of his coming, in a gospel-dispensation, to scatter the clouds of Antichristian darkness that had covered this whole land; our fathers did, according to scripture-warrant and example, by *solemn covenant*, bind and engage both themselves and their posterity, to cleave and adhere unto the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the Lord's house; and to join with their profession of the gospel, such a life and conversation as becometh Christians; whereby this *whole nation* was devoted to the Lord. We therefore believe and confess the PERPETUAL OBLIGATION of the *national covenant*, frequently sworn by all ranks of persons in Scotland; as also the PERPETUAL OBLIGATION of the *solemn league and covenant*, sworn in the year 1643, for maintaining and carrying on a work of Reformation in the three nations, and renewed afterwards in Scotland in the year 1648, with a solemn acknowledgment of sins and breaches of the said covenant, and a solemn engagement to the duties contained therein: which oaths and covenants, we believe to be *inviolable* in their obligation upon *this* and *all succeeding* generations.

6. We believe, That Christ hath appointed *church-officers* under him, distinct from the *civil magistrate*; and that to these officers, the KEYS of the *kingdom of heaven* are committed; the key of *doctrine*, for opening the mysteries of the gospel, and wonderful things of his law; the key of *discipline and government*, for the preservation of the beauty, order, and purity of his church, and for purging out of her, errors in principle, or scandals in practice, whereby she is in danger of being corrupted.

7. As these ministers and officers in the *kingdom of Christ* are in their *teaching* bounded unto the doctrine of the word, or faith delivered to the saints; so in their government of the church they are limited to that system of laws, and that form and mould of govern-

ment he hath delivered, which are every way complete, without altering the land-marks of his kingdom, or imposing upon his church the commandments of men, which is an invading of his prerogative as the alone *King* and *Lawgiver* of Zion: And therefore we believe, that the decrees and determinations of all councils, made up of fallible men, are no further to be received or submitted to by the church, than in so far as they are *consonant* unto the word of God.

8. We believe, That, when the *plurality* of officers in any particular church under the new Testament, do make *desertion* from the purity of doctrine, worship, or government, attained to; to the preservation and maintenance of which, they and the whole land are bound by the *oath of God*: and when, notwithstanding of these *oaths*, they do practically combine to overthrow the doctrine, worship, government, and discipline of the *house of God*, by countenancing and supporting of *error*, or erroneous *teachers*, by subverting the constitution, by depriving the true members of the church of their rights, and conferring them upon the open enemies of a work of Reformation, whom they take into their bosom, to the sadning of the hearts of the godly, and to the strengthening of the hands of evil doers; and when, notwithstanding of remonstrances, testimonies, and protestations, they not only go on obstinately in their arbitrary methods, but proceed to inflict the censures of the church upon these who, in any of the foresaid ways, testify against their measures: Then, and in that case, we believe it lawful for the LESSER PART of church-officers, who are *holding* the head, and keeping the *foundation* of government, to manage the KEYS of the *kingdom of heaven*, in an agreeableness to the *laws of Christ*, and for the benefit of his *mystical body*; and, in so doing, they have more ground to look for the promised presence of Christ with them, though their number be small, than the majority, who are proceeding as above, Mat. xxviii. 19, 20.

9. We believe, That it appertains unto every several congregation to *elect* their own ministers and officers; and that altogether it is to be avoided, that any man be violently intruded or thrust in upon any congregation; and that this liberty should with all care be reserved to every several congregation, to have their ministers settled among them with their own call and consent: And consequently, that the Act 1732, restricting the power of the election of ministers to heritors and elders, without consent of the people, and giving an equal power of election to non-residing heritors, and even to those that are not of our communion, is a dangerous innovation upon the rights of the church, and the principles of the Reformation, which, since that happy period, this church hath been all along contending for; and that the said act is contrary unto the word of God, which gives the right of electing officers to Christian congregations, without difference between rich and poor.

10. We believe, That it is the duty of faithful ministers, when desertions prevail in a church, and when iniquity is established by law, to give faithful *warning* against the prevailing evils of the time: And when censured for it, though at the bar of an Assembly, it is their duty to *protest* for the cause of truth, that it may not fall in the

streets; and, when suspended, or otherwise censured, that it is their duty to continue in the exercise of their ministry, necessity being laid upon them by their dedication to that office, and the command of God, to preach the gospel, and so to obey God rather than man; especially when it is considered, that submission to arbitrary authority, in a case wherein the public cause is concerned, is a plain giving-up with their testimony.

Having now declared our adherence to the doctrine, worship, government, and discipline of the church of Scotland; and having laid open the grounds and reasons of our Secession from the present *prevailing party* in the judicatories of this church: as we desire to be humbled before the Lord, for the manifold abounding sins, and the great degeneracy of the age wherein we live; and particularly for all the evils above-mentioned, for which a *righteous* and *holy* God may justly forsake and cast off this church and land; especially when it is considered to what a great height our contempt of the *gospel* of Christ, and of Christ himself, the great substance of the gospel, is come, together with our impitenency under all our heinous sins and abominations: so we likewise warn all and every one, and particularly the *people* of our *respective congregations*, seriously to consider these things, to be humbled for them, and to turn to the Lord with weeping and supplication, that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from us, and that he may be graciously pleased to return unto us, and may heal our backslidings and breaches, that *glory* may yet dwell in our land: yea, under our abounding sins, and the manifold evidences of the Lord's anger, his voice unto us seems to be, *Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired; before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the Lord come upon you, before the day of the Lord's anger come upon you. Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be, ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger,* Zeph. ii. 1, 2, 3.

S E C T. III.

Reasons by the protesting Ministers for the VALIDITY of their Pastoral Relation to their respective Congregations.

THE Commission of the General Assembly, by their act and sentence past against us, *Loose our pastoral relation to our respective parishes, and declare our churches vacant from and after the date of their sentence.* And our Protestation, entred at the intimating of the above sentence unto us, bears, That, notwithstanding of this sentence past against us, *our pastoral relation shall be held and reputed, firm and valid;* and in our said Protestation, we declare our adherence to the Protestation formerly entred before this court at their meeting in August: and, because that Protestation contains some weighty reasons for the nullity of any sentence affecting our ministerial office, or the exercise of it amongst the people of our re-

pective charges; we shall insert it here, though it is already published in our several *Representations* given in at that time to the Commission; and it is as follows:

‘ And further, We are obliged to protest, likewise by these presents we do protest for ourselves, and in name of all the *ministers* and *members* of this church adhering to us; as also in the name of all and every one in our *respective congregations* who shall adhere unto us, against any censure that may be inflicted upon us, affecting our ministerial office, or the exercise thereof, as null and void in itself; and that it shall be lawful and warrantable for us to exercise our ministry as hitherto we have done, and as if no such censure had been inflicted upon us; in regard, we are not convicted of departing from any of the received principles of this church, or of counteracting our ordination vows and engagements; but, on the contrary, are sentenced to censure by the late General Assembly, for protesting against a decision, whereby injury is done to some truths of God which we are obliged to own and confess, and whereby we are brought under these new and unwarrantable terms of ministerial communion above-mentioned, which we look upon as inconsistent with the word of God, and our ordination vows and engagements; as also, for all the above reasons and causes, why we cannot retract our paper given in to the late General Assembly.—And further, we do protest, That, if in consequence of any censure inflicted upon us, whether of suspension, or of a higher nature, any minister or probationer shall exercise any part of our ministerial work in our respective congregations, the same shall be held and reputed as an intrusion upon our ministerial labours.—As also, we protest, That if any other minister shall be settled in our congregations, that the same shall be held and reputed as an intrusion upon our pastoral charges; and that the people of our respective congregations shall not be obliged to own, acknowledge, or submit unto such as their lawful pastors; seeing we were ordained to take the oversight of them with their own call and consent, and with consent of the Presbytery into which we were received, and have not been convicted of receding from our ordination vows and engagements.’

In consequence of the above Protestation, we have continued to exercise our ministry amongst the people of our respective charges; and we judge it our duty so to do, because, as our said Protestation bears, we were ordained to take the oversight of them with *their own call and consent*, and with the *consent* of the Presbytery into which we were received, and *have not been convicted of departing from any of the received principles of this church, or of counteracting our ordination vows and engagements*. That we were ordained to take the oversight of our respective congregations with their own call and consent, and with the consent of our several Presbyteries, is what cannot be controverted: and we affirm, that our pastoral relation cannot be loosened by any of the judicatories of the church, unless by transportation to another congregation, but this is not our case; or by some legal evidence or document that we have departed in doctrine or prac-

tice from the received principles of this church, or that we have counteracted our ordination vows and engagements; but none of these take place here: And therefore our pastoral relation to our respective parishes must subsist, and be still held and reputed firm and valid, as will appear from the following particulars:

1. There is no document or evidence brought against us, that we have departed either in doctrine or practice from the received principles of this church; this was never laid to our charge: For the truth of what we affirm, we appeal to the *process* itself, and to the *sentence* that was passed against us, where no such thing is laid to our charge; besides, we have with great solemnity declared, in our several Representations given in to the Commission, our adherence to all the principles of the church of Scotland, as they are laid down in our *Confession of Faith*, our *Directory for worship*, and in the *Form of church-government*, received and approved by this church. What principle then of the church have we departed from? Let our managers show it, if they can. Their sentence, as it stands connected with the act that the last General Assembly passed against us, is founded upon our protestation against a decision of that Assembly, and on our refusal to retract the same, together with our non-submission to a sentence of suspension passed and execute against us: But we ask our managers, Is it a principle of this church, that in no case the ministers and members thereof may protest against an act or sentence of a General Assembly? We are sure, this is so far from being a principle of the church of Scotland, that it is contrary to our Reformation and Protestant principles; this is to set up an absolute power and authority in the supreme judicatory of the church, to which all ought to submit without gainsaying or counteracting, which is the very thing the Pope of Rome pleads for, unto the enslaving of the consciences of men, by requiring a blind subjection and obedience to his dictates, without examining the same according to the word of God: Yea, such a principle as this would open the flood-gates of defection from our Reformation-principles, and would effectually wrest out of our hands a proper mean for exoneration of our own consciences, and for transmitting to posterity a testimony for truth, and against the sins and defections of a backsliding church.

2. We are not convicted of counteracting our ordination vows and engagements; neither is this so much as alledged in the sentence passed against us: Yea, our conduct for which we are condemned is most agreeable to the engagements we came under when we were ordained to the office of the ministry; in regard we have promised and engaged, never to endeavour, directly nor indirectly, the prejudice or subversion of our Presbyterian church-government and discipline; and that, to the utmost of our power, we shall, in our several stations assert, maintain, and defend the same. And when it was evident to us, that by the act of Assembly 1732, and by the present proceedings of church-judicatories in the violent settlement of congregations, a deep wound is given unto our Presbyterian con-

situation, and that by the decision of the last Assembly the mouths of ministers are shut from testifying against these or the like evils, as we have already made evident; we could not but reckon that we were obliged, by our ordination vows and engagements, to protest for our just privilege and duty to testify against the act of Assembly 1732, or the like defections, upon all proper occasions.

3. It is the command of the *Head and King* of the church unto us in his own word, that we should *take heed unto ourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made us overseers, to feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood*, Acts xx. 28. 1 Pet. v. 2. And that we should *take heed to the ministry which we have received in the Lord, to fulfil it*, Col. iv. 17. This is what we have solemnly promised and engaged unto, when we were set over our respective congregations: And since we are not convicted of any thing in doctrine or practice, contrary to the received principles of this church, or our ordination vows and engagements, we cannot but look upon this singular and uncommon censure, loosing our relation to our particular congregations, as a censure that has no foundation in the word of God, or in the constitutions of the church of Scotland agreeable thereto: and therefore, in this case, we must judge it our duty to obey God rather than man; and to regard the command of God in his word, more than the act or sentence of any synod or council whatsoever; and to endeavour, according to the measure of the grace of God given unto us, to fulfil our ministry amongst the people committed to our charge.

4. From the above particulars it is evident, that if any minister or probationer shall exercise any part of our ministerial work, in our respective congregations, or if any other minister shall be settled in our said congregations, the same shall be held and reputed an intrusion upon our ministerial labours and pastoral charges; as also, that the people of our several congregations shall not be obliged to own, acknowledge, or submit unto such as their lawful pastors; yea, if they submit to the ministry of any who, in consequence of the sentence passed against us, exercise any part of our ministerial work, they counteract what they have solemnly promised and engaged, in regard that the calls they have given unto us bear a solemn promise and engagement, 'To give due respect to our persons, as ministers of Christ, and obedience and submission to our ministry in the Lord; and to do what they can to strengthen our hands, and encourage us in this great work, as becomes a dutiful people to their lawful pastors.'

If it is alledged, That the people ought to submit to the public judgment of the church; We answer, They ought not to give a blind and implicit obedience to any church whatsoever, and that they ought to examine the sentences of all Synods and Councils by the *word of God*. The Bereans are commended, Acts xvii. 11. for examining the doctrine of the great apostle Paul by the *word*; and his authority as an apostle was superior to that of any fallible synod or council. Let the *word of God*, and the *principles of this church* agreeable thereto, be judge betwixt the prevailing party and us: We appeal to their own sentence passed against us, wherein nothing

is laid to our charge contrary to the *word of God*, or the received principles of the *church of Scotland*; and it is allowed by all casuists, that, if the true pastors of the church are by mere human authority cast out, and others intruded in their stead, that it is the duty of the people to own their relation to their true pastors, and to refuse subjection to such as are thrust in upon them in their room.—To conclude this head, can we from scripture, or from the constitution and principles of this church, or can we be answerable to our ordination vows and engagements, if we should, in obedience to the arbitrary will and command of men, flee from our flocks, and leave them to be dispersed, scattered, and broken? Will it be a sufficient apology for us to say, That the Assembly, or their Commission, have discharged us to exercise our ministry amongst them, when the chief Shepherd of the sheep has commanded us to *take heed to the flock over which we are made overseers*, and to *feed them*? Or, will it be a *salvo* for us in this case, that our subjection strengthens and supports *church-authority*, when that authority, not only in this particular, but in many other instances, is abused at this day to the prejudice and oppression of the heritage of God, being exercised in a way opposite to the word of God, and subversive of our constitution? Therefore we judge it our duty to exercise our ministry amongst the people of our respective congregations, notwithstanding of the above sentence passed against us, as formerly we have done: And, for the reasons that we have now given, we cannot but look upon the said sentence, loosing our pastoral relation to our several parishes, as *null and void* in itself; and consequently, that our pastoral relation to our several parishes does subsist, and must be held and reputed firm and valid, as if no such sentence had been past. Likewise we are bold to warn all and every one in our respective congregations against any that may exercise any part of our ministerial work among them, in consequence of the fore-said sentence, as intruders upon our pastoral work and charge, whom they ought neither to own nor acknowledge, and to whose ministry, as lawful pastors over them, they ought not to submit.

S E C T. IV.

Reasons by the protesting Ministers for their exercising the Keys of GOVERNMENT and DISCIPLINE, according to their Protestation entred before the Commission.

WHEN the Commission of the General Assembly did intimate their sentence unto us, loosing our pastoral relation, &c. we did protest, 'That it should be lawful and warrantable for us to exercise the *keys of doctrine, discipline, and government*, according to the *word of God*, our *Confession of Faith*, and the principles and constitutions of the *covenanted church of Scotland*.' As this is the last head of our protestation, so we shall briefly offer some few reasons for supporting the same.

1. The *keys of doctrine, government, and discipline*, were given by the *Head of the church* to the apostles, and in them to all the ordinary ministers of the gospel, who are successors unto the apostles in every thing that was standing and ordinary in their work and office, Matth. xvi. 19. and xviii. 18. John xx. 23. And, as the *key of doctrine* belongs to the pastoral office, so do the *keys of government and discipline*. The command to *feed the church of God*, Acts xv. 23. 1 Pet. v. 2. is a command to rule and govern the flock; the original word, in both these places, signifies the power of *rule and government*, as well as that of feeding by the preaching of the word: Only, whereas the key of doctrine may be exercised by every single pastor, the keys of government and discipline must be exercised by pastors two or three in *collegio*, Matth. xviii. 19, 20.

2. As the *keys of government and discipline* are given to the *ministers of the church*, so there is a special promise made unto them for their encouragement in the exercise of the same, Matth. xviii. 20. *Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.* It is plain from the context, that, by this *gathering together in Christ's name*, is meant their meeting together in a judicative capacity for the exercise of the *keys of government and discipline*: And, as the grant of the keys is made to the ministers of the church, so it is here promised unto them, for their support and encouragement in their work and duty, whatever difficulties may attend it, that the Lord himself will be in the midst of them; and we judge, that, when we are constitute in his name, we have a more special claim to the above promise.

3. The prevailing party in the *established church* of Scotland having now cast us out from ministerial communion with them, we cannot exercise the keys of government and discipline any longer in conjunction with them: yet, as they themselves must own, that, as we are ministers of the church of Christ, we have power and authority from the Lord Jesus to exercise the *key of doctrine*; so we have the same warrant and authority to exercise the *keys of government and discipline in collegis*.

4. As we are in principle Presbyterians, and have promised and engaged to adhere to that form of government, as the only government instituted and appointed over the house of God, by the Lord Jesus in his own word, and have also professed and owned the same in our several *Representations* given in to the Commission of the General Assembly; so we judge it necessary for us to exercise the keys of government and discipline conjunctly, not only for the benefit of our own congregations, and for maintaining that order amongst ourselves which is required by the word of God, and by the acts and constitutions of this church founded thereupon; but also, that we may distinguish ourselves from these of the *Sectarian and Independent* way, who lodge the keys of government and discipline in the whole *community of the faithful*, as they speak, and who refuse the due subordination of *congregational eldership* to the *superior judicatories*.

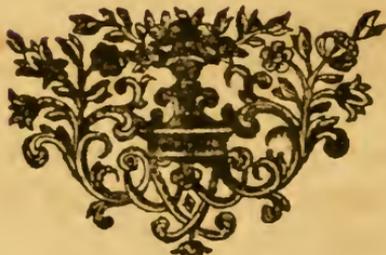
5. The deplorable situation of many congregations in Scotland, growing under the weight of violence and oppression by the intrusion

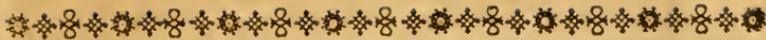
of ministers upon them, and crying for help and relief from the present judicatories of the church, but finding none, makes it the more necessary for us now, when we are cast out by the prevailing party from ministerial communion with them, to associate ourselves together for the exercise of *government* and *discipline*, that so we may be in some capacity of affording help and relief to the distressed and oppressed heritage of God through the land, according to the word of God, and the rules and constitutions of the *church of Scotland*.

Thus we have laid open the REASONS of our *Protestation*, entred before the Commission of the General Assembly November last, and have made a free and plain declaration of our principles; being constrained in this day of *trouble* and *treading down*, and of *darkness* and *perplexity* from the Lord God of Hosts in our valley of *vision*, according to the measure of light and strength which we have received of the Lord, to bear testimony for the *reformed doctrine* and *worship*, *government* and *discipline* of the *church of Scotland*, in opposition to the many injuries done thereunto: in all which we have not, so far as we know our own hearts, designed or desired to provoke any, or to appear singular, but in the simplicity of our hearts to discharge our consciences with respect to our own particular flocks, and this whole church and nation, and to our posterity when we are gone. And, as it cannot but be affecting to all who have any regard to the constitution and principles of this *church*, that the present managers are pursuing such measures as are so opposite unto our received principles, and have such a manifest tendency to subvert our constitution, and to corrupt our doctrine; so we sincerely wish that they may consider their way, and may endeavour to rectify these evils that have been complained of, and that Reformation-work may be set on foot, and carried on, according to the *word of God*, our *solemn covenant-engagements*, and the *acts and constitutions* of the *church of Scotland*: but, if the prevailing party will still go on in their present unwarrantable and sinful measures, carrying on a course of defection from our *reformed and covenanted principles*; however low this church may be thereby brought, and though a righteous and holy God may for these things be provoked in his just and righteous displeasure to visit us with severe strokes and judgments, yet we hope the Lord will in his own good time raise up a General Assembly in the church of Scotland, that shall condemn the present sinful and unwarrantable proceedings: and we are encouraged in this hope and expectation, when we consider how early the Lord visited this nation with the light of the *glorious gospel*, and what he has done for this church in her greatest extremity, how remarkably he has delivered her, and how seasonably he has interposed for her help and relief in the day of her strait and distress; so that in *reforming* and *covenanting* Scotland, these and the like promises have had a signal accomplishment, *I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession*, Psal. ii. 3. and, *The Isles shall wait for his law*, Isa. xlii. 4.—May he who is the founder and found-

dation of Zion, who builds the temple of the Lord, and bears all the glory, appear in his glory, and build up his Zion amongst us: May he yet arise and have mercy upon his church in this land: May the time to favour her, even the set time come, when his servants shall take pleasure in her stones, and savour the dust thereof: So shall the heathen fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth his glory, Psal. cii. 13,—16.

The END of the FIRST TESTIMONY.





A C T,
Declaration and Testimony

F O R

The DOCTRINE, WORSHIP, DISCIPLINE, and GOVERNMENT of the
CHURCH OF SCOTLAND:

AGREEABLE TO

The Word of GOD, the Confession of Faith, the National Covenant of SCOTLAND, and the Solemn League and Covenant of the Three Nations:

AND AGAINST

Several Steps of DEFECTION from the same, both in former and present Times.

B Y

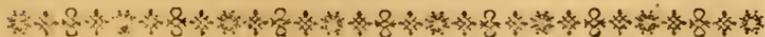
SOME MINISTERS *associate together* for the Exercise of Church Government and Discipline in a PRESBYTERIAL CAPACITY.

W I T H

AN INTRODUCTION, containing the GROUNDS of their Associating into a Presbytery, and the REASONS of their emitting this Act and Testimony.

To which is also subjoined,

The ACCESSION of the Rev. Mr. RALPH ERSKINE, and the Rev. Mr. THOMAS MAIR, to the said Presbytery and the present Testimony.



THE HISTORY OF THE
CITY OF BOSTON

J

FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE CITY
TO THE PRESENT TIME

BY NATHANIEL BENTLEY

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME THE SECOND

BOSTON: PUBLISHED BY
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BY NATHANIEL BENTLEY

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME THE SECOND



T H E
I N T R O D U C T I O N.

THE Commission of the General Assembly that met at Edinburgh, November 1733, having, by their act and sentence, declared Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, minister at Stirling, Mr. William Wilson, minister at Perth, Mr. Alexander Moncrieff, minister at Abernethy, and Mr. James Fisher, minister at Kinclaven, *to be no longer ministers of this church, &c.* Upon the intimation of the above sentence, the foresaid ministers gave in a *Protestation*, bearing a *Secession* from the judicatories of the church, and that it should be lawful and warrantable for them to exercise the keys of doctrine, discipline, and government, according to the word of God, Confession of Faith, and the principles and constitutions of the covenanted church of Scotland.

As the *Reasons* of their Secession were published some time thereafter, in a paper intituled, *A Testimony to the doctrine, worship, government, and discipline of the church of Scotland* †; so, in consequence of the *last part* of their above *Protestation*, after mature and serious deliberation, they came to a resolution to *constitute* themselves into a *Presbyterial Meeting*, for the exercise of church government and discipline, as the Lord should clear up their way: and that for the following weighty *reasons*.

1. The keys of *government* and *discipline* are given to ministers, and belong to the pastoral office, as well as the key of *doctrine*; with this difference, that the key of doctrine may be exercised by every single pastor alone; whereas the key of government and discipline, must be exercised by pastors, two or three *in collegio*. And when they considered that *four ministers*, being *thrust out* all at once from ministerial communion with the present judicatories, were a competent number for associating together for the exercise of government and discipline, they judged it a special and very particular call in providence, to associate themselves Presbyterially, that they might be in a condition and capacity to exercise all the parts of their pastoral office, according to the power and authority given them by the Lord Jesus, Matth. xvi. 19. Chap. xviii. 18. John xx. 23.; and his express command to *feed* the church and *sheep of God*, Acts xx. 28. 1 Pet. v. 2.: the original word in both places, signifying the *exercise of rule and government*, as well as that of *feeding* by the *preaching of the word*.

2. As they judged themselves warranted to associate together for the exercise of government and discipline, from the power and autho-

† See this Testimony printed above, p. 25.—73.

rity given them from the Lord Jesus; so they were *encouraged* to this step from the promise of the divine presence, Matth. xviii. 20. It being plain from the context, that by *gathering together in Christ's name*, is chiefly intended meeting together in a *judicative capacity*, for the exercise of the keys of government and discipline; therefore they judged, that, when they were constitute in his name, they had a more especial claim to the above promise.

3. When they were *cast out* from communion with the judicatories, they also judged it necessary for them to enter into a *Presbyterial Association*, not only for maintaining that *order* among themselves, which is required by the word of God, and by the approved acts and constitutions of this church; but also to *distinguish* themselves from these of the *Secularian and Independent way*, who lodge the keys of government and discipline in the *whole community of the faithful*, as they speak, and who refuse the due subordination of congregational elderships to superior judicatories.

4. It had considerable weight with them, to determine them to this important step, when they considered the *deplorable situation* of many congregations in Scotland, groaning under the weight of violence and oppression by the *intrusion* of ministers upon them, and crying for help and relief from the judicatories of the established church, but finding none: therefore, since by adorable providence they were thrust out from the judicatories, they judged, that if they entered into a *Presbyterial Association*, they would be in a better capacity for affording *help and relief* to the oppressed heritage of God through the land, according to the word of God, and the rules and constitutions of the church of Scotland.

5. They likewise thought it incumbent upon them, not only to testify *doctrinally*, but to endeavour to lift up a *judicial testimony* for Scotland's covenanted Reformation, and against the present declinings and backslidings from the same. And since the judicatories were carrying on a course of backsliding, they thought it the more incumbent on them, though their number was small, and their hands weak, to improve the opportunity providence had given them, by using their endeavours in a *judicial way*, to bear witness for the truths of God, against a strong current of defection and backsliding from the same.—For these, and other weighty *reasons*, they did, *by solemn prayer, CONSTITUTE themselves into a Presbyterial Meeting*, sometime after they were cast out from the judicatories of the church.

The *associate ministers* agreed, that they would not be *shaken* in proceeding to any acts of jurisdiction, but resolved, before any such procedure, to wait if the judicatories of the church would return to the Reformation-standards; and therefore, they held their meetings mainly for asking counsel of the Lord, and for mutual advice in their present situation, and for strengthening of one another's hands in the way and work of the Lord.

When the General Assembly met at Edinburgh, May 1734, the majority of the members appeared to be opposite to the measures taken by some former Assemblies and their Commissions. Among

other things enacted by that Assembly, they impowered the Synod of Perth and Stirling, under certain limitations, mentioned in their act, to *restore* the *four* ministers to their respective ministerial charges: they likewise pass an act concerning *ministerial freedom*. And when, some time afterwards, the Synod of Perth and Stirling, clothed with this delegated power from the said Assembly, had taken off the sentences pronounced by the Commission of the General Assembly 1733, against the foresaid four brethren, it was the judgment of many, both ministers and private Christians, that they should have instantly acceded unto the judicatories of the church.

The foresaid *ministers* having frequently met to consider what was their duty in the present juncture, the *question* before them was, *If the grounds of their secession were removed by what the Assembly 1734 had done?* Or, if they were *so far removed*, that without *counter-acting the testimony*, which by a particular and special providence was put into their hands, they might *return* to the judicatories of the church? And having deliberately and seriously considered the foresaid question, as the weight and importance of the matter did require; and particularly having considered the conduct of the Assembly 1734, with respect to the *act* and *sentence* of the preceding Assembly, passed against themselves, whereby *ministerial freedom*, in *testifying doctrinally* against the defections and backslidings of this church was *condemned*, and the liberty of *protesting*, for exoneration against a sinful sentence and decision of a General Assembly, affecting the public cause and interest of Christ, was *wrested out of the hands* of the ministers and members of this church; they found, that the said Act of Assembly 1733, stands to this day *unrepealed*; and that the Synod of Perth and Stirling, were expressly bound up from judging in the *legality* or *formality* of the former proceedings of the church-judicatories in relation to this affair, and from censuring any of their proceedings against the four protesting ministers, though in their case church-power was screwed up to a most exorbitant height.—Likewise they found, that the Act of the said Assembly 1734, concerning *ministerial freedom*, was so far from asserting that freedom and liberty, which belongs to the ministers of the gospel, and which in the present case was contended for, that their *testimony* in this point, was by the said Act *materially condemned*, in so far as the Act declares, *That due and regular ministerial freedom was not impaired nor restrained by the preceding Assembly's decision in the process against the foresaid ministers*: and therefore, the *act* and *sentence* of the Assembly 1734, alledged to be pass in their favours, together with the Act of the said Assembly anent *ministerial freedom*, instead of *removing* the grounds upon which they found themselves obliged to declare a secession from the judicatories, did, upon the matter, *condemn* the testimony which they judged their duty to give against the proceedings of the Assembly 1732.—All that was done by the foresaid Assembly 1734, in the case of the protesting ministers, was, that the Synod of Perth and Stirling was impowered, upon some political considerations, to restore the said ministers to their respective charges; when yet their *alleged guilt* and crime, in *protesting* against the

decision of the Assembly 1723, is still *supposed*, and they stand *condemned* for the same.—Likewise they found, that the Act concerning the Presbytery of Dunfermline, whereby unwarrantable terms of ministerial and Christian communion are imposed upon the ministers and members of this church, *stands still in force*: as also, that no *judicial testimony* was lifted up against the gross errors overspreading the whole land.—Therefore, for these, and the like *reasons*, which are laid open more fully in a *print* published immediately before the meeting of the Assembly 1735 *, the *associate ministers* had not freedom to *re-enter* into the judicatories of the church, by the *door* which was at that time opened unto them. But, in regard the foresaid Assembly 1734, did put some stop to the unwarrantable proceedings of former Assemblies and their Commissions, they judged it their duty to continue their meetings at that time as formerly, without proceeding to any acts of government and discipline.

When the General Assembly met at Edinburgh 1735, that edge and concern, which appeared to be in the preceding Assembly, was somewhat cooled and blunted: for though it was pressed by instructions from several Presbyteries that the *acceptance of presentations* might be duly *testified against*, yet this, and other motions toward Reformation, were upon political considerations laid aside; and though both this and the former Assembly appointed their respective Commissions to appoint a *national fast*; yet, in these acts for national fasting, there was no *particular enumeration* of the evils and defections of the day and time wherein we live: this, together with some other steps taken by the foresaid Assembly, and which are more fully narrated in the following *Act and Testimony*, were a lamentable evidence, that a sincere and thorough Reformation was neither aimed nor intended.

When the General Assembly met, *Anno* 1736, they went still further backward from any thing like true Reformation-work.—They appointed the Presbytery of Stirling to proceed to the settlement of a *presentee* to the parish of Denny, though the elders and far greater part of the people of that parish were *dissenting and reclaiming*.—Likewise they appointed the Synod and Presbytery of Dumfries, to enrol the *intruder* into the parish of Traquair, as a member of these judicatories.—And further, instead of condemning the many gross and dangerous errors, vented by Mr. Archibald Campbell, professor of church-history at St. Andrews, which have a manifest tendency to subvert all religion, natural and revealed, they dismissed him without *any censure* whatsoever: and, (as will appear in the following Act and Testimony) they have likewise *adopted* his pernicious principle concerning *self-love*, whereby, instead of removing the *former*, a *new* and strong ground of *secession* is added.

The *ministers associate in Presbytery*, having thus waited for a considerable time, to see if the judicatories of the church would lift up

* This Paper is intitled, Reasons by Messrs. Eben. Erskine, Wilson, Moncrieff, and Fisher, why they have not acceded to the judicatories of the established church.

a particular testimony against the evils of the present, and the sins of former times; but beholding, with regret, the conduct of some former General Assemblies, that, instead of going forward in Reformation-work, they had gone visibly backward in many instances: Therefore, after mature and serious deliberation, they judged it their duty to emit a judicial *declaration* or *testimony* for the doctrine, worship, government, and discipline of the church of Scotland, and against former and present defections from the same; and that for the following *reasons*.

1. The *iniquities* and *backslidings* of former times have never been particularly acknowledged nor condemned, by the judicatories of this church, since the Revolution; neither have the valuable pieces of Reformation, once attained unto by this church and land, nor the contendings and wrestlings of the former suffering period against defections from the same, been judicially justified and approved; tho' the former are just *grounds of the Lord's controversy* against the land, and the latter the privilege and the honour of this church.

2. Tho' the backslidings and defections of this church are many, and a flood of error and profaneness *at present* overflows the land; yet, a banner is not *judicially* displayed for truth, and against the prevailing evils of the *present time*: And therefore,

3. A judicial testimony appears to be necessary at this time, for the glory of God, for the information and conviction of the present generation, for the information of *posterity*, and that truth may be transmitted to them with a suitable testimony thereunto: For it must be owned, that this is a debt which one generation owes to another, to use their endeavours to transmit the truths of God in their purity unto them; and, when truth is opposed and controverted, it ought to be delivered off our hands to the following generation, with a more solemn and peculiar testimony unto it.

4. The Lord having, in his adorable providence, permitted the judicatories of the church to cast out from communion with them *four ministers*, at a time when the current of defection was strong; and they having at the same time made a *Secession* from them, upon the grounds contained in their *protestation* given in to the Commission in November 1733, and more fully laid open in their *testimony* afterwards published; and these reasons and grounds of their *Secession* not being to this day removed; they judge, that now when they have entered into a Presbyterial Association, for the reasons above condescended upon, that the same adorable providence calls them to lift up the standard of a judicial testimony for the truths of God, and against a course of backsliding from the same: And to this they find themselves more especially and more particularly called, when they consider that a testimony of this kind has been so long wanting, and so much desired by many that fear the Lord through the land; and tho' it has been so necessary, as has been already observed, yet there is now no hope of obtaining it from the present judicatories of the church.

5. They were the more excited to emit this declaration and testimony, that they might make an *open* confession of their principles,

that the world might see what they own and acknowledge, and upon what foundation they desire, through the grace of the Lord Jesus, to stand.

6. They reckoned themselves still the more obliged unto this duty, both from the special and particular engagements they came under at their *ordination*, to fulfil that ministry which they received from the Lord, whereby they are bound to *teach the observance of all things whatsoever* the Lord Christ *has commanded* them, and that not only *doctrinally*, but *judicially*, as the Lord gives opportunity : and likewise from the obligation which they, as well as the whole land, are under by *solemn oath* to the most High God, ‘ That we shall sincerely, really, and constantly, through the grace of God, endeavour, in our several places and callings, the preservation of the reformed religion in the church of Scotland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government ;—and, that we shall not give ourselves to a detestable indifferency or neutrality in this cause ; but shall, all the days of our lives, zealously and constantly continue therein.’

The foresaid ministers, being met in Presbytery, appointed some of their number to prepare the draught of an *Act and Testimony*, asserting the doctrine, worship, government, and discipline of the church of Scotland ; and condemning several steps of defection from the same, both in former and present times : And the said draught having been prepared and laid before the Presbytery, it was, in several meetings, seriously and deliberately considered, reasoned upon, and amended ; and, as thus amended and corrected, it was, at a meeting of Presbytery at Perth, December 3d 1736, unanimously approved, *enacted*, and, for the above and like weighty *reasons*, ordered to be published : the *tenor* whereof follows.





A C T,

DECLARATION and TESTIMONY,

F O R

The Doctrine, Worship, Government, and Discipline of the church of Scotland, AGREEABLE to the word of God, the Confession of Faith, the National Covenant of Scotland, and the solemn League and Covenant of the three Nations; and AGAINST several steps of defection from the same, both in former and present times: By some Ministers associate together for the exercise of Church-government and discipline, in a Presbyterial Capacity.

AT Perth, the third day of December, one thousand seven hundred and thirty-six years. Which day and place the Presbytery being met, and taking into their serious consideration the low state of religion at this day; the manifold defections and backslidings of all ranks, both in former and present times, from the truths of God, and the precious ordinances and institutions of Jesus Christ, delivered as a valuable trust unto his church and people in this nation; and to the maintenance and preservation of which, the whole land stands indispensibly bound and obliged, by the most solemn covenant-engagements; and especially, considering the present growth and spreading of dangerous and pernicious errors, and the many injuries that are done to the government and discipline of the house of God amongst us; together with the abounding sin, wickedness, and profaneness of the present generation, and the deep security and general stupidity that prevails under our national sins and spiritual judgments; by all which God is highly dishonoured and provoked, his sanctuary profaned, the kingdom of his Son undermined, and the whole land involved in the dreadful guilt of apostasy from the Lord:—Wherefore this *Presbytery* find themselves bound in duty, to cast in their *mite* of a *testimony* to the many great appearances of the Lord for this church and land, and to the doctrine, worship, government, and discipline of the Lord's house there-

in, agreeable to the Holy Scriptures, our Confession of Faith and Catechisms, the National Covenant of Scotland, and the Solemn League and Covenant of the three Nations: as also against the injuries and insolent indignities done unto, and the encroachments, violations, and breaches made upon the same.

To this they reckon they are warranted, from the practice and example of the church and people of God, recorded in Scripture, who very often commemorate the remarkable appearances made for them, the signal deliverance they have met with, together with their own deep ingratitude and heinous provocations, both of an older and later date; and also from the practice and example of this church in former times: And likewise they judge a *testimony* of this kind necessary, for the information of the present generation, who have generally lost the knowledge, both of what God hath done for Scotland, and of the grounds and causes of his righteous quarrel and controversy against us; necessary, for the conviction and humiliation of all ranks of persons; necessary, to preserve and maintain the truths of God, and an useful mean to transmit them to following generations in their purity.

Therefore, for all the above, and many other weighty reasons and considerations, the *Ministers associated*, being met in *Presbytery*, did, and hereby do, in the *first* place, with thankful hearts, acknowledge and bear record unto, the wonderful power, grace, and goodness of God, in visiting this land very early with the light of the glorious gospel, whereby *from these uttermost ends of the earth were songs heard, even glory to Jesus Christ the righteous*; and thus the promises and prophecies given of old were remarkably accomplished, namely, That the *heathen* should be given unto Christ for his inheritance, and the *uttermost parts of the earth* for his possession; that the *isles* should wait for his law; and that he should be the *confidence of the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea*.—Yea, when this and other nations were involved in Popish darkness, God left not himself without a witness in this land; our ancient records bear, that in the darkest times of Popery, the Lord had some witnesses for himself among us, against the errors and idolatry of Rome.

And when the Lord, by a bright and clear sun-shine of the gospel, in several parts of Europe, discovered *that mystery of iniquity, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth*; he was also graciously pleased, with an high hand, and outstretched arm, to ransom this land from the bondage of popish tyranny, idolatry, and superstition, and again to bless it with the light and liberty of the gospel. So strong was the hand of the Lord upon a few polished shafts, chosen and furnished by himself, that in a short time, in the midst of the flames of fiery persecution, and against the rage and fury of devils and men, this great work was so far advanced and effectuated, that, in the year 1560, the Pope's authority was abolished in Scotland, and the *first Confession of Faith* (directed mainly against the errors and abominations of the church of Rome, the great point upon which the testimony of the Lord's witnesses was then stated)

was ratified and approved by the Parliament; and, in a few years thereafter, most congregations were planted with the ministry of the gospel, and did yield subjection unto the ordinances of Christ: The government and discipline of the church was established according to the word of God, in a due subordination of Congregational Elderships, Presbyteries, and Synods, unto General Assemblies: The *first book of discipline*, which contains many excellent Reformation-principles, written with a simplicity and plainness peculiar to reforming times; together with some other things that were, in the judgment of the compilers of that book, adapted to the then state and circumstances of the church, was approved by many of the privy counsellors of Scotland, in the year 1561. The General Assembly, *Anno* 1562, refused to admit one Mr. Alexander Gordon, to be superintendent of Galloway, till he should subscribe the same*. And the General Assembly, *Anno* 1638, in their act condemning the *five articles* of Perth, refer several times unto it; from whence it is plain, that it was received and approved by this church at our Reformation.

Afterwards the *second book* of discipline, wherein the form of government and discipline in the house God is more distinctly laid down, was approved and registrate by the General Assembly, *Anno* 1581, and appointed to be subscribed by all the ministers of this church, *Anno* 1590: and all the pieces of the Reformation then attained unto, were ratified and approved by the parliament, *Anno* 1592; excepting that patronage, which was expressly condemned in the second book of discipline, was approved by the said act of parliament.—In grateful acknowledgment of which rare and singular mercies, and for their own mutual strength and support against the common enemy, the *national covenant*, having been first subscribed by the king and his household, in the year 1580, was subscribed by persons of all ranks, *Anno* 1681; and again by all ranks of persons in the year 1590. This covenant, relating to the reformed religion then professed in Scotland, and more particularly expressed in the Large Confession of Faith, was sworn with much cheerfulness and gladness of heart; the greater part of the nation rejoiced at the oath of God: And, by this solemn oath and covenant, this kingdom made a *national surrender* of themselves to the Lord, and bound and obliged both themselves and their posterity to cleave to the truths of God, and to the observation of his laws, ordinances, and institutions.

But the above-mentioned Reformation, and the glory of this church, was much defaced, when king James VI. desirous to gratify the *prelatical party* in England, did, contrary to his most solemn professions, declarations, and engagements, by the advice and assistance of some covetous time-serving churchmen, first introduce a lordly prelacy into this church, and afterwards corrupted the worship, by imposing the Popish ceremonies of the church of England, under the authority of a pretended General Assembly that met at Perth, *Anno*

* Calderwood's History, p. 32.

1618.; and his son king Charles I. endeavoured to carry on the same design, by imposing a service-book, and a book of popish and prelatick canons: which course of defection continued for many years without interruption.—Yet, during this period of grievous sinning and backsliding, there were several eminent men who witnessed against the same; also the word of the gospel was countenanced in several corners of the land with more than ordinary power and success, particularly in several places in the west of Scotland, *Anno* 1625, and at the Kirk of Shots in the year 1630.

And, after all, the Lord was graciously pleased to turn back the captivity of this church when it was least expected; even when Prelacy appeared to be fenced with all the strength of civil authority, and a great body of the ministry couching in conformity under the burden of it: Yet he did, in a most surprising and wonderful manner, cut asunder the cords of these plowers who ploughed upon the back of this church, and revived his work through the land, by animating at first a few of his servants and people, in the year 1637, to testify more openly and boldly against the current of the defection and apostasy of that time; and he was pleased to give such remarkable countenance to their proceedings, that in the month of February 1638, notwithstanding of many threats and strong opposition of adversaries, they renewed the national covenant: and the power of God was present with them, in such an eminent manner, that within a few months thereafter, almost the whole land did cheerfully and joyfully come under the oath of God. Here there was no *force* nor compulsion from the civil powers; all this was done voluntarily and cheerfully, in the face of great opposition from a threatening and enraged court.

Likewise, in the latter end of the foresaid year, a free and lawful General Assembly met at Glasgow, which deposed all the prelates from their pretended episcopal function, and from the privilege of sitting and voting in parliament, council, or convention, in name of the kirk; suspended two of them from the exercise of the mitterial office; deposed all the others from the office itself, and excommunicated eight of them; recognized and approved the national covenant; and prelacy, with the five articles of Perth, were found and declared to be abjured by it; and several other laudable acts and constitutions were made for purging the house of God, and the advancement of Reformation; as the acts of that Assembly more fully bear. And though the determinations of this Assembly were much opposed by a popish and prelatick party, yet, through the good hand of the Lord upon his servants and people, the Reformation then begun and carried on, was ratified and confirmed by the second parliament of king Charles I. *Anno* 1640: the last session of which parliament was countenanced by the king's presence, *Anno* 1641. And from this time till the year 1650, the building of the house of God, in manifold instances, advanced prosperously and successfully: though it must be acknowledged, that the enforcing of religious duties with civil penalties; and, in too many instances, blending the affairs of church and state with one another, is totally inconsistent with the

spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom.— During which period, the following things deserve particularly to be remembered.

I. The Lord gave *testimony* and *witness* to his *own work*, by a remarkable down-pouring of his Spirit from on high, on the judicatories and assemblies of his people for worship: the word of the gospel was powerful and successful; the pleasure of the Lord did prosper thro' the land: and a seed was sown, which the fury and rage of twenty-eight years hot persecution afterwards could not extirpate.

II. The remarkable countenance which the Lord gave to the reforming and covenanting church of Scotland at this time, was followed with a considerable reformation among their protestant brethren in England; as also among a vast number of them in Ireland. The consequence was, that a great body of the former, and many thousands of the latter, united with her in a solemn league and covenant, for promoting and advancing a joint-reformation in the three kingdoms.—This *covenant*, however reproached and reviled, was for the *matter* of it, just and warrantable; for the *ends*, necessary and commendable; and for the *time* seasonable.—The *season* when this covenant was entred into, was the dangerous state of the church and kingdom of Scotland; the distressed state of the church and kingdom of England; and the deplorable state of the church and kingdom of Ireland.—The *matter* of this covenant was all the precious things that are involved in pure religion and true liberty; namely, the preservation of the reformed religion in Scotland, in doctrine, worship, government, and discipline: and the reformation of religion according to the word of God in England and Ireland. In this covenant every one bound themselves to *personal* reformation; and, in several places, stations, and callings, to endeavour *national* reformation: duties obligatory upon every one *antecedently* to this oath and covenant.—The *end* of this solemn covenant was, that they and their posterity after them might, as brethren, live in faith and love; that the Lord might be one, and his name one, through the three kingdoms. And, as an eminent divine * expressed himself before the *House of Commons* in England, when they were about to swear the said covenant:—‘ This *oath*,
‘ faith he, is such, in the matter and consequences of it, as I can
‘ truly say it is worthy of us; yea, of all these kingdoms, yea, of all
‘ the kingdoms in the world: for it is a swearing fealty and allegi-
‘ ance unto Christ the King of kings; and a giving up of all these
‘ kingdoms, which are his inheritance, to be subdued more unto his
‘ throne, and ruled more by his sceptre, upon whose shoulders the
‘ government is laid.’—This oath and covenant was appointed to be sworn by persons of all ranks in England and Ireland; and was entred into by the whole body of this land. And, when it was approved by the General Assembly of this church, *Anno* 1643, they express themselves in this manner;—‘ That they all with one voice
‘ approve of the same; with these feelings of joy which they did find
‘ in so great a measure, at the renewing of the National Covenant of
‘ this kirk and kingdom.’

* Mr. Philip Nye.

III. In prosecution of the above covenanted uniformity, a *Confession of Faith* was agreed upon by the Assembly of divines at Westminster, with Commissioners from the church of Scotland; likewise the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, the Propositions concerning church-government, and the ordination of ministers, and the Directory for worship, all agreed upon by the foresaid Assembly at Westminster, were received and approved by this church in the manner expressed in the several acts of Assembly relative unto them: to all which the General Assembly of this church reckoned this land bound and obliged by the Solemn League and Covenant; as their said acts more fully bear.

IV. When the much-desired and covenanted *uniformity* had proceeded thus far, many in this land involved themselves in the *breach* of covenant, by the war with England, commonly called, *the Duke's engagement*, which was testified against, and condemned by the General Assemblies of this church: and the sinfulness thereof was afterwards acknowledged by all ranks of persons, when the *solemn League and Covenant* was renewed in Scotland, *Anno 1648*; with a solemn acknowledgment of sins and breaches thereof, and engagement to the duties therein contained. In the said engagement to the duties of the covenant, they bind and oblige themselves to *preserve the purity of religion against all error, heresy, and schism; and to study and endeavour the carrying on the work of uniformity*: Whereby the above-mentioned uniformity in one Confession of Faith, one Form of Church-government and Directory for worship, is solemnly approved and sworn unto. And, by the foresaid renovation of the solemn League and Covenant, this land declared they looked upon this oath as *nationally* binding upon them, whatever the behaviour of their neighbours in England or Ireland might be. And as the General Assembly, in their *brotherly exhortation* to their brethren in England, August 6th 1649, express themselves, 'Although, say they, there were none in the one kingdom who did adhere to the Covenant, yet thereby were not the other kingdoms, nor any person in either of them, absolved from the bond thereof; since in it we have not only sworn by the Lord, but also covenanted with him. It is not the failing of one or more that can absolve others from their duty or tie to him. Besides, the duties therein contained being in themselves lawful, and the grounds of our tie thereunto moral; though others do forget their duty, yet doth not their defection free us from that obligation which lies upon us by the covenant in our places and stations. And the covenant being intended and entered into by these kingdoms, as one of the best means of stedfastness, for guarding against declining times, it were strange to say that the backsliding of any should absolve others from the tie thereof: especially seeing our engagement therein, is not only *national*, but *personal*; every one with uplifted hands swearing for himself, as is evident by the tenor of the covenant.'

V. During this period, the *states* of the nation also gave their helping-hand to the work of Reformation; not only by the legal establishment given unto it in the foresaid year 1640; but also, by

approving the solemn league and covenant, *Anno 1644*, and by many laudable Acts of Parliament passed, *Anno 1649*: particularly by the *act abolishing patronages*; a grievance and yoke under which this church had groaned ever since the Reformation from Popery: and by their *act for keeping the judicatories and places of trust free of corruption*; and by the *act of classes*; and by the *act for purging the army of persons disaffected to the cause and work of Reformation*.—Also by another act passed in the foresaid year 1649, they ordained and declared, 'That before the King's Majesty who now is, or any of his successors, shall be admitted to the exercise of his royal power; he shall assure and declare, by his solemn oath under his hand and seal, his allowance of the national covenant, and of the solemn league and covenant, and his obligation to prosecute the ends thereof, in his station and calling; and that he shall, for himself and his successors, consent and agree to the Acts of Parliament enjoining the solemn league and covenant, and fully establishing Presbyterian government, the Directory of worship, Confession of Faith and Catechisms, as they are approved by the General Assembly of this kirk, and Parliament of this kingdom, in all his Majesty's dominions; and that he shall observe these in his practice and family; and that he shall never make opposition to any of these, or endeavour any change thereof.'

The above particulars are some instances of the power and goodness of the most high God, manifested in the beginning and progress of the work of Reformation in this land, which *this Presbytery* judge it their duty to record and bear witness unto: for, as the arm of the Lord was gloriously revealed in recovering this church and nation from Antichristian darkness, and bringing all ranks of persons within the bond of a national oath and covenant to be the Lord's; so, when by a surprising and wonderful appearance of divine providence, this church was delivered from the brink of ruin, in the year 1638, the judicatories of the church pulled down and carried of the rubbish of defection; they began where former Reformation had stopt, and went forward in building and beautifying the house of God.

But, since the church, while militant, is in an imperfect state, it is not hereby intended to affirm, that, under the above-mentioned period, there was nothing defective or wanting as to the beauty and order of the house of God, or that there was nothing culpable in the administration; all that is designed by the above particular deduction is, to declare, that this church endeavoured, and mercifully attained, a considerable pitch of Reformation, during the foresaid period: towards this their several contendings and wrestlings, their solemn vows and engagements, their declarations and testimonies, all pointed.

IT would have been the happiness and glory of this church, if she had held fast what, by the good hand of God upon her, and by a series and train of remarkable providences, both of mercy and judgment, she had attained unto. But how soon did *her gold become dross*? how quickly was *her most fine gold changed*? Ah! how was her

glory eclipsed, and her beauty suddenly departed from her? A glorious building was pulled down; a Reformation, ratified, confirmed, and established in the strongest terms by law, and fenced by the most solemn oaths and covenants, sworn with uplifted hands, by our king, by our noblemen, barons, ministers, burgesses, and commons of all sorts, was, not only *sullied* but *overturned*; and that by these very hands that had been lifted up to heaven for the preservation and maintenance of the same. *Hath a nation changed their gods, which yet are no gods?* but, Scotland hath changed her glory for that which doth not profit! May it not be said, *Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this; be horribly afraid: for my people have committed two evils, they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and have hewn out to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water?*—Can there be a parallel given in any church or land, of that scene that opened of backsliding and defection, of perjury and apostacy, or of that oppression and cruelty, afterwards exercised upon such as adhered unto the cause and covenant of their God, after so many and so great appearances of the Lord in a way of mercy amongst us, and after such solemn professions of subjection and obedience unto him?

THE Presbytery pretended not to reckon up the innumerable abominations of the land: but they judged it their duty to give some particular instances of the beginning, progress, and height of the apostacy and defection from the above-mentioned steps of Reformation, in which all ranks of persons have sinfully and shamefully involved themselves.

I. When the judicatories of the church were carrying on the work of Reformation, with a beautiful and pleasant harmony, a *snare* was laid for breaking and dividing them; when, in the month of December 1650, and in the beginning of 1651, two several questions were put unto the Commission of the General Assembly by the king and parliament, concerning the admission into places of public trust, both civil and military, of such as were debarred from the same by the above-mentioned acts of parliament, *Anno* 1649. The *resolutions* of the Commission upon the said question were such, as the King and Parliament took occasion from them to repeal the foresaid laudible acts; and all places of public trust, civil and military, were immediately filled with such, whose disaffection to the work of Reformation, carried on from the year 1638, was abundantly notour. Malignants in principle, and such as were immoral in practice, were promoted: a sham profession of repentance was required at first from such as had been active against the work of Reformation; but even this was soon laid aside. And when the Resolutions of the Commission were remonstrated against, by some Presbyteries and several ministers, the Commission discharged all ministers or probationers to speak or write against them: and what was done by the Commission, was approved by some ensuing Assemblies, who also excluded all, both ministers and elders, who remonstrated against the *public resolutions*, from sitting in General Assemblies; and appointed Presbyteries to

oblige both intrants into the ministry before they were admitted to trials for ordination, and elders before they were allowed to sit in Presbytery, to give it under their hand, that they passed from any protestation or declination against the said Assemblies; and likewise some eminent ministers were suspended and deposed, for testifying against the foresaid resolutions.—But the constitution and actings of these Assemblies having been *protested* against by a considerable body of ministers and elders, who were grieved at the foresaid resolutions of the Commission, all such were designed *Protesters*, as these on the other side were called *public Resolutions*.

By the above proceedings, the nation, with the consent of the church, delivered up, not only the maintenance and preservation of their valuable civil liberties, but also of all the civil securities and ratifications given unto the work of Reformation from the year 1638, into the hands of such who had appeared for the support and maintenance of arbitrary power and authority in the state, and who were notour enemies of a covenanted Reformation. This introduction of such persons into places of power and trust, was contrary to, and condemned by the word of God, Exod. xviii. 21. 2 Chron. xix. 2. Psal. cvi. 35. Psal. cxxxix. 21. Hof. v. 13.: and their sin and guilt in this matter was the more heinous, and the more highly aggravated; in regard it was what had been so lately acknowledged, and so solemnly engaged against, in the solemn acknowledgement of sins, and engagement to duties.

The sinfulness of these proceedings was witnessed against by a considerable number of eminent ministers and godly elders through the land, who laid open the dangerous tendency of them: and what they had too just ground to fear, came in a short time to pass; these men, who were now admitted into places of public trust, had an active hand in overthrowing the beautiful constitution of this church, and in bringing the nation under the yoke of arbitrary government. And it cannot well escape to be taken notice of, that the most part of these who were for the *public Resolutions*, made defection into Prelacy; whereas the greatest part of the *Protesters*, except a few, stood firm against it; when, in the year 1662, this *curfed Jericho* was rebuilt: and some of the *former*, who were honest in the main, but carried in to the measures of the court, came with regret to see their error and mistake, and to acknowledge*, *That their brethren the PROTESTERS had their eyes opened, when they were blind.*

When this church and land was thus miserably rent and broken (as a just punishment of this step of declining and treachery in the cause and covenant of the Lord) the nation was brought under the yoke of Oliver Cromwell *the usurper*; under which it groaned for the space of ten years. During this period, a most sinful *toleration* of scismatic errors and delusions was granted by Cromwell and his privy council in Scotland: this was the first of this kind known among us since the Reformation; and thereby such laxness in principle and practice was introduced, as paved a way for the more general apostasy and defection, which followed very soon thereafter.

* Woodrow's History, Vol. I. p. 112

The aforesaid toleration was faithfully witnessed against by some *ministers* in the provinces of Perth and Fife, in their testimony published, *Anno* 1659, as contrary to the word of God, our Confession of Faith and Larger Catechism; and as contrary to, and inconsistent with, the solemn oath and covenant of God sworn by the nation: and likewise, as producing many dismal and sinful effects, such as the increase and growth of errors and blasphemy, with laxness and profaneness in practice; and also as a temptation to men to break the Lord's bonds asunder, and to cast his cords from off them.

II. After the death of Oliver Cromwell the usurper, and when the power of the sectarian party, who had ruled the three kingdoms for several years, began to decline, the Parliament of England *restored* King Charles II. to the government, without any conditions or limitations; whereby all the testimonies and declarations they had given for a covenanted Reformation and uniformity, were at once given up: and immediately, abjured prelacy, with the service-book and all the ceremonies, were re-imposed in England: a dismal presage of what was now coming on Scotland; where, until a meeting of Parliament, the government was lodged in the hands of a *Committee of Estates*, named by the last Parliament, *Anno* 1651. This Committee, consisting of such as were disaffected to the work of Reformation, caused seize and imprison a few eminent ministers, who met about an address to the King upon his return; and, with the faithfulness that became their office, were putting him in mind, not only of the solemn obligation which he himself had come under, in his repeatedly swearing the covenants national, with the solemn league; and in his obliging himself, by his own coronation-oath, to prosecute the ends thereof; but even of the solemn covenant-engagements of the nation to be the Lord's.—Upon which occasion a proclamation was immediately emitted, discharging all meetings without the King's authority; and all the above and like petitions and remonstrances whatsoever, under a pretext of their being seditious: this was a prelude unto the dismal scene that was now opening.

III. When the Parliament met in Scotland, *Anno* 1661, they immediately remove all the *legal securities* given to our church-constitution, and the whole work of Reformation, by rescinding all acts of Parliament from the year 1640, to 1651, *inclusive*; and declaring all the said Parliaments null and void: they assert the *king's supremacy* in all causes; and declare all meetings, assemblies, leagues, and covenants, without the King's countenance and authority, unlawful and unwarrantable: they discharge the renewing of the *league and covenant*, or any other public oath and covenant concerning the government of the church, without the King's warrant. And, having thus removed all the legal fences from our church-constitution, they give up the government of the church to be settled by the King, in the way *He* judges most agreeable to the word of God and monarchical government.

IV. At the second Session of this Parliament, *Anno* 1662, it is declared, That the ordering and disposal of the external government

and policy of the church doth properly belong to the *King*, as an inherent right of the crown, by virtue of his royal prerogative and supremacy in causes ecclesiastick: all acts of Parliament or Council, which might be interpreted to give any church-power, jurisdiction, or government to the office-bearers of the church and their meetings, than that which acknowledged a dependence upon, and subordination to the sovereign power of the King as supreme, are rescinded, cassated, and annulled: *Diocesan* bishops are restored to their dignities, privileges, and jurisdictions; all meetings of Presbyteries and Sessions, not authorised by the bishop, are discharged.—In their second act, all that was done in prosecution of a covenanted Reformation, from 1638, to 1650, is declared rebellious and treasonable; the *national* covenant, as sworn in the year 1638, and the league and covenant, are declared to be unlawful oaths, and imposed contrary to the fundamental laws of the kingdom: and likewise, in the said act, a *dispensing* power is assumed, declaring the consciences of all these who had taken the foresaid oaths, free from the obligation of them.—It is also declared *rebellious* and *treasonable* in subjects, upon pretence of Reformation, or any other pretence whatever, to enter into leagues and covenants, or to take up arms against the King; whereby the sinful and absurd doctrines of *passive obedience* and *non-resistance*, condemned by the memorable *Revolution*, Anno 1688, were screwed up to the highest. As likewise, they annul all *ecclesiastical* acts and constitutions approving the national covenant, or the solemn league and covenant: and particularly, they declared, that the Assembly that met at Glasgow, Anno 1638, was in itself an unlawful and seditious meeting; and that their acts, deeds, and sentences were, in all time coming, to be reputed unlawful, void, and null.

Afterwards, by an act of council at Glasgow, about three hundred ministers are, without any legal procedure, thrust from their charges, merely for non-conformity, and refusing subjection to the prelates; and, in the year 1663, the Parliament ordain and enact, That all non-conforming ministers, that shall presume to exercise their ministry, shall be punished as seditious persons: and also, in acknowledgment of, and hearty compliance with his Majesty's government ecclesiastick and civil, all the subjects are required to give their concurrence and countenance to these who are, by public authority, admitted to their several parishes, (namely, Prelatic incumbents,) and to attend their meetings for worship, under the penalties mentioned in the act of Parliament: and also, for putting all these tyrannical laws, and others that were enacted in this period, in execution; an *high Commission* court was erected, most irregular and arbitrary, both for its constitution and manner of procedure. During this period of apostasy, *viz.* from the year 1660, to 1688, there is a continued series and train of acts of Parliament, supporting the Prelates and maintaining Prelacy; and obliging the whole land to conformity, and to homologate the King's supremacy.

Thus abjured Prelacy is restored: and not only is the royal prerogative screwed up to a most exorbitant height, in matters merely

civil; but an authority is put into the hands of the King, like to that which is usurped by the Roman Antichrist. The Lord Jesus, on whose shoulders the government of his own house is laid, and who alone is able and worthy to bear this weight and burden, [Psal. ii. throughout. Isa. ix. 6, 7. Eph. i. 22, 23.] is, as far as human laws could do it, divested of his prerogative-royal, namely, his incommunicable *headship*, sovereignty, and authority over the church his spiritual kingdom: and all this done by the representatives of the nation, in opposition and contradiction to the most solemn professions of allegiance unto the King of Zion, and the most solemn oaths and covenants that a people could come under to the most high God.—Yea, to such an height of heaven-daring impiety and wickedness did they arrive, that in the year 1663, the *national covenant*, as it was sworn in the year 1638, and the *solemn league and covenant*, together with that remarkable paper, intitled, *The Causes of the Lord's wrath*, were most ignominiously burnt at the cross of Linlithgow, by the authority of the magistrates there. And afterwards, (Jan. 14th 1682.) the *solemn league and covenant* is condemned by the Duke of York, then Commissioner, and the Privy-council, to be most contemptuously burnt at the cross of Edinburgh, by the hands of the common hangman: which was accordingly done, to the public affronting and dishonouring of the great God, to whom these solemn vows were made.—It was also declared, by act of Parliament, May 6th 1685, That the giving or taking of the *national covenant*, as explained in the year 1638, or of the *league and covenant*, or writing in defence thereof, or owning them as lawful or obligatory upon themselves or others, shall infer the crime and pains of *treason*.—Can a parallel be given to such perfidy and treachery, to such apostasy and defection? What nation, once like Scotland for a zealous profession of obedience and subjection to the Prince of the kings of the earth! but now scarce to be equalled for treachery and apostasy, attended at the same time with a flood of profaneness and immorality overflowing the whole land.

V. In this hour and power of darkness, an universal silent *submission* is given at first to the above wicked tyrannical acts and constitutions: no open, *judicial*, or *joint testimony* was lifted up against them. When the storm was ready to break, ten ministers and two elders met together, (a small number in comparison of what might have been expected in such a day of perplexity and distress) in order to present a supplication to the King, for his employing his royal power and authority in the preservation and maintenance of the true Protestant reformed religion in the three kingdoms, according to the national covenant, and the solemn league and covenant, both which he had solemnly sworn at his *Coronation* in Scotland: but they were, without all law and justice, immediately apprehended and incarcerated, for no other reason, but because they were framing such a supplication; and, as has been already observed, all such meetings, petitions, and remonstrances of public grievances, were discharged as seditious.

This struck such a terror on the most part, that no joint remon-

france or testimony was offered. And when some Provincial Synods in the year 1661, when the Parliament had begun to raze the work of Reformation, were considering what was proper for them to do in this juncture; they were dissolved, in the King's name, by such noblemen or gentlemen as the Commissioner to the Parliament had appointed to observe their proceedings. All of them immediately obeyed; some of them dismissed even without prayer. The Synod of Galloway protested against their dissolution; but yet they rose immediately. The Synod of Glasgow, at their ordinary meeting in April, adjourned themselves till May, then to consider of a supplication to the Parliament for the security of religion: but, when they were about to convene, they were discharged in a proclamation from the cross by order from the King's Commissioner; to which they gave obedience. And likewise, when in the beginning of the year 1662, all Synodical and Presbyterial meetings, until authorized by the Bishops, were discharged; Presbyteries, as well as Synods, were immediately deserted.—Such fainting in the cause of God, in this day of apostasy and backsliding, was a sign and evidence of the Lord's indignation and wrath; and was far from that courage and resolution that sometimes appeared among the ministers of this church, who witnessed against the like incroachments upon the liberties and privileges of the house of God, in face of the greatest opposition.

In like manner, in obedience to the act of Council at Glasgow, the most part of these that conformed not to prelacy, left their flocks; whereby they became a prey to the grievous *wolves* that were afterward thrust in upon them: yea, the greatest part by far, through the whole land, gave obedience to the above-mentioned act of Parliament, requiring them to attend upon worship performed by the *Bishop's underlings*, or such as conformed to prelacy; in testimony of their acknowledgment of, and hearty compliance with his Majesty's government, ecclesiastick and civil: by which means all ranks of persons, from the highest to the lowest, were involved in the apostasy and defection, and guilty of the grossest treachery in the cause and covenant of the Lord. And, for all the above-mentioned and the like sins, awful judgments are threatened in the word of God, Lev. xxvi. 16, 17, 25. Deut. xxix. 23, 24, 25. Psa. lxxviii. 9, 10. Isa. xxiv. 5, 6. Jer. xi. 9, 10, 11. Hof. viii. 1. Rev. ii. 5.

VI. When the ministers, who, by the proceedings of Parliament and Council, *Anno 1662*, were cast out of their churches, had recovered from the consternation and damp, which such a sudden convulsion in church and state had brought upon them, they began to be persuaded, that it was their duty, notwithstanding of their tyrannical ejection, to preach the gospel of Christ. And the people being more and more alienated from the *bishop's creatures*, or *curates*, as they were called, (many of them, being not only ignorant and profane, but all of them being guilty of perjury and defection, in receiving a commission immediately from, and acting in subordination unto, and by a power derived from the abjured Prelates, contrary to the word of God and our Reformation-principles, confirmed by

solemn oaths and covenants;) and being also sensible of the obligation still lying upon them to own their ejected ministers as faithful servants of Christ, and of their duty to receive the ordinances of Christ as dispensed by them: therefore, not a few of the said ministers, considering the present urgent necessity of the people, and their chearful readines and willingness to hear the word of God, saw themselves called of the Lord to preach the gospel, wherever providence ordered their abode.

They began at first to preach in private houses: this enraged the Prelates, who ceased not to stir up the rulers to all extravagancies of cruelty, for suppressing these peaceable and harmless Assemblies for the worship of God. Hence the Parliament declared all such meetings, or *conventicles*, as they were called, to be seditious and criminal; and discharged them under the severest penalties.—After this, houses were forced when people were assembled for hearing the word of God: many were haled to prison, and the laws execute with rigour against them. These severities constrained them at last to keep their meetings in the *fields*; whereupon the rage and fury of the rulers, instigate by the apostate Prelates, did break forth into a more extensive and boundless flame: several acts of Parliament and Council were emitted, and all ways of cruelty imaginable taken, to suppress meetings in houses and in the fields; field-meetings being discharged under pain of death to the minister, and grievous penalties upon such as did attend them. Hence ensued a train of the greatest barbarities, wherewith these two persecuting reigns were indelibly stained, as the effect of tyrannical acts, and the more tyrannical execution of them.—But, notwithstanding of these severities, the more the Lord's people were afflicted, the more they grew: when the gospel was dispensed at the peril of their lives from the sword in the wilderness, the Lord gave remarkable countenance to his own ordinances, which were blessed to the conversion and confirmation of many.

VII. When the rulers, at this time, saw that they could not, by all the above acts of cruelty, *extirpate* the assemblies of the Lord's people for worship, according to his own institution, and which were the only monuments of his covenanted interest in the land; but the more they laboured to suppress them, the more frequent they grew: then the cunning and crafty device of an *indulgence* to some of the *outed* ministers is fallen upon; whereby many, otherwise eminent lights, were ensnared and taken.—This *indulgence* was first granted by the *King*, in his letter to the *Privy-Council*, dated, June 7th, 1669. whereby he authoriseth them to appoint so many of the *outed ministers*, who had lived *peaceably and orderly*, to return to preach and exercise the functions of the ministry in the parish-churches where they *formerly* served, providing they be vacant; and that Patrons, should present to other churches such others of them as the Council shall approve. The ministers allowed by this letter to exercise their ministry, were appointed to keep Presbyteries and Synods, namely, such as depended upon, and were authorized by the Bishops; and, in case they did not, they were to be confined

within the bound of the parishes where they were allowed to preach. Also the letter requires, that they be strictly enjoined not to admit any from neighbouring parishes to the communion, nor to baptise their children, nor to marry any of them, without the allowance of the curate of the parish; and that they shall not give countenance to any who deserted their own parish-churches, and resorted to their preachings; and that no seditious discourse or expression be uttered in the pulpit, or elsewhere, by any of these ministers.

In pursuance of the above letter, the *Privy-Council*, at different times, appoint several ministers to preach and exercise the other functions of the ministry, some at the churches out of which they had been ejected; others (their own churches being planted with intruders) were appointed, with consent of the patron, to churches that were vacant: And every one of these ministers were, by the *Council's act*, July 27th 1669, strictly enjoined to give due obedience to all the restrictions contained in the King's letter aforesaid.—After the granting of this *indulgence*, the King's *supremacy*, which was indeed the spring thereof, and had been amply asserted by former acts of parliament, is now further explained and extended, by the parliament that met October 19th that same year: for, by the first act of that session of parliament, it is enacted, asserted, and declared, 'That the King and his successors have the supreme authority and supremacy over all persons, and in all causes ecclesiastic, within this kingdom; and that, by virtue thereof, the ordering and disposing of the external government and policy of the church, doth properly belong to them as an *inherent right* to the crown: and that they may settle, enact, and emit such constitutions, acts, and orders, concerning the administration of the external government of the church, and the persons employed in the same, and concerning all ecclesiastical meetings, and matters to be proposed and determined therein, as they in their royal wisdom shall think fit.' After this, several restrictions were laid upon the *indulged* by the privy-council; particularly by their act, January 13th 1670, they discharge them to *lecture* upon any part of scripture before sermon; with certification, that, if they continue to do so, they shall be discharged to exercise their ministry within the kingdom.

Afterwards, a *second indulgence* is granted by the privy-council, September 3d 1672; and three several acts were framed about it that same day.—By the first, a great many of the *outed* ministers, not formerly indulged, are classed and confined by two's and three's in different parishes, and discharged to pass without the bounds of the same: and a committee of council is impowered to remove any of the ministers named from one of the said parishes to which they are confined, to another, as they shall see cause, within six months after the above date of this act.—By a second act of the same date, there are several other limitations laid upon them as to the exercise of their ministry, besides these mentioned in the King's letter: such as, 'That the *indulged*, in one and the same diocese, celebrate the communion in one and the same day; that they should not preach in church-yards, or any other place, but in kirks, under the pain

‘ of being punished as keepers of conventicles ; and that they depart
 ‘ not forth from the parish, without license from the bishop of the
 ‘ diocese only ; and that, in the exercise of discipline, all causes for-
 ‘ merly referable to Presbyteries, should still in the same manner be
 ‘ referred unto them,’ although they were now nothing else but
 bishops courts.—And, by a third act of the above date, they dis-
 charge all other Presbyterian ministers, except these who are *indulged*,
 to exercise any part of their ministerial work, unless they are in-
 vited by the ministers of the parishes where they live ; and appoint
 them under severe penalties to attend ordinances in the said parishes.
 —Thus the indulgence stood, *Anno 1672* : and some years after-
 wards, when, by a public proclamation, March 1st 1676, the above
 orders and instructions were again strictly enjoined ; they are, in the
 said proclamation, expressly called, the *terms* upon which the *indulged*
 ministers were *permitted* to preach, and exercise the other functions
 of the ministry. And, by an act of council of the same date with
 the said proclamation, ‘ The *indulged* ministers are *discharged* to ad-
 ‘ mit any of the ministers, *not indulged*, to their *communions* or *pul-
 ‘ pits*, under pain of being deposed by the bishop of the diocese.’

From all which it is evident, that the *indulgences* above-mentioned
 had their rise, conveyance, and subsistence from the *blasphemous su-
 premacy* usurped over the house of God ; and the several acts above-
 mentioned were the actual exercise of the same : As will plainly ap-
 pear, if it is considered, that the ministerial power and authority for
 the government of the church, which the Lord Jesus Christ, the
 alone head and lawgiver thereof, has conveyed to church-officers,
 as the proper subject and receptacle thereof (Mat. xvi. 19. chap.
 xviii. 18, 20. 2 Cor. x. 8, 11.) is by the *act of supremacy*, most impi-
 ously and sacrilegiously transferred upon the King and his successors,
 as an inherent right of the crown ; with power to him either to ex-
 ercise the same in his own person, or by others whom he shall no-
 minate and appoint to execute his orders. Accordingly, in obedience
 to the commands, and by virtue of an authority derived from the
 King (whom the parliament had constitute supreme over all persons,
 and in all causes ecclesiastick) the privy-council assume the *actual
 exercise of church-power*, in judging of the gifts and qualifications
 of ministers for labouring in such and such parishes, and planting
 and transplanting them at their pleasure ; and in framing and prescrib-
 ing ecclesiastical canons and instructions for regulating the exercise of
 the ministerial office : all which are acts competent *only* to *church-
 officers*, by virtue of Christ’s institution, and quite beyond the sphere
 of the *civil magistrate*.

And, as a further evidence that the *indulgence* flowed from the
supremacy as the *spring* thereof, the ministers, who had the benefit
 of it, were appointed to such and such parishes (with consent of the
 patron) in virtue of the *king’s supreme authority exercised by the coun-
 cil*, without any *call* from the people, or the interposure of any ec-
 clesiastick authority whatsoever. And these who were restored to
 their own churches, were not admitted to them by virtue of any
former standing relation ; but merely by *appointment of the council*,

in pursuance of his Majesty's commands signified to them: as is evident from the tenor of the several acts relative to this affair. And, tho' all the ministers of Christ have their instructions from him alone, and are expressly enjoined to *teach the observance of all things whatsoever he has commanded them*, Mat. xxviii. 18, 19, 20.; every one of the *indulged ministers* were *restricted* in the exercise of their ministry, by the above-mentioned *limitations*: and, as they were strictly discharged to utter any *sedition* expressions in the pulpit, or elsewhere; so it is plain, from the acts of parliament and council at this time, that *faithful ministerial freedom* against the perfidy and treachery of all ranks of persons, (in the present horrid violation of the oath and covenant of God, and in rearing up, or submitting unto the abjured hierarchy and wicked supremacy,) was what was then reckoned *sedition*.

And though it may be alledged, that the ministry of some of the indulged was attended with success, and that the instructions given them were not punctually observed by them all; yet the *acceptance* of the *indulgence*, in the above complex circumstances, and *omitting* to give a plain and distinct *testimony*, in that case of confession, against that wicked *supremacy*, usurped over the house of God, was a *departing* from a very material part of the cause and testimony of the church of Scotland. And it was no small aggravation of the sinfulness of this step, that some ministers, who were in the council's nomination, *never accepted* of it; but continued with others of their brethren, who were not included in it, (notwithstanding of cruel edicts against them) to *jeopard* their lives in the *high places* of the *field*, testifying and witnessing against the present apostasy and defection from Scotland's covenanted reformation.

VIII. The whole land was yet further involved in dreadful and heinous guilt, by the many *sinful oaths, declarations, and bonds*, that were imposed, during this period of apostasy and defection, between the year 1660 and 1688; particularly, by the 11th act of the 1st session of parliament, Anno 1661, all persons in public trust were obliged to swear the oath of *allegiance*, or rather *supremacy*: whereby they were required to declare, *That the king is the only supreme governor over all persons and in all causes*; and that they should promote and support his foresaid *jurisdiction*, against all deadly.—Together with this oath, an *instrument assentory* of the royal prerogative is appointed to be signed; whereby the subscribers consented to the King's *absolute power*, and owned the unlawfulness of *resisting* him upon any pretext whatsoever: and so not only gave up their *civil liberties*, but materially renounced the whole work of reformation, as it was *begun* at our *secession* from *Popery*, and as it was *carried on* in the year 1638; though all was approved by King and Parliament; and, which is more, was signally owned of God. The *privy-council*, or any having authority from them, were empowered to impose the said oath and assentory act upon any whom they pleased: hence, in a short time, these *oaths* reached the most part of the subjects, and became trying badges of loyalty. If a person was sisted before the council, or other courts, if he swore the allegiance and sign-

ed the assertory act, he was dismissed; but, if he refused, there was no mercy for him.

Again, by the 5th act of the 2d session of that same parliament, *Anno* 1662, in order to put the grave-stone upon the covenanted reformation, a *declaration* is appointed to be signed by all persons in public trust; wherein they were required to *affirm* and *declare*, 'That it is unlawful, upon any pretext whatsoever, to enter into leagues and covenants, or to take up arms against the king, or these commissioned by him: That all the convocations, petitions, and protestations, that were used in the beginning, and for carrying on the late troubles,' (*i. e.* all that was done for carrying on the work of reformation from the year 1638) 'were unlawful and seditious; and that the *national covenant*, as explained in the year 1638, and the *solemn league and covenant*, were in themselves unlawful oaths; and that there lieth no obligation upon any of the subjects, from the said oaths, to endeavour any change or alteration in the government, either in church or state, from the present establishment by the laws of the kingdom.' This *declaration* became one of the great sins and snares of this time: *perjury* is now made a chief qualification, and necessary condition of all that were to be admitted to places and offices in church and state.

Likewise, by an act of parliament, *Anno* 1670, against people's separating from the public worship in their own parishes, *i. e.* from the perjured *Conformists* to Prelacy; heritors and life-renters, if they obstinately withdraw from their parish-churches, for a certain space of time, must be sited before the council, and required to sign a *bond*, obliging themselves, that they shall not, upon any pretext whatsoever, rise in arms against the King, or any commissioned by him; and that they shall not assist or countenance any who shall rise in arms: and the refusers of this bond are appointed to be secured or banished, and their single or life-rent escheat to belong to the King. This was a snare unto many, and a ground of suffering unto others.

Besides these oaths imposed by authority of parliament, many other ensnaring oaths and bonds were also enforced by the privy-council; such as the *bond of peace*, appointed to be subscribed, *Anno* 1667: and the *bond for regularity*, as it was called, (appointed by act of council, August 2d 1677, to be subscribed by all heritors, &c.) whereby they bind and oblige themselves, and all under their authority, that they shall not withdraw from the public divine worship in their respective parish churches; that they shall not have their children baptised, nor be married, but by such ministers as are lawfully authorised; and that they shall not be present at conventicles, either in houses or in fields: and all this under heavy and severe penalties.

But that *oath*, called the *test*, deserves particular consideration: It was a *self-contradictory* oath; and had not a parallel among all the oaths ever imposed in any Protestant country. It was framed by the parliament, August 31st 1681. At first, only persons in public trust were obliged to take it; but afterwards it became a general *test*

of loyalty, and was imposed upon all ranks of persons; and made a handle, even of persecuting unto death, great numbers, some of whom were of very considerable rank and quality: and multitudes, who could not comply with it, were grievously oppressed. In the first part of this oath, the Protestant religion, contained in the first Confession of Faith, is professed; and all principles and doctrines contrary to, and inconsistent with the same, are renounced: and yet, in direct contradiction thereto, the King's supremacy, in the utmost extent, is again and again asserted; together with the unlawfulness of subjects, their resisting the sovereign upon any pretext whatsoever: the obligation of the Covenants, National and Solemn League, is disowned, and the government of the church, then established by law, is approved.—Thus the representatives of the nation, and together with them, many of all ranks of persons through the land, make themselves more and more vile by the blackest perjury, the grossest apostasy and defection from the Lord, that a people or nation could be guilty of.

IX. The wickedness of this period did rise higher, even to the greatest tyranny and cruelty exercised upon all such as endeavoured to keep their garments clean in this sinning and defiling day. The above-mentioned acts of parliament, with the oaths and bonds imposed by the parliament and privy council, laid a foundation for near twenty-eight years grievous persecution: A simple non-compliance with the prelatical government then established; declining to attend ordinances dispensed by the bishop's underlings; being present at conventicles in houses or fields; refusing the oath of supremacy, or the other oaths and bonds that were imposed; owning the obligation of our solemn covenants, and the lawfulness of defensive arms, or of resisting a tyrannical sovereign;—were reckoned crimes of the highest nature, and subjected multitudes of all ranks unto unparalleled severity.

During this period, the witnesses for Scotland's covenanted reformation endured cruel mockings and scourgings; they wandered about in deserts and in mountains, in caves and dens of the earth, destitute, afflicted, tormented. Multitudes were banished their native country; others suffered long imprisonment, spoiling of goods, and grievous tortures, that had not a parallel in any Protestant country; many resisted even unto blood, striving against sin: the most public cities of the nation were defiled with innocent blood; such as Edinburgh, Glasgow, and other cities: yea, to such an height did cruelty and tyranny arrive, that many were killed in the open fields without any legal process. The merciless soldiers were both their judges and executioners.

This torrent of blood was opened in the martyrdom of the noble marquis of Argyll, May 27th, and of the worthy Mr. James Guthrie, five days thereafter, in the year 1661, when the parliament was razing Scotland's covenanted reformation, and planting the tree of prelacy and arbitrary power. This cursed tree behoved to be soaked with the noble blood of an excellent Patriot, a staunch Presbyterian, a vigorous asserter of Scotland's liberties, and with the good of au

eminent and faithful minister of Jesus Christ: and much bitter and bloody fruit did this *tree of prelacy* bear, in the sufferings unto death of many excellent persons of all ranks, till the beginning of the memorable year 1688, when the torrent stopt in the death of Mr James Renwick. The principal articles of his indictment, and for which he suffered, were his affirming, That the *duke of York*, then King James VII. was not rightful nor lawful king of these realms; and that because he was a *Papist*, had never sworn the *coronation-oath*, and was overthrowing the *fundamental laws* of the kingdom; also his affirming and defending the lawfulness of *defensive arms*, both for our civil and religious liberties. These *principles* were espoused by this church ever since our reformation from Popery, and were justified by all the three nations at the Revolution.—Thus, in our *skirts* is found the *blood of the saints* who suffered during this dismal period; and, if the ordinary course of divine procedure is observed, all ranks in Scotland have reason to fear, that a *land, defiled with perjury and blood*, must be *punished by blood*; especially when these heinous abominations have never been duly nor seriously considered nor mourned over, Lev. xxvi. 25. 2 Kings xxiv. 3, 4.

X. When apostasy and defection had come to such a prodigious height, as is already mentioned, the whole *Protestant Interest* in the three nations was brought into the greatest danger, by the accession of the duke of York unto the throne, after the death of his brother, Charles II. *Anno 1685*. He openly professed and declared himself a *Papist*; and the representatives of the nation, without requiring the coronation-oath, being met in parliament, make a declaration and offer of duty unto this *Popish Prince*, wherein they own his absolute power and authority, and promise him obedience, without reserve. In consequence whereof, though the parliament, that met the following year, refused to rescind the *penal statutes* against *Papists*, yet this *Popish Prince* did most tyrannically abrogate and pull down these hedges of the reformation, by virtue of his usurped supremacy and absolute power; first in his letter to the privy-council, dated August 21st 1686. wherein, by his power paramount to the law, he declares his resolution to protect his *Catholic Subjects*, and allows them the free exercise of their religion in their houses; and appoints the *royal chapel* at *Holyroodhouse* to be fitted up for *Popish* worship: whereupon the land was immediately filled with swarms of *Popish Priests*, and a *Popish School* is erected at *Holyroodhouse* for corrupting the youth. And then, by his Proclamation, February 12th 1687, he does, by his prerogative-royal, sovereign authority, and absolute power, *suspend all penal laws against Papists*; wherein also there is a *liberty* granted to these whom he calls *moderate Presbyterians*; but it is under such severe restrictions, and so *manifestly* in connection with the toleration of Popery (for which indeed it was chiefly designed) that none of the *Presbyterians* took the benefit of it.

When severals began to be alarmed at such an open and violent attack upon the reformation, wherein such large favours were granted to the *Papists*; not only as to the exercise of their religion, but also capacitating them to enjoy places of power and trust, that this

toleration was too bare-faced for Presbyterians to fall in with: therefore, that the main design of introducing Popery might be the better coloured, and the reformation *more effectually* (though *less sensibly*) unhinged, there comes down a *second form* of a *toleration*, in a Proclamation, dated June 28th that same year, conceived indeed in more general terms, but of the same nature and import with the former: Therein it is declared, that the *Archbishops* and *Bishops*, and all subjects of the Protestant religion, are to be defended in the free exercise of their Protestant religion, as by law established; and likewise, by virtue of the prerogative and absolute power, all *penal* and sanguinary laws, made against any for non-conformity to the religion established by law, or the exercise of their respective religions, rites, and ceremonies, are stopt, suspended, and disabled; and a liberty is granted to all the subjects to meet and serve God in their own way and manner, in private houses, chaples, or places, hired or built for the purpose; providing nothing be preached or taught that may any ways tend to alienate the hearts of the people from the government: and *field-meetings* are still discharged under the severest penalties.

It is evident, from the *abrogating* of the *penal statutes* in this, as well as in the former Proclamation, that this *boundless toleration* was calculated *chiefly* in favours of the *Papists*, as well as the *former*, although they be not expressly named in it; and yet all the *Presbyterian ministers* in the kingdom (excepting a very few) not only accepted the benefit of it, but also a considerable *body* of them, met at Edinburgh, did send an *address of thanks* for the said toleration, dated July 21st 1687, and subscribed in their own name, and in the name of the rest of the brethren of their persuasion; wherein they offer their *humble and hearty thanks* to that popish Prince, and *blest the great God, who put it in his heart to grant them the said liberty*, which they call a *gracious and surprising favour*: withal promising (in obedience to the above Proclamation) *an entire loyalty in their doctrine and practice*, consonant to their known principles, contained in the Confession of Faith) and also *beseeching, that these who promote any disloyal principles or practices (as they disown them) may be looked upon as none of theirs, whatever name they may assume to themselves.*

The above *boundless and illimited toleration* was, no doubt, contrary to the principles of the *church of Scotland*, contained in her Confession of Faith and Larger Catechism. The design of the *grant-er*, and tendency of the *liberty granted*, was the introduction of Popery and slavery; its *conveyance* was from the King's *absolute power*, which all were required to obey without reserve; suspending and disabling all the penal statutes against Papists, whereby all the legal bulwarks of the Protestant religion against Popery were undermined and overthrown: Likewise the particular proviso above-mentioned, 'That nothing should be preached or taught, which might any way tend to alienate the hearts of the people from him, or his government;' *i. e.* in plain terms, that no doctrinal testimony

should be emitted against a popish Prince, and his arbitrary government, overturning the very foundations of our civil as well as religious liberties, was a most sinful and unwarrantable; and, in the present juncture, a most dangerous restriction and limitation upon ministers in the exercise of their ministry.—From all which it is plain, that the *acceptance* of this *toleration*, conveyed after the above-manner, with *such an address* of thanks for it, and without any *public joint testimony* against the evils contained in it, (except that which was offered by Mr. Renwick, and the few that adhered to him,) was not only stumbling to many, but became one of our *public national sins*.

The above-mentioned *particulars* are some *instances* of the beginning, progress, and height of the *backsliding* and *defection* of all ranks of persons, between the years 1650, and 1688, from a glorious Reformation, formerly attained unto; whereby a reformed land, a land of light, and under the most solemn engagements to the Lord, became a land of perjury and blood, and was *filled with sin against the holy One of Israel*. Wherefore,

The *ministers associate together, being met in Presbytery*, judge it their duty to *testify* and bear witness against all these *heinous sins and abominations*: and they did, and hereby do, *condemn all the several sins, backslidings, and steps of defection from our covenanted Reformation* above-mentioned, for the particular reasons and grounds above condescended upon; and all other acts and deeds, in so far as connected with, and supporting, the above steps of defection, as contrary to the word of God, and inconsistent with the covenanted principles of this church founded thereon. And they hereby declare, that they were and are just causes of the Lord's righteous quarrel and controversy with our princes, our nobles, barons, burgessees, ministers, and commons of all sorts in the land; and that, for the above heinous sins and provocations, all ranks of persons have reason to mourn before the Lord, lest by their continued and growing impenitency and obduration, a righteous and holy God be provoked to come out of his holy habitation, and visit the iniquities of our fathers upon us in this generation, who are many ways serving ourselves heirs unto their sins and backslidings; as will appear from the instances afterwards to be given.

THIS church and land having groaned under the yoke of *arbitrary government*, and a *hot persecution* for the space of about 28 years; the Lord was graciously pleased to break the yoke from off our necks, by a *glorious and surprizing appearance* for us at the Revolution, in the latter end of the year 1688, whereof the *Prince of Orange* was the happy instrument, who was afterwards proclaimed King, to the joy and satisfaction of all such as had a just sense of the worth and value of their *liberties, religious and civil*: wherefore this Presbytery judge it their duty, to commemorate, with thankfulness, the divine power and goodness manifested in this wonderful work, whereby all the three nations were rescued from Popery and slavery.

This deliverance was seasonable as to the juncture, and surprizing

as to the manner in which it was given: it was brought about at a time, when the designs were open and declared for bringing this land under *Antichristian Idolatry* and darknefs, when *Papists* were advanced to the most considerable posts, when the penal statutes against them were abrogated by an absolute dispensing power, assumed and usurped by a *Papish Tyrant*, supported by a numerous army, and at a time when the whole land was couching under these grievous burdens: neither was it our *own sword*, or our *own bow*; but the *right-hand of the Lord*, and his *holy arm*, that wrought salvation for us.

It might have been justly expected, upon the back of such a remarkable and great appearance of God, that former iniquities and backslidings should have been particularly acknowledged, and the *house of God purged*; and that Reformation-work should have been advanced and carried on, after the example and practice of former reforming periods. But, instead of this, our *transgressions are multiplied*, new sins and backslidings are added to our former trespasses and defections: *forty years* and upwards have we in this generation grieved the Lord in the wilderness; we have sinned with our fathers, and have not understood his wonders, nor remembered the multitude of his mercies, though he saved us for his name's sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known: we have forgot his works, and have not waited for his counsel; and, in following counsels of flesh and blood, we have declined gradually from him, until our apostasy and defection in the present age is come to an height, in some particular instances, that were not known in former times.

I. When the Parliament of Scotland met, immediately after the Revolution, in the first Session they abolished Prelacy, as a great and insupportable grievance to this nation, and contrary to the inclination of the generality of the people, ever since the Reformation, they having reformed from Popery by Presbyters. And in the second Session of the same Parliament, Anno 1690, Presbyterian church-government and discipline is established and ratified, according to the civil ratification and establishment given unto the government of this church, Anno 1592.—Thus a retrograde motion is made near an hundred years backward; and all the legal securities given to this church, in that covenanting period, from 1638, to 1650, are overlooked and passed by.—Likewise all the acts of the first Session of the first Parliament of King Charles II. together with the infamous act rescissory, Anno 1661. (whereby a covenanted Reformation was razed, and the acts and deeds of that covenanting period were declared seditious and treasonable,) are left untouched in this above-mentioned settlement.

Prelacy is never considered as contrary to the word of God, and abjured by our covenants; nor our Presbyterian church-government and discipline, as what the land is bound and obliged to maintain by the most solemn oaths and covenants: the indignities done to the national and solemn league and covenant, and consequently to the most high God, the great party in them, are never regarded; but

these *solemn oaths and covenants* are left *buried* under an *act rescissory*, and other acts and deeds *subversive* of them.

But though the Protestant religion, and Presbyterian church government, which had been professed and sworn to in our covenants, national and solemn league, between 1638, and 1650, were thus established; and though it would appear, from the general clause in the act of settlement at the Revolution, that the *acts rescissory* were included among the *other acts, statutes, and proclamations*, mentioned in said clause, and so materially rescinded, *in so far as contrary to the said religion and church government established by said Act*; yet it is to be lamented, that these *infamous acts* were not *expressly* rescinded, as well as the other wicked acts mentioned in the settlement at the Revolution.—*Prelacy* was never considered as contrary to the word of God, and abjured in our covenants: and tho' Presbyterian government was expressly declared to be *agreeable to the word of God*, yet it was never considered as what is solemnly sworn to in these covenants.—The indignities which had been done to the national covenant, as it was explained in 1638, and to the solemn league and covenant, and by consequence to the most high God, the great party in them, by requiring the subjects solemnly to renounce them as *unlawful*, and not *binding* upon the conscience; or by declaring it treasonable to administer or take them, or to speak or write in defence of them, were expressly rescinded. But several other acts, declaring these covenants unlawful, and not binding, were left unrepealed.—Likewise the draught of an act for excluding such as had a share in the oppressions of the former period, from places of public trust, was laid aside, after it was twice read in Parliament. Hence such were admitted into places of public trust and power, as were both in principle and practice opposite to a covenanted Reformation.—Thus after our great deliverance, we mingled ourselves *again* with *these*, and learned of them their ways.

II. The first General Assembly of this church after the *Revolution* did sit down, *Anno 1690*, under the shadow of the above *civil establishment*, and never reclaimed against what was defective in the same, but kept measures with the *state* in their several acts and deeds at that juncture. It is not here intended to detract from that regard that is due to the memory of these worthy ministers, and others, who came out of the furnace of a hot persecution, and did bear a part in our first General Assemblies after the Revolution: yet it is necessary, both for the sake of the present as well as succeeding generations, to mention some *considerable omissions*, of which ministers and many others have complained, and which cannot be otherwise looked upon, than as *standing grounds and causes of the Lord's displeasure and controversy with us*, and as one of the springs of the many evils which have since that time befallen this church and land.

It was the laudable practice in Reforming times, to condemn the most glaring steps of defection, and duly to censure such as were guilty of public backsliding. Accordingly, by the Assembly that met, *Anno 1638*, all the *Prelates* being ringleaders in the apostasy,

were deposed, from their pretended episcopal function, and from the privilege of sitting and voting in Parliament, Council, or Convention, in name of the kirk, two of them were suspended from the exercise of the ministerial office; all the others were deposed from the office itself, and eight of them were excommunicated.—Also, in the said Reforming period, they returned to the Lord, by a particular acknowledgement and confession of the sins of the ministry, and of the whole land, and by renewing their solemn covenant-engagements.—But the General Assembly that met in the year 1690, did not make such a plain and particular acknowledgment of the heinous backslidings of the preceding persecuting period, as might have been expected; but on the contrary, when many lamentable steps of defection and apostasy were complained of in a *large paper* offered to the foresaid Assembly 1690, by Mr. Alexander Shields, and other two ministers, the said Assembly was so far from attempting the redress of these grievances, that they approve the report of their *Committee of overtures*, calling several of them *, *Unseasonable and impracticable proposals, uncharitable and injurious reflections, tending rather to kindle contentions, than to compose divisions.*

And though many iniquitous and blasphemous statutes were made, in the *two persecuting reigns*, for *dethroning the glorious Redeemer*, and pulling the *crown which he should alone wear from his royal head*; yet the Assembly 1690, did not, by any formal and express act, assert the divine right of Presbytery, and the intrinsic power of the church, which are two special branches of his glorious headship in and over the same: and *that* power and authority given by the Lord Jesus to the office-bearers of his house, to hold their meetings in his name, was not stedfastly adhered unto, in regard, that though the King's *Commissioner* dissolved the Assembly 1692, and though their meetings were adjourned from time to time by the King's proclamation, till the year 1694; yet there is no such *standing* testimony against such sinful encroachments upon the rights and liberties of Christ's spiritual kingdom as the case required.

And neither the foresaid Assembly 1690, nor any of the Assemblies of the church since that time, did by any one *formal* act or statute, *explicitly* and *judicially* condemn the sacrilegious usurpation of his royal dignity, by that blasphemous *supremacy*, arrogated during that bloody period; nor asserted him to be, what he really is, *The alone supreme head and king over his church, as his free and independent kingdom.* It is true indeed, that the Assembly 1690, in their act appointing a *national fast*, own, *That the supremacy was advanced, (viz. in the preceding reigns,) in such a way, and to such a height, as never any Christian church acknowledged.* Yet, they do not *absolutely* condemn that usurped supremacy, nor expressly assert the headship and sovereignty of Christ, *in opposition* to the bold and daring invasion made upon it, in the late times of lamentable defection and grievous persecution.

Further, they did not expressly approve the covenanted Reforma-

* Act 5th, Assembly, 1690.

tion of this church, attained unto from the year 1638, to 1650; nor did they justify the wrestlings, testimonies, and sufferings of the Lord's remnant in the late persecuting times, for the same; nor has the *obligation* of our *covenants, national and solemn league*, and their binding force upon posterity, ever been expressly asserted by any particular act of Assembly since the Revolution; nor has the solemn league and covenant been expressly named in any of the grounds of national fasting since that time; though both these might have been expected, considering how these *covenants* were so openly violate, and ignominiously burnt, in the former period.

Also the above-mentioned sinful and conscience-hardening *oaths, bonds, and declarations*, whereby Christ was sacrilegiously robbed of his royal crown and dignity, his servants oppressed, by some of which, the nation gave up with their valuable *civil* liberties as well as their *religious* privileges, and by every one of which the land was involved in the dreadful sin and guilt of perjury; yet these bonds and oaths were never expressly and particularly condemned and mourned over: neither has the *subversion* of our covenanted Reformation, by these *Parliamentary deeds*, which laid a foundation for the tyranny and bloodshed which followed thereupon, been particularly acknowledged in any of our acts appointing national fasts since the Revolution.

Neither have such as made *desertion* been duly *condemned*; but, on the contrary, the Index of the unprinted acts of Assembly 1690, bears a public declaration by the *moderator*, 'That the Assembly would depose no incumbents simply for their judgment anent the government of the church;' that is, they declare, that the perfidious Prelates and their underlings, were not to be deposed for their treacherous desertion from the covenanted principles of this church: and, in a consistency with this declaration, the Assembly 1694*, enjoin their Commission, (as several Assemblies afterwards did,) 'To receive into ministerial communion such of the late conform ministers, as, having qualified themselves according to law, shall subscribe the *formula*,' which was *then* framed for them: whereby they were not bound to acknowledge, that Presbyterian government is founded on the word of God; but only, 'That the church-government, as now settled by law, is the only government of this church.' Nor are elders required to sign any other *formula* to this day.

Upon the signing of the above *formula*, a great many prelati- cal ministers and elders were admitted into the bosom of the church, and had access to sit in judicatories, without requiring any evidence of their repentance, or sorrow for their heinous and scandalous desertion: as will be evident from the *Commission's address* to Queen Anne, recorded Act 10th, Assembly 1712, wherein they have these words; 'We cannot but lay before your Majesty this pregnant instance of our moderation, that since our late happy establishment there have been taken in, and continued, hundreds of dissenting,

* Act 11th, §. 6.

‘(i. e. episcopal) ministers upon the easiest terms.’—When these things are duly considered, and *former* reformatory periods and this compared, what a vast difference is there between the house of God in Scotland, in its former lustre and glory, and the fabric and building, as it was reared up by church and state at the Revolution!—The above practice, both of church and state, is contrary to *scripture pattern and example*; and the *practice* of reformatory times recorded there, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 29. to the close. Ezra ix and x chapters. Neh. ix and x chapters. Psal. lxxviii. and Psal. cvi. throughout.

III. Though the above *omissions* were frequently regretted, by ministers and others; yet it was still alledged, that the land was no way *ripe* to return, by solemn national covenanting, to the Lord; and that it was not a *proper time* and season to be *too particular* in mentioning public national sins, and in condemning the gross defections and heinous backslidings of the former period. Thus, when the *present season* and opportunity of *necessary duty* was neglected, it came to be *altogether lost*; particularly, when, by the *treaty of union*, we were brought under the more immediate influence of our *neighbours in England*, whose principles, as to church government and discipline, and in several points that concern the worship of God, differ widely from ours.

Our *covenant-union* with England, Anno 1643, was reckoned the honour and glory of the three lands at that time; it was an *union* for carrying on and advancing a work of Reformation in England and Ireland, according to the word of God, and the example of the best reformed churches: but, by the forefaid *treaty of union*, we were *incorporate* with them upon *terms opposite* unto, and *inconsistent* with our *covenant-union*; in regard, the maintenance and preservation of the doctrine, worship, government, and discipline of the church of England, is made a *fundamental* and essential part of the *union* of the *two kingdoms*.

The Commission of the General Assembly, that were met at that time, being informed, that, in the *act of ratification* of the articles of the treaty of union, which the Parliament of Scotland were about to pass, it was declared, that the Parliament of England might provide for the *security* of the church of England, *as they should think expedient*, to take place within the bounds of the kingdom of England: therefore, the said Commission, in their *Representation and Petition*, of the 16th of January 1707, given in to the Parliament, *remonstrate* against the forefaid *clause* in the *act of ratification*; not only as putting a *blank* in the hands of the Parliament of England, to enact what they should think fit for securing the *hierarchy* and *ceremonies* of their church; but also as a *consent on the part of Scotland*, that it be an *article* and *fundamental* of the union, and as it is contained in the ratification, implying a manifest *homologation* of the *said hierarchy and ceremonies*: therefore they crave, ‘That there may be no such stipulation or consent for the establishment of the hierarchy and ceremonies, as they would not involve themselves and the nation in guilt, and as they would consult the peace and quiet of this nation, both in church and state.’ But as the ensuing

General Assembly, only approved of the proceedings of this Commission in common form, without any express approbation of their conduct in this particular, though matters of less moment have sometimes been particularly noticed; so the Parliament of Scotland nowise regarded the foresaid Representation and Petition, having in their *act of ratification* given their consent, That the *maintenance of the hierarchy and ceremonies in England, should be a fundamental and essential article of the union.*

And though it was then alledged, that the said *union* was the best mean to secure our religion and liberties, against the attempts of a *Popish Pretender* and his adherents; yet, as it was upon terms contrary to our covenant-union, so we hereby declared our confidence in an *arm of flesh*, and not in the *living God*, who had so often and so wonderfully saved us from our enemies.—And, upon all these grounds and reasons, the foresaid *union* may be justly looked upon as *contrary to*, and *condemned by the word of God*, Jer. ii. 16, 17, 18, 36, 37. Ezek. xvii. 15. Isa. xxx. 1, 2, 3. chap. xxxi. 1, 2, 3. Whereupon the said *union* is become one of our *public national sins*; and from this time, instead of making progress in Reformation-work, we have been declining and backsliding every day; and have fallen under the weight of such grievances as shake the foundation of our Presbyterian church-government and discipline. For,

IV. Among the more immediate bitter and sinful *fruits* of the foresaid *incorporating union*, the whole nation was made to groan under the weight of unnecessary, superfluous, and sinful *oaths*; and, indeed, *because of swearing*, to this very day, *the land mourneth*. How oft are the same oaths *repeated*, even upon one and the same day, to qualify men to act in different capacities? How often are dealers in candles and leather obliged to swear? How do many of the *trading part* of the nation involve themselves in *perjury* by the ordinary *custom-house oaths* at the entry of *ships*? And how much guilt do they bring upon themselves, and the whole land, by *running* of goods, and such like fraudulent practices; which are frequently attended with a very gross profanation of the Lord's day? How is the name of God profaned; and the just sense and impression of the importance, weight, and solemnity of an oath, and also the dreadful guilt and danger there is of rash and false swearing, worn off the spirits of many, by a frequent and unnecessary repetition of oaths?

Likewise, a superstitious form of *swearing* was soon introduced among us from England, by *laying the hand upon, and kissing the gospels*: a very corrupt innovation in that solemn piece of divine worship; and contrary to scripture-pattern, which alone should regulate us, as in every other part, so in this solemn act of worship.—Also the *sacramental test*, and conformity to the liturgy and ceremonies of the church of England, is required of the *members* of this church, while serving the sovereign in England and Ireland. The Commission of the General Assembly, in their *Petition* to the Parliament of Scotland, November 8th, 1706, represented, *That this might prove of most dangerous consequences to the church*; yet, in the

treaty of union, there was *no particular provision made against it*. The fruits and consequences of the same are every day more and more seen; persons of all ranks resorting to England, and *conforming occasionally* to the liturgy and ceremonies there; that zeal and concern manifested by this church in former times, for the purity of divine institutions, is gradually decaying, it is daily languishing; and a nauseous lukewarmness and detestable indifferency doth prevail among us, about the worship, government, and discipline of the Lord's house.

Also, immediately after the union, the *oath of abjuration* was imposed upon all persons in public trust, both civil and military. This *oath* was framed at first by the parliament of England; and calculated for the maintenance of their constitution, both in church and state: and as the *Commission*, in their last-mentioned *Address*, observe, 'It bears a reference to some acts of the English parliament, wherein are some qualifications required in the successor to the crown,' (*viz.* that he should be of the communion of the church of England, and shall maintain the church of England, as by law established,) 'which are not suitable to our principles.'—In all the above particular instances, the whole land is more and more involved in sin, Amos viii. 14. Jer. iv. 2. chap. xxiii. 10.

V. In the year 1712, *an almost boundless toleration* is granted; by which the government and discipline of this church were exceedingly weakened: and a wide door was opened for laxness in principle, which never fails to bring alongst with it looseness in practice.—This *toleration*, as the *then Commission* of the General Assembly observed, in their address to Queen Anne, 'Is such as gives a large license, almost to all error and blasphemy; throws up all good discipline, to the dishonour of God, and the scandal and ruin of the Christian religion.'—*Tolerations* of this kind are contrary to the word of God, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 33. Ezra vii. 25, 26. Zech. xiii. 2, 3. Rom. xiii. 3, 4. Rev. ii. 2, 14, 15, 20. chap. xvii. 12, 16, 17.; and to the principles of this church, contained in the Confession, chap. xx. sect. 4. chap. xxiii. sect. 3.: and the answer to the question in the Larger Catechism, *What are the sins forbidden in the second commandment?* And the *present* was mainly intended and designed for strengthening and supporting a malignant and disaffected party in Scotland; who, ever since the Revolution, have openly espoused the cause and interest of a *Popish Pretender*: and whose meetings, to this day, are not only *nurseries* of superstition, but *seminaries* of disaffection to our *sovereign king George*, and the Protestant succession in his illustrious family.

As this *boundless toleration* is a stroke and judgment upon this church and land; so the growth of error and superstition, the genuine fruits and effects of the same, may be justly reckoned among the causes of the Lord's wrath against sinful and backsliding Scotland.—It deserves also to be noticed, that the *English liturgy and ceremonies* were never received, even by these of the *Episcopal* denomination in Scotland, till after the late incorporating union, when a manner of worship, never practised in Scotland, was set up in all

the corners of the land.—Together with the said act of *toleration*, the above-mentioned *act of abjuration*, which was at first required to be sworn, as is already observed, by all persons in civil and military trust, was now imposed upon the *ministers* of this church: which, beside the dismal effects it produced, in *renting and breaking the ministry among themselves*, may be justly reckoned one of our *public national sins*; in so far as the *united constitution*, directly opposite to our *covenant-union*, is thereby homologate and sworn unto.

VI. In the foresaid year 1712, the *right of presentation* to vacant congregations, claimed by *Patrons*, was again restored unto them. Against this the church of Scotland has always testified, as subversive of the *right of election* belonging to Christian congregations by the word of God, as in the *second book of Discipline*, chap. xii.; ‘The liberty of the election of persons called to the ecclesiastical functions, and observed without interruption, so long as the Kirk was not corrupted by *Antichrist*, we desire to be restored and retained within this realm: so that none be intruded upon any congregation, either by the Prince, or any inferior person, without lawful election, and the assent of the people over whom the person is placed; as the practice of the apostolical and primitive Kirk and good order crave.’

As the act of Parliament restoring the right of presentation to Patrons, was a heavy stroke upon this church; so the countenance that has been given unto this *Antichristian usurpation*, by the *present judicatories* of the church, in the settlement of ministers upon *presentations* from Patrons, over *reclaiming and dissenting* congregations, is one of the *sins and corruptions* of the *present time*; whereby the Lord Jesus, the only Lord and Law-giver to his church, is dishonoured, and his heritage wounded, scattered, and broken; as may be afterwards more particularly considered.

VII. Besides the toleration and patronage acts, countenance is given by the authority of parliament to the observation of *holy-days* in Scotland, by the *vacation* of our most considerable *courts of justice*, in the latter end of December. This superstitious practice was condemned by the acts and constitutions of this church; and declared by the General Assembly that met at Glasgow, *Anno* 1638, to be abjured by the *national covenant*.

These are some instances of the gradual *declinings* of this church and land from Reformation-purity, that did take place between that remarkable and wonderful appearance of divine providence in the year 1638, and the *accession* of our late *sovereign King George* to the throne.—Therefore, this *Presbytery* judge it their duty to *condemn*, likeas they *hereby do condemn*, all the foresaid steps of defection, for the several grounds and reasons above condescended upon, as contrary to the word of God and our solemn covenant-engagements: And they hereby declare, that they are *national sins*; and every one of them may be justly reckoned among the grounds and causes of the Lord's indignation and controversy with us, for which all ranks of persons have reason to be deeply humbled before the Lord.

THOUGH, instead of making progress in Reformation-work, many valuable pieces of Reformation, once attained unto by this church and land, were not only neglected, but upon the matter given up at the *Revolution*; and though, instead of holding fast what was then attained unto, the church of Scotland did lose ground, and was involved in new steps of declining and backsliding; and, at the same time, though a malignant and disaffected party were unwearied in their plots and projects to destroy any good work the Lord had wrought for us by the *Revolution*: Yet the Lord, whose name is *gracious and merciful, long-suffering, and slow to anger*, dealt not with us according to the desert of our sins; but, under many frowning and wrath-like dispensations of providence, *remembered mercy*, and *saved us from our enemies, and put them to shame that hated us*.

Therefore, among the many remarkable appearances of God for his church and people in this land, *this Presbytery* judge it their duty to *commemorate and record* with thankfulness, the deliverance from threatened ruin that was brought about by the *right-hand of the Lord*, in the years 1714 and 1715: when, in the latter end of Queen Anne's reign, thick and dark clouds covered us; and when it was evident that *designs* were not only formed, but very far advanced, for placing a *Popish Pretender* upon the throne of these realms; which, if they had taken place, would have brought the *three nations* back into the same miserable circumstances in which they were immediately before the *Revolution*. But the Lord was graciously pleased to scatter the clouds, and to disappoint these projects, by the *seasonable accession* of our late sovereign king George to the throne. This was like *another Revolution*; brought about by his immediate hand, who *cuts off the spirit of princes*, and appears *terrible to the kings of the earth*.—No sooner was this deliverance given us, than an *unnatural rebellion* broke forth in our bowels: the interests of a *Popish Pretender* were openly espoused; and a banner was displayed against the *Revolution-interest*, our *sovereign king George*, and the *Protestant Succession in his Royal Family*; and that by a set of men in this land, for whose sake the *toleration* above-mentioned was granted, and who were always declared enemies to Scotland's *covenanted reformation*. But the Lord was graciously pleased to break their measures; to pour shame and contempt upon our enemies; and to *turn wars into peace, in all our borders*.

When the hand of the Lord was so remarkably seen in working *manifest* deliverances for us, it might have been expected that something should have been done for carrying on Reformation-work: *What could have been done more for his vineyard in Scotland, than what he has done? and yet, when he looked that we should have brought forth grapes, we have brought forth wild grapes*.—Since this last deliverance, we have not only fallen asleep, as if we had no enemy to fear; but, as if we had been delivered to add iniquity to our former trespasses:—*Corruption* in principle and practice is come to a greater height, in several instances, in this present age, than in any period since our Reformation from Popery:—damnable and pernicious principles are propagated, which have a tendency to raze the grounds

and foundations of our Christian faith.—*Arian* blasphemies, and *Arminian* errors have been vented in one of our most considerable *Seminaries* of learning; where the youth are trained up for the holy ministry:—serious godliness, and the supernatural work of the Spirit of God upon the souls of men, in their effectual calling, have been treated, even from the *press*, and otherwise, in a very ludicrous manner: and yet the standard of a faithful testimony, against the prevailing errors of the time, has not been lifted up by the judicatories of the church.—A form of godliness, a shadow of religion, takes place of the power and life thereof through the land.—The *Keys* of government and discipline, (committed to the office-bearers of the church, by her glorious *Head*, for the edification of his body, and preserving his institutions in their purity; for purging the house of God of unsound ministers and members; for removing of the offences whereby the flock of Christ may be hurt or stumbled; and for the maintenance of the liberties wherewith Christ hath made his people free,) have been *perverted* to quite opposite ends.—The power of religion is daily decaying among us; and the very form of it is despised by many, and by others it is rested upon.

BUT, as it is necessary to give some particular instances of the progress and height of the present defection and backsliding; so this Presbytery judge it their duty to condescend upon the following.

I. A *scheme* of pernicious and dangerous principles has been vented by Mr. John Simson, professor of divinity in the university of Glasgow; as is evident from the several *processes* that have been carried on against him.

1st, When he was processed before the judicatories of this church, in the years 1714, 1715, and 1716. the following dangerous *errors* are owned and defended by him, in his *answers* to the *libel* given in to the Presbytery of Glasgow against him, by the Rev. Mr. James Webster, late minister of the gospel at Edinburgh.

1. That ' by the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence, including tradition, God has given an obscure objective revelation to all men, of his being reconcileable to sinners; and that the heathen may know that there is a remedy for sin provided, which may be called an implicit and obscure revelation of the gospel: and that it is probable, none are excluded from the benefit of the remedy for sin provided by God, and published twice to the whole world, except these who, by their *actual* sin exclude themselves, and slight and reject the clearer light of the gospel revealed to the church, or that obscure discovery, and offer of grace made to all without the church * : and that, if the heathen would in sincerity and truth, and in the diligent use of means that providence lays to their hand, seek from God the knowledge of the way of reconciliation, necessary for their acceptable serving of him, and being saved by him, he would discover it to them †.—Like-

* Answers to Mr. Webster's libel, p. 77, 78, 79, 115. † Page 80.

wife he affirms, ' That there are means appointed of God for obtaining saving grace ; which means, when diligently used with seriousness, sincerity, and faith of being heard, God has promised to bless with success ; and the going about these means in the foregoing manner, is not above the reach of our natural ability and power *.'

All these propositions are directly contrary to the doctrine held forth from the word of God in our Confession of Faith : particularly, chap. i. §. 1. ; where, according to the scriptures cited, we are taught, That, ' although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence, do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave man inexcusable ; yet they are not sufficient to give that knowledge of God, and of his will, which is necessary unto salvation.' Whereas, by the above propositions, Mr. Simson affirms, that the end and design of *natural religion* is, not only to leave men inexcusable, but that thereby an *obscure* offer of grace is given them, and an implicit revelation of the gospel made unto them ; and that the benefit of the remedy provided for sin, extends to all without the church, who do not slight and reject, this obscure discovery and offer of grace : and therefore, this *obscure* revelation and offer of grace is such, as lays a foundation for the heathen, in the diligent use of the means which providence lays to their hands, their seeking in sincerity and truth the knowledge of the way of reconciliation : whereby some kind of *sufficiency* is given to natural religion ; yea, such a sufficiency, as lays a foundation and ground for hope and confidence towards God, for obtaining, some way or other, reconciliation to him, and consequently eternal salvation ; contrary to Eph. ii. 12. where the whole *heathen* world are declared to be *without God* and *without hope*. And, whatever advantages the heathen may be supposed to have by tradition, yet the apostle testifies, that the *world by wisdom know not God* : and they were so far from seeking after the knowledge of the way of reconciliation, that when it was published unto them by the gospel, they rejected the same as foolishness, and not agreeable to their carnal reasonings, 1 Cor. i. 21, 25. Isa. lxv. 1. with Rom. x. 20.

Besides, by the above propositions, mens natural powers and abilities, whether they be within or without the church, are *exalted* to the dishonour of God, to the disparagement of his sovereign and efficacious grace ; and in direct contrariety to that miserable state and condition into which all mankind are brought by their apostasy from God in the *first Adam* ; being *dead in trespasses and sins*, under the power of spiritual darkness, and not only *enemies to God*, but by nature *enmity* against him ; as is held forth from the scriptures in our Confession of Faith, chap. ix. §. 3. ' Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation ; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able by his own strength to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereto.'

* Answers to Mr. Webster's libel, P. 216.

The above propositions, concerning man's powers and abilities in a natural state, are more dangerous, when it is considered, that Mr. Simson rejects the ordinary *answer* given by our orthodox divines to a *Pelagian* objection, *viz.* That it is unjust in God to command what we have no power to perform. All reformed divines make answer, that we had sufficient power and ability in Adam, but have lost it by our fall; and though we have lost power to obey, yet God has a just right to command. This answer Mr. Simson rejects, as no way sufficient; and substitutes what is contained in the above propositions in the room of it, *Answers*, p. 210. &c.: whereby, instead of removing the objection, (to the dishonour of God, and hardning of these gross perverters of the truth, and to the sul-verting and poisoning of those with whom he was intrusted to train up for the holy ministry,) he gives up the cause of truth to the Pelagians and Arminians.

2. The said Mr. Simson maintains and defends, ' That there was ' no proper covenant made with Adam for himself, and his posterity* :—That Adam was not a fœderal head to his posterity † :— ' and that if Adam was made a fœderal head, it must be by divine ' command, which is not found in the Bible ‡.—The above propositions are contrary to the doctrine held forth from the word of God, in our Confession, chap. vi. §. 3. chap. vii. §. 2.: and the answer to the question in the Larger and Shorter Catechisms; *Did all mankind fall in Adam's first transgression?*

The above gross and erroneous propositions, are the foundation and ground of a chain of principles connected with them; whereby the reformed doctrine contained in our Confession of Faith, is undermined and overturned: for, by the denial of the *fœderal representation*, the proper *imputation* of Adam's first sin falls to the ground. And though the *professor* pretends to maintain the imputation of Adam's first sin, from the sanction of the law, yet his reasoning amounts to no more than that his posterity are *punished* for the same. When Adam's fœderal representation of his posterity is disowned, his *first sin* can no more be called *theirs*, than the sins of their immediate parents. That this proper imputation of Adam's first sin is denied by him, will further appear from the following gross and dangerous propositions which he maintains and defends. For,

3. He affirms, ' That it is inconsistent with the justice and goodness of God, to create a soul without original righteousness, or ' any disposition to good || ;—and that the souls of infants since the ' fall, as they come from the hands of their Creator, are as pure ' and holy, as the souls of infants would have been created, sup- ' posing man had not fallen;—and that they are created as pure ' and holy as Adam's was, except as to these qualifications and ' habits which he received, as being created in an adult state §.—These propositions are directly contrary to the doctrine held forth from the word of God in our Confession, chap. vi. §. 2, 3, 4. And the answer to the question in the Larger and Shorter Catechisms;

* *Answers*, P. 166. † P. 174. ‡ P. 176. || P. 225. § P. 226.

Wherein consists the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell? And the answer to the question in the Larger Catechism; How is original sin conveyed from our first parents to their posterity?

4. Mr. Simson also affirms and defends, 'That it is probable, that of the whole race of mankind, moe are elected and saved, than reprobated and damned *.'—He owns, that of the *adult*, or these come to years, it is plain from scripture, that the *most part are neither elected nor saved*: but, that he may account for the number of the elect and saved, he asserts, 'That it is more than probable that baptized infants, dying in infancy, are all saved †; and that it is manifest, if God should deny his saving grace to all, or any of the children of infidels, he would deal more severely with them than he did with the fallen angels ‡.'

By the above propositions, Mr. Simson judges it probable, that all *infants*, dying in infancy, are included in the decree of election; which is very agreeable to the Arminian scheme, which teacheth, that the decree of election, is influenced from foreseen conditions and qualifications in the creature: but contrary to the doctrine held forth from the word of God in our Confession, chap. iii. §. 5. 'Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of his mere grace and love; without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions or causes moving him thereto, and all to the praise of his glorious grace;' and consequently without any regard unto their infant or adult state. It is plain from the scriptures, that God hath chosen some of mankind to eternal life, out of his mere good pleasure *allenary*; Rom. ix. 11. *For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth: [Ver. 13.] As it is written, Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated.*

Besides, by the above propositions, he maintains the certainty of the salvation of *all infants*, when he challengeth his *Maker* with exercising greater severity towards them, in case he should deny his saving grace to any of them, than is exercised towards the fallen angels: especially when this is compared with his other *proposition*, noticed above, 'That none are excluded from the benefit of the remedy for sin provided, but these who, by their actual sins, exclude themselves.'—All these propositions have an evident tendency to lead men to low thoughts of the evil and desert of *original sin* imputed and inherent. Moreover, if the above doctrine is true, then there is no ground to fear the damnation of any upon the account of original sin, though it is the bitter fountain and spring of all our actual transgressions, and makes us children of wrath by nature: according to the doctrine held forth, from the word of God, in our

* Answers, p. 106.

† *Ibid.* p. 111.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 113.

Confession, chap. vi. §. 6. 'Every sin, both original and actual, being a transgression of the righteous law of God, and contrary thereto, doth in its own nature bring guilt upon the sinner; whereby he is bound over to the wrath of God, and curse of the law, and so made subject to death, with all miseries, spiritual, temporal, and eternal.'

5. Mr. Simson likewise impugns the *immediate previous divine concurrence* with all the actions of the reasonable creature; and in place thereof affirms, 'That God may determine infallibly all the actions of reasonable creatures, that are not above their natural powers, and are not contrary to their natural inclinations and dispositions, by placing them in such circumstances, by which they have a certain series and train of motives laid before them, by which they may infallibly, yet freely, produce such a series of actions, as he has decreed: and this, says he, may be sufficient for ascertaining all the events of sinful actions, and of the ordinary natural and civil actions of men *.'—It is true, the *providence* of God is a great depth; *his ways are unsearchable, and his judgments pass finding out.* The terms that have been used by reformed divines, in explaining the doctrine of providence, some of them are not in our Confession; being nowise adapted to vulgar capacities: yet the *immediate divine concurrence* with all the actions of the reasonable creature has been affirmed and maintained by reformed divines in opposition to *Jesuits* and *Arminians*; and is necessary for maintaining and asserting the absolute dominion of God over the free actions of reasonable creatures, and their immediate dependence upon him in motion and action, as well as in their being, and preservation in the same: whereas the way whereby Mr. Simson explains the divine providence about all the actions of reasonable creatures, leaves the creature independent in motion and action upon the adorable Creator.

Though some of the ordinary terms, that are used by divines upon this subject, are not in our Confession of Faith: yet the doctrine of the *immediate previous divine concurrence* with all the actions of the reasonable creature, as it is explained by our reformed divines, is plainly held forth therein from the word of God, chap. v. §. 4.; 'The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God, so far manifest themselves in his providence, that it extendeth itself even to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men: and that not by a bare permission; but such as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering and governing of them in a manifold dispensation to his own holy ends: yet so as the sinfulness proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is, nor can be the author or approver of sin.'—And the answer to the question in the Larger and Shorter Catechism, *What are God's works of providence?*

6. Mr. Simson likewise affirms and maintains, 'That a regard to

* *Aspersis*, p. 124.

‘ our own happiness, and the prospect of our eternal felicity and
 ‘ blessedness in the enjoyment of God in heaven, ought to be our
 ‘ chief motive in serving the Lord upon earth *.’—He also affirms,
 in answer to the first question of the Catechism, ‘ That our glorify-
 ‘ ing God, being the means, is subordinate to our enjoyment of
 ‘ him for ever, which is our ultimate end †.’—And, ‘ That, were
 ‘ it not for the prospect of happiness, we could not, and therefore
 ‘ would not serve God ‡.’—As Mr. Simson perverts the doctrine
 held forth from the scriptures, cited upon the answer to the first
 question of our Larger and Shorter Catechism, so as the Committee
 of the General Assembly 1727, very justly observe (State of the Pro-
 cess, p. 277.) ‘ *What is set forth in the above article, is contrary to*
 ‘ the instinct of that new nature the Lord endueth all his people
 ‘ with in regeneration, which makes them, by the further influence
 ‘ of grace, desire to serve God for himself and his supereminent ex-
 ‘ cellencies, and not merely or chiefly for the prospect of their own
 ‘ happiness; whence it is their greatest burden that they cannot
 ‘ more serve him for himself. And considering how much all men
 ‘ are bound to make the glory of God their chief end, though yet
 ‘ they are called herewith to pursue happiness; and likewise, that
 ‘ it is through a prevailing respect to God’s honour and glory, and
 ‘ not a mere or chief respect to our own happiness, that the differ-
 ‘ ence between nature and grace is to be cleared to the doubtful
 ‘ Christian. Therefore, — it is no small dishonour to God, to
 ‘ teach what is set down in the above articles; and that the contrary
 ‘ was necessary to be taught.’

7. Mr. Simson also maintains, and defends it as his opinion, ‘ That
 ‘ there will be no sinning in hell after the last judgment ||.’ This
 absurd opinion, is contrary to the doctrine held forth in our Con-
 fession and Catechisms; where, according to the scriptures, we are
 taught, ‘ That sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression
 ‘ of, the law of God.’ And since it is certain, that the natures of
 the damned in hell were never renewed, they can have no manner of
 conformity to the law of God: and, from their corrupt and unre-
 newed natures, must necessarily show the highest enmity and rage a-
 gainst the justice and holiness of God in punishing of them; which
 is expressed in scripture by *gnashing of the teeth*, Matth. viii. 12.

2dly, By another *process* against the said Mr. Simson, begun be-
 fore the Presbytery of Glasgow, Anno 1726, and carried on before
 the judicatories, till the Assembly 1729, when it was concluded;
 the said Mr. Simson was found guilty of many other gross and dan-
 gerous errors: in regard, it was found clearly proven, ‘ That, in
 ‘ teaching his *students*, he had denied the necessary existence of our
 ‘ Lord Jesus Christ;’—and that he had affirmed, ‘ That his necessary
 ‘ existence is a thing we know not; and, that the term *necessary ex-*
 ‘ *istence* was impertinent, and not to be used when talking of the
 ‘ Trinity; and that the three persons of the adorable Trinity, are
 ‘ not to be said to be *numerically* one in substance, or essence; and

* *Answers*, p. 139, — 155. † *Ibid.* p. 140. ‡ *Ibid.* p. 149. || *Ibid.* p. 233.

‘ that the terms, *necessary existence, supreme deity, and the title of the only true God,* may be taken, and are by some authors taken, in a sense that includes the personal property of the Father, and so not belonging to the Son.’—By all which *propositions*, the *supreme Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, the second person of the adorable Trinity; as also the supreme Deity of the Holy Ghost, our Comforter and Sanctifier,* is blasphemously impugned and denied by the said Mr. Simson; in direct opposition to the scriptures of truth, and the doctrine held forth from them in our Confession of Faith, chap. ii. §. 1, 3. chap. viii. §. 2. Answer to the question in the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, *How many persons are there in the Godhead?* And Larger Catechism, Quest. 11.

It deserves also to be observed, that ‘some *hypotheses* adopted by Mr. Simson, and which tend to attribute too much to natural reason, are the very spring of the above dangerous errors vented and taught by him. In his second letter to Mr. Rowan, he adopts the following *Socinian propositions*, ‘ That reason, as it is taken for evident propositions, discovered by the light of nature, is the principle or foundation of theology; and that nothing is to be admitted in religion, but what is agreeable to reason, and determined by reason to be so.’ Although Mr. Simson pretends to disown these *propositions* as they are maintained and explained by the Socinians; yet it is obvious from the plain meaning of the words, that the above propositions, adopted by him, exalt reason above divine revelation; contrary to the doctrine held forth in our Confession of Faith, chap. i. §. 10. ‘ The supreme Judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the holy Spirit speaking in the scripture.’ And contrary to the answer to the second question in the Larger and Shorter Catechism.—Mr. Simson having once set reason in the chair, and exalted it to be judge in principles of faith, it is no wonder that he rejects the testimony of God in his own word, concerning the *covenant-headship and representation of the first Adam*, and the many sacred truths that are connected with that important article; and that he has maintained the other errors charged against him in the *first process*.—From the same source and spring also, he was at length led to impugn and deny the *supreme Deity and necessary existence of him whose name is, Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace,* Isa. ix. 6.

This Presbytery considering, that the purity of doctrine, maintained in this church, is very much endangered by the above gross and pernicious errors; and that many may be in hazard of being tainted with them in a day wherein atheism and infidelity do so much abound: Therefore they did, and hereby do, upon the weighty grounds and reasons above-narrated, CONDEMN, as contrary to the word of God, our Confession of Faith and Catechisms, the several propositions above-mentioned, maintained and defended by Mr. Simpton, viz.
‘ *Ratio, ut sumitur pro propositionibus neutraliter revelatis, est prin-*

cipium seu fundamentum theologiæ; and that nothing is to be admitted in religion, but what is agreeable to reason, and determined by reason to be so: That by the light of nature, and works of creation and providence, including tradition, God hath given an obscure objective revelation to all men, of his being reconcilable to sinners; and that the heathen may know there is a remedy for sin provided, which may be called an implicit or obscure revelation of the gospel:—That it is probable none are excluded from the benefit of the remedy for sin, provided by God, and published twice to the world; except these who, by their actual sins, exclude themselves, and slight or reject either the clear light of the gospel, revealed to the church, or that obscure discovery and offer of grace made to all without the church:—That if the heathen, in the use of the means they have, would seek the knowledge of the way of reconciliation, God would discover it to them:—That there are means appointed of God for obtaining saving grace; which means, when diligently used with seriousness, sincerity, and faith of being heard, God hath promised to bless with success; and the going about these means, in the foresaid manner, is not above the reach of our natural ability and power:—That there was not a proper covenant made with Adam for himself and his posterity:—That Adam was not a fœderal head to his posterity; and that, if Adam was made a fœderal head, it must be by a divine command, which is not found in the Bible:—That it is inconsistent with the justice and goodness of God, to create a soul without original righteousness or dispositions to good:—That the souls of infants since the fall, as they came from the hands of their Creator, are as pure and holy, as the souls of infants would have been created, supposing man had not fallen; and that they are created as pure and holy as Adam's was created, except as to those qualifications and habits, which he received, as being created in an adult state:—That it is more than probable, that all baptized infants, dying in infancy, are saved; and that it is manifest, if God should deny his grace to all, or any of the children of infidels, he would deal more severely with them than he did with the fallen angels:—That there is no immediate previous divine concurrence with all the actions of the reasonable creature; and, that a regard to our own happiness, and the prospect of our eternal felicity and blessedness in the enjoyment of God in heaven, ought to be our chief motive in serving the Lord upon earth; and, that our glorifying God, being the means, is subordinate to our enjoyment of him for ever, which is our ultimate end; and that, were it not for the prospect of happiness, we could not, and therefore would not serve God:—That there will be no sinning in hell, after the last judgment.—And the PRESBYTERY hereby declare all these propositions, vented and taught by the said Mr. Simson, to be *dangerous* and *pernicious errors*, dishonouring to a God of truth, and having an evident tendency to subvert the souls of men.

As also, this PRESBYTERY did, and hereby do, CONDEMN the several *propositions*, found clearly proven against the foresaid Mr.

Simson, by the several General Assemblies of this church, *Annis* 1727, 1728, and 1729: such as, 'That our Lord Jesus Christ is not necessarily existent; that the necessary existence of our Lord Jesus Christ, is a thing we know not; that the term *necessary existence* is impertinent, and not to be used in talking of the Trinity; that the three persons of the Trinity are not to be said to be *NUMERICALLY* one in *substance* or *essence*; that the terms *necessary existence, supreme deity*, and the title of the *only true God*, may be taken in a sense that includes the personal property of the Father, and so not belonging to the Son.'—All which *propositions* they did, and hereby do, *declare* to be *damnable heresies, denying the Lord that brought us*; subverting and overthrowing one of the principal foundations of our Christian faith: and to be blasphemous indignities done to the person of the eternal Son of God our Redeemer; as also unto the person of the Holy Ghost our Sanctifier and Comforter: whereby these adorable persons are robbed of their *true and supreme Deity*, and reduced unto the class and rank of dependent and inferior beings.—As also, they did, and hereby do, *declare*, That the said Mr. Simson, in regard of the atrocious and heinous nature of the fore said *errors*, deserved not only *suspension* from teaching and preaching; but to have been *deposed* from the office of the holy ministry, and *excommunicated* from all society, communion, and fellowship with the church and people of God; until he gave satisfying evidences of his repentance and sorrow for teaching and spreading the fore said dangerous errors and blasphemies.

II. A *scheme* of most pernicious and dangerous principles has been vented by Mr. Archibald Campbell, Professor of Ecclesiastical History in the University of St. Andrews; as is evident from the books he has published, and from his explications and defences in the process that has been laid against him: In which the following gross errors are defended by him.

1st, 'That the sole and universal motive to virtuous actions is self-love, interest, or pleasure *a*:—That self-love is the great cause or the first spring of all our several motions and actions, which way soever they may happen to be directed *b*:—That self-love is universally the first spring in every rational mind, that awakens her powers, begins her motions, and carries her on to action *c*:—That men may refuse to worship God, unless he presents himself favourably inclined to their interest, and studious of their happiness *d*:—That we are to settle it as our main purpose, to recommend ourselves to the love, esteem, and commendation of God, and of all mankind, by our moral virtue *e*:—That self-love, as it exerts itself in the desire of universal unlimited esteem, is the great commanding motive that determines us to the pursuit of virtue *f*:—And that, seeing God acts for his self-interest, we cannot act from any higher principle than our self-interest *g*.'

a Enquiry into the original of moral virtue, p. 463. *b* Enquiry, p. 4.
c Enquiry, p. 101. *d* Enq. p. 460. *e* Enq. p. 273. *f* Enq. p. 257, 258.
g Enq. p. 432.

All the above *Propositions* are directly contrary to the word of God: in which it is expressly asserted, that all our religious actions must proceed from a *new nature*, and from *faith* in the Lord Jesus Christ, and from a holy regard and love to God; and not from *self-love* or self-interest, as their first spring and principle, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. Acts xxvi. 18. John xv. 4, 5. Mat. xxii. 37, 39.: And that our main purpose or ultimate end ought not to be the advancement of our own self-interest, but the glorifying of God; that is, the advancement of his *declarative glory*, 2 Cor. v. 15. Rom. xiv. 7. chap. xv. 1, 2, 3. John v. 30. chap. vii. 18. 2 Tim. iii. 2,—5. In which places of scripture it is declared, that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, whose example we are to imitate, *pleased not himself*, and sought not *his own will*, nor his own glory; but *the will and glory of his Father that sent him*: and that to be lovers of our own selves; that is, to love ourselves *inordinately*, is one of the blackest of crimes. And it must needs be an *inordinate self-love*, when, according to Mr. Campbell, our self-interest or happiness is made the chief and leading motive of our love to God; since, according to this *selfish scheme*, we love God not for himself, or for his own sake, but for *ourselves*: whereby we prefer ourselves to our Maker, and love ourselves more than the adorable Creator; which may be justly reckoned the greatest impiety.

It must also be observed, that as the declarative glory of God, or the manifestation of his Being, and the glorious excellencies and perfections of his nature, is the chief end of God in all his works, [for *the Lord hath made all things for himself*, Prov. xvi. 4.;] so it is very gross and absurd in Mr. Campbell to affirm, ‘That our *self-interest* must be the great cause and first spring of all our several actions; and that our self-love is the great commanding motive, that determines us to the pursuit of virtue; and that because (as he thinks fit to express himself) the Deity is studious of the good of his creatures from self-interest*.’—Thus he wickedly argues, that we, in acting from our own self-interest, imitate God, and cannot act from a higher and more perfect principle. What is this else, but to usurp the throne of God; and to exalt ourselves, if not above him, at least unto an equality with him? It is an ambitious aspiring to that very thing, which, through the subtilty of Satan, was the inlet at the beginning, to our sinful and shameful apostasy from our Maker, Gen. iii. 5. *And ye shall be as gods*.

But the whole scope and design of divine Revelation is, to recover us from these *selfish* principles into which all mankind are plunged by the fall; and to bring us back to our primitive love, obedience, and subjection to ЖЕHOBAH. And the whole word of God proclaims unto us, That as the Lord hath done all things for himself; (that is, for the manifestation of his own infinite and glorious excellencies:) so the most noble imitation of God is, to love him *chiefly for himself*; and to yield subjection and homage unto him, *because he is God*; and that he may be *glorified in our bodies and spirits which are his*. This is the great end and design of the whole œconomy of grace; and of

* Enquiry, p. 432.

the dispensation of the divine Spirit to sinners, in effectual calling and regeneration; that they may be animated and moved from this higher and more excellent spring and principle, in all the duties of their obedience to God, and in every relative duty towards men with whom they are associate; as is evident, not only from the above, but also from the following scriptures, 1 Cor. x. 31. and vi. 20. Matth. v. 16. Rom. xi. 36. Psalm cxv. 1. Rev. iv. 8, 11. Rev. v. 13.

It is also evident from the word, that God's infinite perfection, and his glorious excellencies, are the main ground and reason of our loving, obeying, and worshipping him; and not chiefly his *benefits* to us, and his promoting our happiness. Therefore it is blasphemy to say, *That we might refuse to worship God, if it were not for the prospect of promoting our own happiness*: for, though God allows us to pursue happiness, and though the prospect of it may be a *secondary* motive to our obedience; yet the scriptures declare, that *what God is in himself*, or his own infinite perfection, is the *primary* ground and formal reason of the whole of our obedience and worship, Exod. xx. 2. Lev. xix. 12. Psalm xcvi. 4, 7,—10. Psalm xcix. 3, 5. Psalm civ. 1, 2. Psalm cxlviii. throughout. Rom. i. 21. Rev. iv. 8, 11. Rev. vii. 10, 11. Jer. x. 6, 7, 10.

It must likewise be observed, that in our best and most virtuous actions, we can never recommend ourselves to the love, favour, and esteem of God; as Mr. Campbell affirms: in regard his love and favour to any of his creatures, and much more to sinful men, is *absolutely free*. As they cannot merit his favour; so there is no motive *without himself*, to move him to love them.—Hos. xiv. 4. *I will love them freely*. Deut. vii. 7, 8. *He hath loved you, because he loved you*. Rom. ix. 13. *Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated*. Compared with, ver. 11. *The children not being yet born, neither having done any good or evil; that the purpose of God, according to the election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth*. And whatever we do, we must still reckon ourselves *unprofitable servants*.

The above propositions, are likewise contrary to our Confession of Faith and Catechisms; Con. chap. vi. §. 7. wherein it is asserted from the word of God, 'That works done by unregenerate men, although for the matter of them, they may be things which God commands, and of good use both to themselves and others; yet, because they proceed not from an heart purified by faith, nor are done to a right end, the glory of God, they are therefore sinful, and cannot please God, or make a man meet to receive grace from God.' And to Larg. Cat. Quest. 190, 196. and Less. Cat. Quest. 101, 107. and Larg. and Less. Cat. Quest. 1st; wherein it is said, 'That man's chief and highest end is to serve God, and fully to enjoy him for ever:' And to Less. Cat. Quest. 47. where, the 'not worshipping and glorifying the true God, *as God*,' is the *great sin forbidden* in the first commandment: and to Larg. Cat. Quest. 105. where, 'Self-love, self-seeking, and all other inordinate and immoderate setting of our mind, will, or affection, upon other

' things, and taking them off from God, in whole or in part,' are affirmed, from the scriptures there cited, to be among the sins forbidden in the first commandment.

Mr. Campbell also affirms, ' That self-interest or pleasure is the only standard by which we can judge of the virtue, [*i. e.* the value or goodness.] of any action whatsoever *a* :—That *virtue* and *utility* are two words signifying the same thing *b* :—That the intrinsic goodness or rectitude of moral virtue, lies directly in the fitness of it to the self-love and happiness of mankind ; and that actions are virtuous only as they promote self-interest *c* :—And that moral goodness, as well as natural, lies in advantage and pleasure *d* :—And that we like and approve all the moral qualities that are called virtuous, for no other reason, but for their being good to us ; *i. e.* for the pleasure they give us, or for their gratifying our self-love *e* :—And that the goodness of any action, from which it is denominated moral virtue, immediately lies in the conformity it has to our self-love ; while it concurs and co-operates with this principle in approving our being happy, and to secure and promote our well-being *f*.'

These Propositions do directly contradict the holy Scriptures ; in which it is expressly declared, That the *law of God is the adequate and only standard by which the goodness of actions is to be tried, and not our own self-interest and pleasure.* Isa. viii. 20. 2 Pet. i. 19. Psal. cxix. 9. Deut. iv. 2. Rev. xxii. 18. Psal. cxix. 4, 5. Prov. xxx. 6. Exod. xx. 2,—17. Deut. v. 29. Luke i. 6. Gal. iii. 10. 1 Sam. xv. 22. John xiv. 15, 21. chap. xv. 14. 1 John iii. 4.—And, in regard the holiness of God is manifested in his law, and his sovereign authority is interposed therein ; the *goodness* of our actions doth immediately lie in their *conformity to the holy law of God*, and in their being done by *faith* in Christ, and from a respect to the *authority* of God the Lawgiver. And there is nothing more contradictory to the whole word of God, than to assert, that the *goodness* of our love to God, and his Son Jesus Christ, or of any act of obedience and devotion, lies directly in its fitness to promote our personal interest, Psal. xlvii. 8. Heb. x. 7. Rom. ii. 12, 13, 14. Heb. x. 38. chap. xi. 6. Gal. ii. 20. John xv. 4, 5.—And the above Propositions do likewise contradict our Confession of Faith and Catechisms ; Confess. chap. i. §. 2. chap. xvi. §. 4, 2. Larg. Cat. Quest. 3. Less. Cat. Quest. 2. where it is asserted, ' That the scriptures are given by the inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life ; and that they are the *only rule* of faith and obedience.'

Mr. Campbell also asserts, ' That virtue depends not on the arbitrary will of any being, but flows from the essential properties and nature of things *g* ; and that God's interests are not in all respects independent on us : That our happiness is advantageous to God's nature ; and that self-love determines God to be studious of our good ; and that God cannot but reward the virtuous from self-love *h*.'

a Enquiry, p. 389. *b* p. 453. *c* p. 202, 389. *d* p. 354, 355.
e p. 357, 358. *f* p. 319, 320. *g* p. 137. *h* p. 429, 430, 432.

These Propositions are contrary to the holy Scriptures; in which it is asserted, That *God himself*, in the wise purpose and counsel of his own will, *laid down the whole plan of the nature and relation of things*, which he freely brings forth in his works of creation, providence, and redemption. And though the precepts of the moral law are eternal and immutable; in regard the holiness and perfection of God's nature is such, that it cannot be his will that his creatures should do otherwise: yet the Scriptures also assert, That *God is our Lawgiver*, and affirm his absolute sovereignty and authority over us; and consequently, that nothing can be a law to us but by *his enacting*; and that what he enacts must be a law to us, whether it be a moral precept, or a thing in its own nature indifferent: As is evident from the *positive precept* given to Adam at his creation, and from other *positive* commands, both under the old and new Testaments; which, although they were all wise and good, yet who can say that God was necessarily obliged, by his own nature, to enact them, and that he could not possibly have done otherwise? It is therefore grossly erroneous to set up the *nature and relation of things* as a law above God himself, and to maintain that moral good and evil flows from the essential properties and nature of things, and not from the *holiness of God's nature* altogether, together with his sovereign authority and will manifested in his law; as is evident from the following scriptures, Eph. i. 5, 11. Rom. ix. 15,—24. Rev. iv. 11.—The above Propositions are also contrary to the doctrine held forth from the word of God, Confess. ch. viii. §. 1. chap. xix. §. 5. Larg. Cat. Quest. 12.

From the word of God and our Confession of Faith we are also taught, that *creatures can merit no good from God*: and that he is not obliged to reward their services; and that all the rewards he has promised to any of them are free and unmerited; and that they can have no fruition of God as their blessedness and reward, but by some *voluntary condescension* on his part, which he has been pleased to express by way of *covenant*: As also, that he, whose name is JEHOVAH, hath all life, glory, blessedness, and goodness, *in and of himself*; and stands not in need of any of his creatures, nor derives any glory from them. Therefore it is grossly erroneous in Mr. Campbell to affirm as above, 'That God cannot but reward the virtuous from self-love.' Yea, it is blasphemy in him to affirm, 'That our happiness is advantageous to God's nature; and that God's interests are not altogether independent on us.' Luke xvii. 10. and xiii. 32. Eph. ii. 5, 8. Rom. vi. 23. Job xxii. 2, 3. and xxxv. 7, 8. Acts xvii. 24, 25. Confess. ch. ii. §. 1, 2. ch. vii. §. 1. Larg. Cat. Quest. 7. 30. and from Quest. 67. to 75. inclusive.

THE General Assembly 1736, having had Mr. Campbell's writings under their consideration, in which he has vented the above Propositions, it is to be observed with regret, 'That they find, with respect to the third article concerning self-love, he had declared he meant no more, but that *our delight* in the glory and honour

of God is the chief motive of all virtuous and religious actions : and are of opinion, that the examining and stating of the matter, as has been done by the Committee for purity of doctrine, is sufficient for cautioning against the errors, that some at first supposed Mr. Campbell was guilty of; and do appoint, that the matter rest here.' From all which, compared with the report of the Committee, taken into the preamble of the act, it is very manifest, that the Assembly have adopted this proposition of Mr. Campbell's, as in their opinion sound and orthodox, viz. *That our delight in the glory and honour of God is the chief motive of all virtuous and religious actions.* And that they have taken it up in the same sense and meaning of the terms, in which Mr. Campbell, who delivered it, appears to have understood it, from his explications then under consideration, is as certain, as it is plain from the act itself, that the design of the Assembly and Committee, (in hearing and considering this declaration of Mr. Campbell's, and the other explications he offered,) was, *To do something that was sufficient for cautioning against the errors, that some at first supposed he was guilty of.*

But the above proposition, considered in a relation to his scheme of principles, and his explications then under consideration, is manifestly gross and erroneous; and is very agreeable to the scheme of selfish love he has laid down in his *Enquiry*: as appears from his further explications and his remarks on the report of the Committee; which, together with this short declaration of his sentiments, were laid before the Assembly, as his defences in the charge laid against him. He concludes his defences upon this head in his further *Explications* †, as follows; 'I hope the reverend Committee will judge, that my opinion about the supreme motive, is in no degree an exclusion of the glory of God from being our chief end; and that true philosophy justifies my professing, as I have done in my (first) explications, that the glory of God, or God in his glorious perfections and excellencies, is our chief and our ultimate end; and our prevailing desire after happiness in this glory of God, or in God an infinite good, the great fountain of all life and of all perfection, is the supreme motive that excites us, and that animates our vigorous endeavours, to attain to him.' And in his *Remarks on the Committee's report*, page 47. he asserts, 'That the Agent's self-love, or a man's own happiness, is the motive whereby he is excited to the pursuit of such sort of (good or virtuous) actions.'

The matter stands briefly thus:—The Assembly have assented Mr. Campbell from the charge of error that some at first supposed he was guilty of; in respect, that, as to the 3d article concerning *self-love*, he had declared he meant no more, but that *our delight in the glory and honour of God, was the chief motive of all virtuous and religious actions.* But, if the terms of this proposition are considered, and compared with his defences as above, it will be manifest, that by the honour and glory of God, Mr. Campbell does not understand the declarative glory of God; but God in his glorious excel-

† Further Expl. p. 78, 79.

lencies and perfections; or God an infinite good: and, by our delight in the glory and honour of God, he understands our prevailing desire after happiness in this glory of God, or in God an infinite good. And, when he affirms, that our delight in the honour and glory of God, is the chief motive to all virtuous actions, he understands, that the Agent's self-love, or a man's own happiness in this glory of God, or in God an infinite good, is the chief motive whereby he is excited to the pursuit of religious and virtuous actions; which is the same thing with the error that some at first supposed he was guilty of, viz. That self-love is the chief motive to all such actions.

This might be further illustrate from what he says, page 70. and 78. of his *Further Explications*; and p. 46. and 48. of his *Remarks*. But the case is so plain of itself, and from what has been observed, that nothing is necessary to be added; except to lament, that God has left this church so far as to adopt this error: and that he so far deserted some worthy men, as not to notice it, and testify against it, in a way of *protestation* for the honour of truth. It shall only be further observed on this head, that no other meaning can be imposed on the proposition contained in Mr. Campbell's declaration, than what is above-represented; because, as he has not as yet renounced one proposition in all his writings, but defends every one of them, so it is manifest that he pleads, that, in eyeing God as our last end, we must consider him, *merely as our chief good*, or the being who can fully satisfy our self-love, and gratify all our desires and appetites. And he makes God's benefits to us, or his promoting our happiness, the only ground and reason of our loving and worshipping him. And he plainly asserts, That 'seeing God acts for his self-interest, we cannot act from a higher principle than our self-interest.' Yea, he confidently affirms, 'That his expressions on this subject do not go higher than his sentiments; and that his sentiments do not go beyond the nature of things *.'

A like injury has been done to truth by the Committee's judging, 'That the expressions objected against, are only *too high* on the side of self-love, which amounts to no more than that he had expressed the truth in equivocal and suspicious terms; particularly, his asserting self-love to be the sole principle, standard, and motive of all religious actions.' And the Assembly's being of the opinion, 'That the Committee's thus stating the matter, is a sufficient caution against error.' has thereby reduced his sentiments (concerning self-love's being the sole principle, standard, and motive of all virtuous and religious actions,) to nothing else, but to *too high expressions on the side of self-love*. And error being in the nature of the thing, a *false proposition*, or expression; and an *high expression*, in common language, being nothing else but a *truth set in a strong light*; hereby the important truths of God, that relate to the principle, standard, and motive of our actions, are left wounded and bleeding in our streets.

2dly, Mr. Campbell, in his *discourse*, proving that the *Apostle* were

* See *Enquiry*, p. 429, 101, 102, 493, 389, 412. *Rep.* p. 58.

no Enthusiasts, has done manifest indignity to the work of the holy Spirit upon the souls of men in their regeneration and conversion; in regard he affirms, 'That many in the world look upon these manifestations, which they think they have of the nature and excellencies of God, as supernaturally communicated to their minds; and take these inward ravishments they feel upon such pretended revelations, to be all divine joys poured in upon them by the immediate hand of God himself: and, that it is evident, beyond all reasonable dispute, that all such events may possibly have come about in a natural course and series of things,' (he makes no exception of any, but such as are of the miraculous and extraordinary kind,) 'without any more immediate interposing of the divinity, than there is when a man opens his eyes and beholds the sun in its glory at noon-day *.' He affirms, 'That an extravagant conceit of being peculiarly blest with such supernatural communications from heaven, makes up the very life and soul of Enthusiasm †.' He describes the Enthusiast to be one, 'who, in the course of his devotion, keeps not within the compass of reason ‡.' Whereby he makes *human reason*, in its present situation, our *only guide* in our devotion. He also represents the Enthusiast to be one, 'who, in the course of his devotion, without attending to the dictates of reason, imagines himself to be under the immediate influences of heaven; and therefore concludes, that these things which run strongly in his mind, are immediately impressed upon him by the divine Spirit §.' And, in a ludicrous manner, represents it as a part of the character of the Enthusiasts, 'That they consult the throne of grace, lay their matters before the Lord, and implore his light and direction.' These and the like, says he, 'are terms of art much used by them §.'

But the holy scriptures expressly assert, the *absolute necessity* of a *supernatural work* of the *holy Spirit*, for the *renovation of our natures*; and for manifesting unto us, in a *saving manner*, the glorious excellencies of God in the person of Jesus Christ. This work of the Spirit is common to all that are effectually called: and they are every one peculiarly blessed with it. 2 Cor. iv. 6. and v. 17. Eph. i. 17, 18, 19. Psal. cxix. 18. 2 Cor. iii. 5. 1 Cor. ii. 14. Ezek. xxxvi. 26. Rom. viii. 7. Acts xxvi. 18. Eph. iv. 18. Luke vi. 43.—Also the *will of God* revealed in his word, and not our own *depraved reason*, is that rule, within the compass of which we are to keep in our devotion: Heb. xi. 1, 6. Isa. viii. 20. 2 Pet. i. 19. 1 Sam. xv. 21, 22, 23. Rom. xii. 2.—Likewise the scriptures affirm, That an *actual influence of the holy Spirit*, is necessary to enable us to walk with God, in all the duties of *holy obedience*; and to impress the truths of God upon our minds: Rom. viii. 9, 14, 26, 27. Phil. ii. 13. 2 Cor. iii. 5. John xvi. 7, 8, 9, 14. John xv. 5.—And that it is our duty, *Not to lean to our own understanding*, or reason; but to consult the throne of grace, and to lay all our matters before the Lord, and implore his light and direction: Prov. iii. 5, 6. James i. 5. Psalm xxxvii. 23. Heb. iv. 14, 15, 16.

* Disc. p. 26. † P. 10, 11. ‡ P. 2. § P. 4. § Ibid.

And in every thing, by prayer and supplication we ought to make our requests known unto God, Phil. iv. 6.

It is also the received doctrine laid down in our Confession of Faith and Catechisms, That a 'supernatural work of the holy Spirit, is absolutely necessary for enlightening our minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God,' Conf. 10. § 1. Larg. Cat. Quest. 67. And though 'nothing is at any time to be added to the scriptures, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men; yet the inward illumination of the Spirit of God is necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the word.' Conf. chap. i. §. 6. Also, it is the doctrine of our Confession, agreeable to the word of God, 'That the light of nature is not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and of his will, which is necessary unto salvation; which maketh the word of God most necessary, being given by inspiration of God, to be the only rule of faith and life.' And therefore, our corrupt and depraved reason, is not the rule and standard of our devotion; Conf. chap. i. §. 1, 2. chap. xvi. §. 1. Larg. Cat. Quest. 3. Less. Cat. Quest. 2. And that 'good works only are such as God hath commanded in his holy word;' and which proceed from a heart purified by faith, and 'are done in a right manner, according to the word; and to a right end, the glory of God;' and 'that our works (or duties of obedience,) as they are good, proceed from the holy Spirit;' that 'our ability to do them is not at all of ourselves, but wholly from the Spirit of Christ; and that' we 'may be enabled thereunto, besides the graces that we have already received, there is required an actual influence of the same holy Spirit, to work in us to will and to do of his good pleasure; and yet we are not hereupon to grow negligent, but to be diligent in stirring up the grace of God that is in us;' Conf. chap. xvi. §. 3, 5, 7. chap. xix. §. 7. chap. xxi. §. 3, 4.

The General Assembly having had Mr. Campbell's writings under their consideration, it is to be lamented, that they have *entirely overlooked* the above, and such other gross propositions in his *Book concerning Enthusiasm*; whereby the supernatural work of the Spirit of God upon the souls of men is reproached, and the serious exercise of godliness is ridiculed.

3dly, Mr. Campbell in his writings has likewise asserted, 'That men, without Revelation, cannot by their natural powers find out that there is a God*.' Which *proposition* directly contradicts the holy scriptures; in which we are taught, That *the invisible things of God, even his eternal power and Godhead, are understood and clearly seen from the things that God hath made*; and that these who are *without law, [i. e. revelation,] have the work of the law written in their hearts, and do by nature the things contained in the law, their consciences bearing witness, and their thoughts accusing or excusing one another*: Which could not be, without some knowledge and persuasion of the *being of a God*, of which they had *natural convictions*

* *Oratio*, p. 26, 27, 31,—34. *Inquiry*, Pref. p. 28, 29.

and impressions, as is plain from the words of the apostle just now mentioned.—It is likewise evident from the scriptures, that God by his works had so clearly manifested his being and existence, his wisdom, power, and goodness; that the idolatry of the heathen was thereby rendered a *sin against the light of nature*: and they were without excuse, because they did not so improve that light, which they had a natural power and ability to do, as to obtain more knowledge and veneration of their Creator, and the author of their being, according to the following scriptures; Rom. i. 19, 20, 32. chap. ii. 1, 2, 14, 15. Psal. xix. i. 2, 3. Acts xvii. 24,—27.

The above *proposition* likewise overthrows the doctrine laid down in our *Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms*, which is as follows: ‘The very light of nature in man, and the works of God, declare plainly that there is a God; but his word and Spirit only do sufficiently and effectually reveal him unto men for their salvation: That the light of nature sheweth that there is a God, who hath lordship and sovereignty over all, is good, and doth good unto all; and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the might; and, that the light of nature, the works of creation and providence, do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave man inexcusable.’ Confess. chap. xxi. §. 1. chap. i. §. 1. Larg. Cat. Quest. 2.

And seeing the *Committee for purity of doctrine* were of opinion, and that upon good ground, ‘That this proposition is justly exceptionable; as tending to darken and render doubtful the truth of natural religion, and as appearing not to agree with the doctrine of the apostle Paul, nor with the doctrine of our *Confession of Faith*:’ There appears no manner of reason for the *Assembly’s dismissing it*, as it were only a *doubtful expression*, or proposition, which may be construed in an erroneous sense, however sound it may be in itself, or however well intended. By which conduct of the Assembly, the *cause of truth* hath suffered exceedingly; in regard that, by the above proposition, the *first principles of natural religion* are attacked and subverted.

4thly, Further, Mr. Campbell in his writings has asserted, ‘That the laws of nature in themselves are a certain and sufficient rule to direct rational minds to happiness; and that our observance of these laws is the great mean and instrument of our real and lasting felicity*.’ Which propositions do evidently contradict the holy scriptures, in which we are taught, ‘That the word of God is the only rule of faith and obedience; and that men cannot be accepted in God’s sight, nor be entitled to future and lasting felicity, by framing their lives according to the law of nature.’ And though holiness be absolutely necessary to make us meet for communion with God, both in grace here, and in glory hereafter; yet the *righteousness of Christ*, or his obedience and satisfaction, imputed to us, and received and rested upon by faith of the operation of God, is the *great mean*, of our blessedness and happiness, begun in time, and consummate in

* Disc. Pref. p. 5, 6.

heaven; Gal. iii. 21, 22. and vi. 16. Rom. viii. 3. and iii. 20, 21. Isa. xlii. 6. Rom. x. 6, 9. Gal. iii. 11. Acts iv. 12. John xiv. 6. Eph. ii. 12. John xvii. 3. and iv. 22. 1 Cor. xvi. 22. Gal. i. 6, 7, 8. John iii. 36. Acts x. 43. and xvi. 31. Rom. iii. 22, 23,—28. and v. 6, 7, 8. 2 Cor. v. 19, 21. Eph. i. 7. Phil. iii. 7, 8, 9.

And the above propositions manifestly subvert the doctrine laid down in our *Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms*, viz. ‘That man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by the covenant of works, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace: That men not professing the Christian religion, cannot be saved in any other way whatsoever, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature: And that those whom God effectually calleth, he freely justifieth; not for any thing wrought in them, or done by them, but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith; which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God,’ *Confess. chap. vii. §. 3. ch. x. §. 4. ch. xi. §. 1. Larg. Cat. Quest. 60, 73.*

A very considerable injury has been done to the truths of God, by the Committee’s making the above Propositions no other but *unguarded expressions*; and by the Assembly’s giving it as their opinion, ‘That the Committee had so stated the matter, as is sufficient for cautioning against the errors that some at first supposed Mr. Campbell was guilty of;’ and their *dismissing* the said propositions which were under their consideration, as is done in the close of their act, as if they were only *doubtful expressions*, or propositions, which may be construed in an erroneous sense, however sound they may be in themselves, or however well intended: And this, notwithstanding it is most manifest from the expressions themselves, and connection of purposes in the *Preface* to his *Discourse*, (in which he delivers these Propositions,) and from the relation they stand in to the principles of the *Deists*, which he there proposes to refute; that he must be understood to speak of mankind in their *present situation*: and that he there, and in the very next page to that, in which he lays down the above-mentioned propositions, expressly pleads for the necessity or *fitness* of revelation, *only* to give a sufficient information of the laws of nature in their full compass and latitude; and of all things necessary to work upon the passions of men, to engage them to pursue and observe them: And that in his Enquiry, p. 221. he asserts, ‘That the sentiments of all fair and honest enquirers do certainly agree in all important points of religion that are of common concern; to which the common parent of mankind has proportioned the common understanding of human nature:’ And that he has not yet confessed one blunder or impertinence, in the way he has taken of managing the arguments against the *Deists*, or the concessions he has made them; or retracted any one of his propositions or expressions, but defends them all most keenly: And that any declarations he has made, from which the Assembly and Committee would infer, that it is not his meaning that a supernatural Revelation of a Saviour, and faith in him, are superfluous, and not necessary to the happiness

of fallen man (as to which Hereticks have been abundantly liberal, and with the greatest cunning and artifice, on occasion of warping in their own errors, or screening themselves from danger) must necessarily be understood in an agreeableness to, and consistency with, all these other unsound propositions, to which he tenaciously adheres. From all which it is very manifest, that these propositions, as they are laid in his writings, and were under the Assembly's consideration, are most dangerous, unsound, and erroneous: and that the Assembly, by their conduct in this matter, have given a deep wound to the cause of truth, which cannot enough be regreted and lamented.

5thly, Further, Mr. Campbell in his writings has asserted, 'That the apostles do not seem to have had any notion of our Saviour's divinity, at the time of his crucifixion: and that they did not apprehend him under that character, in which he is represented to us by the apostle John, in the first chapter of his gospel, and by Paul in his epistles, before they began their public ministry a.' That the apostles, being 'violently prepossessed in favour of a worldly kingdom,' looked upon the carrying it on as the only end of the Messiah's coming to the world: and 'expected this, and this only from him b.' And that the apostles, in the interval betwixt Christ's death and resurrection, 'were greatly offended at him in their hearts; as being, in their opinion, a downright cheat and deceiver, who had once flattered them with mighty hopes, but now had left them under all the agonies of shame and disappointment: and, that they all looked upon him as an impostor c.'

All the above propositions do directly contradict the holy scriptures; in which it is expressly affirmed, That the disciples and followers of Christ beheld him in the glory of his divine person; *They beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth;* and that even while he dwelt among them, in the days of his humiliation: That they looked upon him to be the Messiah, the Son of the living God; a discovery which *flesh and blood* (that is, human reason) had not made to them, but the *Father*: That they expected heaven and eternal life from him: That *religious worship was claimed by him, and paid to him, while he tabernacled among them*: That all the disciples declared their faith of his *omniscience*: And that *one of them, in presence of all the rest, before they entred on their public ministry, professed his faith in him as his Lord and his God.* 'And therefore it is most false and grossly erroneous to say, 'That the apostles had no notion of our Lord's divinity, before they began their public ministry; and that they expected nothing from him but a temporal deliverance; John i. 14. Mat. xvi. 16, 17. John vi. 68, 69. and xiv. 1. Mat. ii. 2, 11. John ix. 35,—38. xvi. 30. xxi. 17. and xx. 28.—And the scriptures likewise assert, that our Lord Jesus Christ had *manifested his Father's name* to his disciples; that is, all the purposes of his grace, as centring in himself the Mediator: That they had *received his words, and knew*

a Disc. p. 31, 53.

b Disc. p. 33, 53. and Preface, p. 22.

c Preface to Disc. p. 21, 23.

thereby that he came out from the Father; and believed that the Father had sent him, John xvii.: and that they considered their Lord as the Messiah of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, John i. 41, 45: and that they looked upon him, in the very interval betwixt his death and resurrection, to be a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, Luke xxiv. 19. And also, that the faith of none of them, no not of Peter, did fail, Luke xxii. 32. And therefore it is most grossly false and erroneous to say, that the apostles, in the interval betwixt Christ's death and resurrection, looked upon their Lord and Master as a downright cheat and impostor.

The above *propositions* are likewise contrary to the doctrine laid down in our *Confession of Faith and Catechisms*, viz. 'That the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are the One only, living, true, and eternal God; the same in substance, equal in power and glory;' Confess. chap. ii. §. 1, 3. *Larg. Cat. Quest. 9.* 'That Christ the Mediator is very God, and very Man, of one substance, and equal with the Father; and that the benefits of his redemption were communicated unto the elect, in all ages from the beginning of the world, in and by these promises, types, and sacrifices, wherein he was revealed,' Confess. chap. viii. §. 2, 6. 'That these whom God hath effectually called, can never totally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end,' Confess. chap. xvii. §. 1. And that, though the Catholic church hath been sometimes more, sometimes less visible; yet there shall be always a church on earth to worship God according to his will,' Confess. chap. xxiv. §. 4, 5.

The cause of truth hath suffered exceedingly, and received a deep wound from the Assembly's giving it as their opinion, 'That the above *sentiments*, vented by Mr. Campbell, contain only his conjectural opinion concerning the inward sentiments of other men; and that our Confession and Catechisms teach nothing concerning these matters.' As also, that his design was 'to give the greater strength to his argument for vindicating the apostles from Enthusiasm.' And their *dismissing* these gross and erroneous Propositions as *doubtful expressions only*, which may be construed in an erroneous sense; however sound they may be in themselves, and however well intended.

This their conduct cannot be enough lamented, if it is considered, that the above propositions are hereby purged of all manner of falsehood or unsoundness in themselves; seeing what is false in itself can give no strength to an argument: nor can it be the least excuse for a man's venting unsound propositions, that he designed by them to give strength to his argument. That these propositions *contradict* the *holy Scriptures*, has been shown in the above passages that have been cited; and this is enough to determine them to be *unsound* and erroneous. But, if the *strain* and general design of the scriptures is considered, they may be said to *contradict* the *whole word of God*, as well as every chapter of our *Confession of faith*: for it is a thing most certain, that if the apostles of Christ, (who constantly attended his ministry, of whom the greatest things are said of all others, as to

their proficiency by their instruction, John xvii. 6, 7, 9.; and to whom he expounded all things privately, that he spoke openly in parables :) If these, however, had no notion of his divinity, and expected nothing but a temporal deliverance from him; and, in the interval betwixt his death and resurrection, looked upon him as a cheat and impostor; no better opinion can be justly maintained of any then living.—And it may be given up to Mr. Campbell, *That one may be a true believer*, (for such were all his disciples, except Judas) *who doth not yet believe the divinity of the Son of God*; and consequently, that the church may be constitute of a company of infidels under a Christian name; which is very agreeable to the Socinian and Deistical Schemes.—It may be likewise given up to him, that one may have a true and saving faith, as the disciples certainly had, and yet fall totally away from the same into the grossest infidelity; for grosser cannot be imagined, than that all the disciples should look upon their Lord as a downright cheat and impostor:—Both which are contrary to the above passages of the Confession, and the scriptures these articles are founded upon.—And from Mr. Campbell's above principles it follows, that John i. 14. and all the other Declarations and Confessions, that the apostles, in the days of his humiliation made, concerning their faith of his true, proper, and supreme deity, are nothing to the purpose; and that no argument can be drawn for the same, from any such declarations and confessions that are recorded in the four gospels.

ALL the above-mentioned are some of the many dangerous expressions and propositions that ly scattered through Mr. Campbell's writings.—And this Presbytery, taking into their serious consideration, the dishonour that is done to God, the injury that is done to his truths, by all the foresaid Propositions; and also considering, that many may be in danger of being tainted with the same, in this day of general apostasy and defection from the truths of God: Therefore, and for all the several grounds and reasons above condescended upon, they did, and hereby do, CONDEMN all and every one of the foresaid Propositions, maintained and defended by the said Mr. Campbell, as contrary to the word of God, our Confession of Faith and Catechisms: particularly his affirming, ' That the sole and universal motive to virtuous actions is self-love, interest, or pleasure: —That self-love is the great cause, or the first spring of all our several actions and motions, which way soever they may be directed: and that it is universally the first spring in every rational mind, that awakens her powers, begins her motions, and carries her on to action: ' whereby the vitals of practical religion are attacked and undermined.—Also, his asserting, ' That self-love is the only standard, measure, and rule of all virtue and religion, and of all our several actions and motions, which way soever they may happen to be directed; and that self-interest or pleasure is the only standard by which we can judge of the virtue, [*i. e.* the value and goodness,] of any action whatsoever: That moral virtue flows from the essential properties and nature of things: That God's interests are not

‘ in all respects independent on us: That our happiness is advantageous to God’s nature; and that self-love determines God to be studious of our good; and, that he cannot but reward the virtuous from self-love.’ By all which, the authority of God, the great *Law-giver*, is disparaged; his *self-sufficiency* is blasphemously impugned; and he is made a *debtor* to his creatures, being necessarily obliged to reward their service and obedience.—Likewise his representing as *Enthusiasts*, all who pretend to have ‘ obtained supernatural manifestations of the nature and excellencies of God,’ that are not of the extraordinary and miraculous kind; and ‘ who imagine themselves in the course of their devotion, to be under the influences of heaven; and that, consulting the throne of grace, laying all our matters before the Lord, and imploring his light and direction, are terms of art much used by Enthusiasts.’ By all which, the work of the Holy Spirit on the souls of men, in effectual calling, and the spiritual exercises of all such as are exercised to godliness, are reviled, traduced, and reproached.—Also his affirming, ‘ That men cannot, by their natural powers, without the aid of revelation, find out that there is a God:’ Whereby the first principles of natural religion are wickedly attacked.—Likewise his affirming, that ‘ our observing of the laws of nature is the great mean or instrument of our real and lasting felicity; and that the laws of nature in themselves are a certain and sufficient rule to direct rational minds to happiness; however revelation be fit or necessary, to give sufficient information of the laws of nature in their full compass and latitude; and of all things necessary to work upon the passions of men, to engage them to pursue and observe them:’ Whereby the peculiar truths of the gospel, concerning the person and mediation of Christ, and the whole work of the Spirit, are wickedly subverted; and such a *sufficiency* is ascribed to *natural religion*, as gives up the cause of truth to Deists and Socinians.—And likewise his affirming, ‘ That the apostles of our Lord, before his resurrection, know not his divinity; and that they expected nothing from the Messiah but a worldly kingdom, or a temporal deliverance; and that, in the interval betwixt his death and resurrection, they looked upon him as a cheat and impostor:’ Whereby the doctrine of the *perseverance* of the saints is subtilly undermined; and the arguments drawn for the deity of the Son of God, from the declarations and confessions made by his disciples in the days of his humiliation, are wholly enervate.—And the PRESBYTERY did, and hereby do, declare, that all the above propositions, tenets, and principles, maintained and defended by Mr. Campbell, are contrary, as said is, to the word of God, and our Confession of Faith and Catechisms; and that they are gross, dangerous, and pernicious errors.

And, in regard, that the late General Assembly have neither censured the broacher and venter of the above dangerous errors, nor condemned any one of them; but have dismissed the process against him, by declaring, ‘ That the examining and stating of the matter, as was done by the Committee for purity of doctrine, is sufficient for cautioning against the errors, that some at first supposed

‘ Mr. Campbell was guilty of;’ without giving any formal judgment, or sentence upon the said Committee’s report. And, in regard, the Committee in their said report, and the Assembly in their *act and sentence*, declare, that *they are satisfied, Mr. Campbell has a sound meaning* in the several propositions they had under their consideration; and particularly, that *they are satisfied with the explication* he gave of the article concerning self-love; namely, That *he meant no more, but that our delight in the glory and honour of God, was the chief motive of all virtuous and religious actions.* And this proposition, now adopted by the Assembly, being the very same with Mr. Campbell’s above condemned principle, that *self-love is the greatest cause, or the first spring of all our several motions and actions, which way soever they are directed*: Therefore, this PRESBYTERY did, and hereby do, declare, for the grounds and reasons above condescended upon, That *the foresaid proposition, adopted by the Assembly, is a gross and dangerous error.*—And this Presbytery likewise considering, that it is the duty of the judicatories of the church to proceed in a regular course of process, and in the due exercise of discipline, against erroneous and heretical seducers, according to the rule and direction given by the apostle, *An heretick after the first and second admonition reject*: and, in regard, the Assemblies of this church have never put a *libel* into the said Mr. Campbell’s hands, in order to reclaim him from the gross and dangerous errors he has fallen into; or for rejecting and casting him out, if found *obstinately* adhering to his dangerous-principles and tenets: Therefore they did, and hereby do, declare, that the whole conduct of the last Assembly, in dismissing this affair, in manner above-narrated, is a deep wound given to truth, and a lamentable step of defection; and may be justly reckoned amongst the signs, grounds, and causes of the Lord’s indignation against this whole church and land.

III. The scripture doctrine of this, and all the reformed churches, is subtilly undermined, and wickedly subverted, in a *Print* lately published, under the title of *The Assembly’s Shorter Catechism revised, and rendered fitter for general use*: In regard, the *Reviser*, by the several omissions, alterations, and additions, he has thought fit to make in the *Assembly’s Catechism*, not only shakes the pillars of our Reformation from *Popery*; with respect to the *scriptures*, as the only rule of faith and practice, and the doctrines concerning justification, the sacrament of our Lord’s supper, and the just desert of every sin: but also boldly strikes at the whole scheme of divine revelation contained in the said Catechism; by casting the same into such a shape and mould, as is very agreeable to the *Deistical, Arian, Socinian, and Arminian* schemes. Hence the *doctrines* taught in the *Assembly’s Catechism*, concerning the holy scriptures being the only rule of faith and practice; concerning the holy Trinity, and the decrees of God; concerning the covenants of works and grace; together with original sin, and its effects upon mankind; and the evil nature and desert of all sin, as contrary to the authority and holiness of God: also the doctrines concerning the person of Christ, his two distinct

natures, and their personal union; concerning the nature, end, and design of his sufferings, as a real and proper satisfaction to the justice of God; concerning special grace, and the peculiar and supernatural energy of the holy Spirit, in the application of the purchased redemption in our conversion and effectual calling: likewise the doctrines concerning the perseverance of the saints, and the perpetual obligation of the whole moral law; (especially when the obligation to obedience is not derived by the *Reviser* from the authority of God, as He is JEHOVAH, whose perfections are infinite, and whose dominion is over all; but only from the special and peculiar benefits received from him): together with the doctrine contained in the *Catechism*, concerning the regard that Christians should pay to the first day of the week as our Christian *Sabbath*.—All these scripture-doctrines concerning the above particular heads, as they are plainly laid down in the *Catechism*, are subtly and wickedly subverted by the *Reviser*.

THIS PRESBYTERY would not have taken such particular notice of the forefaid *Catechism revised*, were it not that the scheme of doctrine delivered in it is not only adapted, but very agreeable to the corrupt and depraved state of the present age. And they cannot but observe it with regret, that revealed religion is so much despised by many, and that the holy scriptures are little regarded, and the laws of nature cried up as sufficient to direct men to true felicity and blessedness; and the supernatural operations of the Spirit, and his peculiar energy in the conversion of sinners, are burlesqued. And many who profess some regard to revealed religion, according to the *Reviser's* scheme, despise the necessity, truth, and excellency of the satisfaction of Christ; and the necessity of the imputation of his righteousness for our justification in the sight of God: together with the absolute need there is of the renovation of our natures, by supernatural grace, and of a vital union with Christ, in order to the bringing forth the fruits of holiness in heart, life, and conversation. Yea, these and the like doctrines, appear to be nauseous to not a few, whose character and profession obliges them to publish and recommend them: when, instead of the special and peculiar doctrines of the gospel, (that concern the person, offices, and mediation of Christ, salvation by the free grace of God, and the supernatural energy of his Spirit;) mens *sincere endeavours* are, according to the *Reviser's* scheme, cried up, either as concurring with the Spirit of God in regeneration and effectual calling, or as pre-existent conditions unto the application of the purchased redemption; and the holy Spirit of God is only regarded as an assistant and help unto us in these our sincere endeavours: faith, repentance, and what they call sincere obedience, are preached as the ground of our right and title to life and happiness; and, instead of enforcing duties of obedience to the law, from gospel principles and motives, a scheme of morality is taught, which has *self-interest* for its principle and leading motive, and that has little or no respect to Christ as its Author and ground of acceptance, or to the glory of God as its end.

IV. Although the above dangerous and pernicious errors have been broached, and are spreading through this church and land; yet the standard of a plain and faithful testimony has not, to this day, been lifted up against them; for the honour of Christ, and the vindication of his injured truth.—This *sinful negligence and omission* of the judicatories of this church, in a matter of such importance, (wherein the honour of God, the glory of the Redeemer, the maintenance and preservation of the purity of doctrine, and consequently not only the souls of the present, but also of the rising generation, are all so deeply interested and concerned;) may be reckoned *one of the most grievous and weighty grounds and causes of the Lord's indignation and wrath against this whole church and land.*—As for instance, when reports were spread at first concerning Mr. John Simson, his teaching and venting error; the late reverend and worthy Mr. James Webster, having taken notice of the same in the Presbytery and Synod whereof he was a member, and they refusing to give their concurrence therein, he tabled the affair before the General Assembly 1714, desiring them to take trial thereof as their proper province: but the said Assembly were so far from assisting him in this matter, that they appointed the said Mr. James Webster, or any who will join with him in charging Mr. John Simson, professor of divinity at Glasgow with error, to table their complaint before the Presbytery where he lives: allowing any person or persons, who are willing, to give Mr. Webster assistance in point of form; but declaring, that, if they engage with him in that cause, they shall be accounted libellers*.

Accordingly, Mr. Webster having libelled Mr. Simson before the Presbytery of Glasgow, and the said Mr. Simson having given in his subscribed answers and defences; wherein are contained the above-mentioned dangerous and erroneous propositions: the *process* was brought before the Assembly 1715, who appointed a Committee to take trial of the case; continuing the load and weight of the prosecution upon Mr. Webster, as the party pursuing and accusing.—In like manner, the Assembly 1716, continued the process in the same channel, till it was concluded by the Assembly 1717.: who, instead of condemning particularly the gross and dangerous errors owned by Mr. Simson, and inflicting due censure upon him; did not so much as *rebuke* him for venting the same: although they were so far convinced of the truth of the libel against him, that by their act they find, ‘ That he had vented some opinions, not necessary to be taught in divinity, and that had given more occasion to strife than to the promoting of edification; and that he had used some expressions that bear, and are used by adversaries, in an unsound sense; and that he had adopted some hypotheses, different from what are commonly used among orthodox divines, that are not evidently founded on scripture, and tend to attribute too much to natural reason and the power of corrupt nature; which undue advancement of reason and nature is always to the disparagement

* See *Index* of unprinted Acts of Assembly, 1714.

‘ of revelation and efficacious free grace : therefore, they prohibit
 ‘ and discharge the said Mr. Simson to use such expressions ; or to
 ‘ teach, preach, or otherwise vent such opinions, propositions, or
 ‘ hypotheses, as aforesaid.’

This extensive lenity, or rather sinful remissness and slackness, in not inflicting due censure upon one who had given such evident discoveries of his corrupt and erroneous principles, and whom it was unsafe to trust any more with the education of youth for the holy ministry, encouraged him to go on in venting and teaching his pernicious errors ; till at length, in a way of righteous judgment from the Lord on this sinful and lukewarm church, he is so far left of God, as to attack and impugn the *supreme Deity* of the *great God our Saviour*.—And though it was found clearly proven, by the several Assemblies, who had this process under their consideration, that he had vented and taught the above-mentioned propositions ; whereby he attempted to *divest the Son of God* of his true and supreme Deity, and thereby blasphemed that *Name which is above every name* : yet the concern of this church, for this *foundation-truth*, did rise no higher than a bare *suspension* of the *blasphemer* from teaching and preaching, and the exercise of any ecclesiastical power or function ; leaving the door open to another Assembly to relax him from the said sentence.

In like manner, during the dependence of the foresaid process, the Committee of Assembly found it clearly proven, that he had contravened the injunction of Assembly 1717, in venting the dangerous errors which they had discharged him to teach : yet the Assembly 1729, concluded the process against him, without taking any notice of these gross errors.—And though there is just ground to fear, that too many are tainted with them, whereby the purity of doctrine is in the greatest danger ; yet no regard is had to these things, but all is passed over, by our Assemblies since that time, with a profound silence : except what was done by the Assembly 1736, in their *Act concerning preaching* ; wherein several weighty and important truths are asserted, and several necessary and seasonable directions are given, both to ministers and preachers : yet the many gross and dangerous errors, vented and taught by Mr. Simson, are never particularly condemned ; neither is there any plain and faithful warning emitted against them.—Also, the foresaid Assembly, in dismissing Mr. Campbell’s affair, by an after-act, in the manner that is already observed, have so far enervate and weakened their own act about preaching, that the good effects thereof, which otherwise might have been hoped for, cannot be now expected.

The above *omission* of our *General Assemblies* concerning doctrine, must be reckoned the more culpable, in regard, they have been frequently addressed by representations and instructions from Synods and Presbyteries, (and also from ministers and elders, and people through the land) ; representing the necessity of a particular condemnation of the several dangerous errors and blasphemies vented by Mr. Simson ; and that a solemn warning might be emitted, discovering the evil and dangerous tendency of the same : yet nothing

of this kind is done. And though it be a debt which one generation owes to another, to transmit the truths of God in their purity to posterity, and to deliver off their hand, to the rising generation, these truths that are particularly assaulted and opposed, with some more peculiar and solemn testimony unto them: yet injured truth continues to ly wounded and bleeding in our streets, without justice done her by the church-representative; to whom it belongs in a special manner to publish and declare, to uphold and defend all the truths of God, delivered in his word, against open and avowed enemies, or secret underminers of the same: and therefore, the above sinful omission must needs be reckoned an injury done to truth; an injustice done to our posterity; and of a very dangerous tendency towards the hardning of such as may be tainted with the above errors, as well as opening a door for the spreading of this corrupt leaven among others.

V. Besides the above-mentioned *pernicious errors*, which like a flood have overspread this church, particularly since our deliverance from the late unnatural and wicked *rebellion*; and which were never the sin nor trial of the church of Scotland, in any of our former periods of apostasy and defection; our declinings and backslidings have increased since that time, by the several dangerous thrusts and wounds we have given with our own hands to our Presbyterian church government and discipline; whereby our ruin and destruction, if mercy prevent not, is like to proceed from ourselves: of which the following particular instances are offered.

1. No due care and caution have been taken in *licensing* young men as *probationers* for the holy ministry; nor a suitable regard had to the qualifications, required in the scriptures and acts of our General Assemblies, of such as are to be employed in preaching the gospel. Hence it is come to pass, that many have been licensed, who, by their general and loose *harangues* in the pulpit, discover their ignorance of Christ and him crucified, and their estrangement from the power of godliness; while there is as little of Christ to be found in their sermons, as in the systems of heathen morals.

2. The *corrupt* and *undue entry* of many into the holy ministry, is another of the public sins and epidemic evils of the present time. The *acceptance of presentations* has become fashionable for several years bypast; and, instead of giving a *check* to this corrupt course and practice, the judicatories of the church have so far encouraged the same, that the settlement of *presentees* has been appointed, when almost the whole parish was *dissenting* and *reclaiming*; contrary to the word of God, and the laudible acts and constitutions of this church founded thereon: yea, settlements have been appointed in a very arbitrary manner over dissenting congregations, even when there was no presentation in the case. And, when Presbyteries concerned have refused to proceed to such violent settlements, Committees have been appointed by the Commission; and invested with a presbyterial power to try and ordain men to the holy ministry. And likewise, many congregations through the land, are still groaning under the

weight of such arbitrary and violent intrusions; and neither the *intruded*, nor such as have had an active hand in the intrusion, give any evidence to this day of their repentance and sorrow for the violence they have done to the flock and heritage of God, who are thereby scattered and broken.

3. The *conduct* of the General Assemblies of the church has not been *equal and impartial* in matters of doctrine: as for instance, in the case of Mr. John Simson. The processes carried on against him, were kept several years in dependence before the judicatories: and particularly the last process, which concerned his impugning the *supreme Deity of the Son of God*, was transmitted to the several Presbyteries of this church, by the Assembly 1728; that their judgment might be reported to the ensuing Assembly, about the *censure* that was due to the said Mr. Simson, though the evidence was so clear, that the discipline of the church should have been *summarily* exercised upon him. But the General Assembly 1720, *condemned* a bundle of propositions, containing *important matters of doctrine*; when the affair had been under the consideration *only* of two different meetings of that Assembly, and a Committee of the whole house.

This very *sudden step* of the said Assembly, occasioned a *Representation* to be given in to the Assembly 1721, by several ministers of this church; bearing, that it appeared to them, that many gospel-truths were wounded by the fore said *condemnatory* act and sentence: and the Assembly 1722, saw themselves obliged to *explain* and declare their minds at length, concerning these important doctrines then upon the field, in the terms and expressions used in our Confession of Faith and Catechisms. But still a *wound* was given to truth, by the act of the fore said Assembly 1720, relating to doctrine: particularly, by their *condemning as erroneous*, the two following propositions; ‘That, as the law is the covenant of works, believers are wholly and altogether set free from it; and, that believers are set free both from the commanding and condemning power of the covenant of works.’ Though both these propositions are evident from the word of God, and expressly contained in our Confession of Faith, chap. vii. §. 19. and Larg. Cat. Quest. 91.; yet the Assembly thought fit, *summarily* to *condemn* them. As this sudden and precipitant stroke at that spiritual freedom and liberty, wherewith the Son of God has made his people free, could not but be affecting to many ministers and christians through the land, as well as to the fore said ministers: so the Assembly 1722, found themselves obliged to declare, ‘That it is a precious gospel-truth, that believers are free from the law as it is a covenant of works.’ Yet it is matter of regret, that the *credit* of acts of Assembly is so much stood upon; that the Assembly 1722, did not *repeal* that act and deed of the Assembly 1720; whereby, what they *themselves* owned to be a *precious truth*, is in express terms *condemned*.

4. Several *arbitrary acts and decisions* have been framed and passed by the General Assemblies of this church; whereby the government of the house of God has been undermined, and the discipline sinfully perverted: such as the *act of Assembly 1732*, concerning the planting

of vacant churches; which lodges the decisive power of electing ministers in a conjunct meeting of elders and heritors, no other qualification being required of the said heritors, but their being Protestants, however much disaffected to the government both in church and state.—Again, the Assembly 1733, rebuked and admonished Mr. Erskine at their *bar*, for impugning several acts of Assemblies, and proceedings of church-judicatories, in his sermon, at the opening of the Synod of Perth and Stirling; that is, for testifying against the act of Assembly 1732, and other violent proceedings of judicatories at that time. And when *he*, with other *three ministers*, PROTESTED against the said sentence, for their own just and necessary exoneration; high censures were threatened, and actually inflicted upon them, because they had not freedom to retract their protestation, and profess their sorrow for the same, as required by the said Assembly: whereby *two sinful and unwarrantable terms* of ministerial communion were imposed.—*First*, ‘That no minister of this church should testify from the pulpit against acts of Assembly and proceedings of church-judicatories, even though they were such as had a direct tendency to undermine our constitution.’—*Secondly*, ‘That no minister, or member of this church, should PROTEST for their own exoneration against acts, sentences, or decisions of the supreme judicatory, even though they should nearly affect the public cause of God, and restrain ministerial freedom and faithfulness, (as was the present case) in testifying, against the sins and defections of a backsliding church.’

Further, the said Assembly, by another *act*, discharging the ministers of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, under pain of the highest censure, to admit any of the parish of Kinross to sealing ordinances, without the permission of the present *incumbent*, who was intruded upon them, imposed *another sinful term* of ministerial communion upon the ministers of this church; whereby *they are bound up from dispensing sealing ordinances, under pain of the highest censure, to such of the Lord's people, as have not freedom to submit to the ministry of intruders*: and thereby, likewise imposed a new and unwarrantable term of *Christian communion*, when all such as cannot own intruders to be their lawful pastors, are *actually excommunicated* from sealing ordinances; which is a plain homologating of a piece of tyranny, which was exercised in the former *persecuting period*; this being one of the grounds of peoples withdrawing from *prelatick incumbents*, that they were intruded upon them without their call or consent.

5. Though the Assembly 1734, did *repeal* the act of Assembly 1732, anent the settlement of ministers; yet the said act was not condemned as *contrary* to the word of God, and the constitutions of this church, contained in her books of discipline, and acts of former Assemblies; particularly, act of Assembly at Glasgow 1638, *discharging any person to be intruded in any office of the kirk, contrary to the will of the congregation to which they are appointed*. And though some stop was put by the foresaid Assembly, to the violent measures and proceedings of some former Assemblies and their Commissions:

yet the *Act of Assembly 1733*, (*restraining ministerial freedom and faithfulness*, and *censuring* the ministers and members of this church, for *protesting* for their own exoneration against such *decisions* of the General Assembly, as are prejudicial to the cause and interest of Christ in this land,) *stands to this day unrepealed*; as also the act of the same Assembly, with reference to the Presbytery of Dunfermline, *excommunicating* both ministers and members of this church, in case they do not either concur with, or submit to the ministry of intruders. Nor is it any apology for a sinful act or decision, whereby a church is involved in the guilt of transgressing the ordinances and institutions of the Lord, that there is a *connivance* at the contrary practice.

6. All the above-mentioned steps of defection and apostasy are followed with many evident signs and causes of the *Lord's departure*: such as abounding profanity, impiety, and the vilest immoralities of all sorts, wherewith *the land is greatly polluted*: the profane diversions of the *stage*, together with *night assemblies* and *balls*, these sinful occasions of wantonness and prodigality, are encouraged and countenanced in the most considerable cities of the nation.—Likewise *an idolatrous picture* of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, was well received in some remarkable places of the land: and though Popish errors and delusions abound more and more, and the abominable idolatry of the *mass*, is openly frequented in many corners of this land; yet no proper nor effectual remedies are applied against this growing evil by either church or state.—And of late the *penal statutes* against *witches* have been repealed, contrary to the express letter of the law of God, Exod. xxii. 18. *Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.* Deut. xviii. 10, 11, 12. *There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an incanter, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these are an abomination to the Lord: And because of these abominations, the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee.*

Also, the common impressions of God are in a great measure worn off the spirits of men; the power of religion is daily decaying through the land: the very form of it is despised by many, and rested upon by others; which is occasioned by the general contempt of the gospel, and neglecting the *great salvation* brought near therein to sinners of all sorts: upon which account the Lord is provoked to withdraw, in a great measure, from his own ordinances, and to restrain the gracious influences of his holy Spirit; whereby multitudes, under the means of grace, are lying scattered *like dry bones about the grave's mouth*: a sad evidence of the departure of a spirit of prayer; and of mourning for our own sins, and the *abominations that are done in the midst of us*: especially when it is considered, that a dreadful spirit of security, deadness, and indifferency prevails among all ranks of persons; notwithstanding of the many evident symptoms of the Lord's anger and displeasure gone forth against us.—Our *nobility* and *barons*, who have sometimes appeared with an

heroic zeal and resolution for maintaining and advancing a work of reformation, have generally *burst the Lord's bonds asunder*, and *have cast his cords from them*; inasmuch, that the very form of family-worship is either despised or neglected by the most part of them.—Our *Burghesses* and *Commons*, who have made a zealous profession of the truths of the gospel, for the most part *know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgments of their God*.—The *Ministers* in the house of God, who have sometimes set the *trumpet* to their mouth, and *shown to the house of Jacob their sin* and their transgression, are under a more than ordinary restraint of the Spirit of God; and he that speaks against the evils of this degenerate day, *makes himself a prey*.—Every one of us in many, if not in all the above particular instances, are some way or other deeply involved in the provocation: the sun is gone down upon us; *We do not behold our signs*; and *there is not a prophet, nor any that know the time how long*.

It may be mentioned with regret, that, in the two several acts for *national fasting*, appointed by the late Commissions, there is no particular searching into the grounds and causes of the Lord's indignation and controversy against this church and land, in former and present times: There is no mention made of the ruining acts and constitutions above-named; nor of the sinful silence of judicatories, in omitting a faithful testimony against the growing and spreading errors of the times; nor of the injuries done to the heritage and flock of God, by the violent intrusions that have been made upon them, which have raised a cry of violence and oppression from all corners of the land. A cry is gone up to heaven, even to his ears who hath said, *For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise: I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him*. When the sins of the *present times* are not particularly mourned over, it cannot be expected that there will be any faithful inquiry into, or acknowledgment of, the defections and backslidings of *former periods*; for which we have just ground to apprehend, that the Lord may pursue a quarrel and controversy against *sinful, gospel-despising, and covenant-breaking Scotland*: Yea, instead of acknowledging the sins and defections of the present times, these who have had an active hand in them, continue to justify their abominations; and, by the whole of their conduct and behaviour, declare, that they only want an opportunity to re-act the same scene of oppression and tyranny, and to complete what they had begun, and in a great measure carried on, even the ruin of any remains of a covenanted reformation among us: Yea, such of the ministry as are weighted and grieved with the above and the like backslidings and declinings, have not courage and resolution to appear in the present judicatories, which the providences and circumstances of the day and time call for.

Hence, notwithstanding the stop that was put to former violent proceedings by the Assembly 1734; yet, instead of carrying on reformation, a visible fainting and declining seems to take place in the present judicatories of the church; of which many instances might be given: such as their proceeding no further than the sentence of

the *lesser excommunication* against one Mr. Nimmo, student in divinity, who, (in March 1735, in a public discourse in the Divinity-hall of Edinburgh,) made an insolent and blasphemous attack upon the whole of divine revelation; when no less censure than that of the *higher excommunication*, summarily pronounced, could have been justly reckoned a sufficient testimony against such bold and daring wickedness, which, in all its circumstances, had never its parallel in this land.—Likewise the Assembly that met foresaid year, appointed a call to be moderate for the Presentee to the parish of Carridden, exclusive of any other. And the Synod of Perth and Stirling, upon the remit of the affair made by the same Assembly unto them, concerning the *inrolment* of the *intruder* into the parish of Muckhart; instead of censuring him for his scandalous intrusion, have taken him into their bosom, and given him the right-hand of fellowship, *by inrolling him as one of their number*; though he was never inrolled by the Presbytery, who have the more immediate inspection of that parish; and, though they reclaimed against the inrolment, and several of them dissented from that deed of the Synod.

And though the Assembly 1736, in their 14th Act declare, ‘That it is, and has been since the Reformation, the principle of this church; that no minister shall be intruded into any parish, contrary to the will of the congregation:’ Yet, in contradiction thereunto, they themselves appointed the Presbytery of Stirling to proceed to the settlement of a Presentee to the parish of Denny, though the whole elders and the body of the people are dissenting and reclaiming.—And likewise they appointed the Synod and Presbytery of Dumfries to *inroll* the intruder into the parish of Traquair, ‘as a member of the respective judicatories, to support him in his ministry, and to endeavour to bring the people of that parish to submit to it.’—These are sad evidences, that, instead of being duly affected with our backsliding and defection, *we sigh and go backward; yea, we refuse to return.*

The above-mentioned particulars, are some instances of the gradual *declinings* and *backslidings* of this church and land, (besides the *doctrinal errors* already condemned,) most of which have taken place betwixt the late *unnatural rebellion* and this present time; and which this Presbytery judge it their duty to testify against: *Therefore, and for all the reasons and grounds above particularly condescended upon, they did, and hereby do, CONDEMN, as contrary to the word of God, and the covenanted principles of this church, all and every one of the steps of defection above-narrated; and they did, and hereby do, declare, that they are amongst the causes and grounds of the Lord’s righteous quarrel and controversy with this whole church and land, for which all ranks of persons have reason to humble themselves before a righteous and holy God.*

BUT, in regard, it is necessary for the maintenance and vindication of truth, not only to *condemn* the particular steps of declining and backsliding which a church and land have been guilty of; but also to *prohibit*, declare, and *assert* the truths which are controverted, op-

posed, or assaulted, whether they concern the doctrine, worship, government, or discipline of the house of God; and particularly, considering the bold attempts that have been made upon the whole doctrine of this church, contained in the holy scriptures and her Confession of Faith founded thereupon, by the forefaid Mr. Simson and Mr. Campbell; and by the forefaid *Print*, intituled, *The Assembly's Catechism revised*: therefore, the ministers associate in Presbytery, do judge it a duty necessarily incumbent on them, in the situation wherein adorable providence has placed them as a *judicatory*, and as now met in Presbytery, and constitute in the name and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, the alone head of his church; *judicially* to acknowledge, declare, and assert the doctrine, worship, government, and discipline of this church, in opposition to the several steps of defection and deviation therefrom.

I. Likeas, the Presbytery *did*, and *hereby do*, acknowledge, declare, and assert, That the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence, without the aid of tradition or revelation, shew that there is God; who hath lordship and sovereignty over all:—As also, that thereby his wisdom, power, and goodness are so far manifested, that all men are left inexcusable; according to the doctrine held forth from the word of God in our Confession of Faith, chap. i. §. 1. chap. xxi. §. 1.—And they hereby *reject* and *condemn* all contrary principles and tenets, that are maintained by Mr. Campbell, the Socinians, and others.

II. In like manner, they acknowledge, declare, and assert, That the word of God, contained in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, is not only a *sufficient* rule, or the *principal* rule; but that it is the *only* rule to direct us, how we ought to glorify God, and enjoy him: and that, ‘The authority of the holy scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God, (who is truth itself,) the Author thereof; and therefore it is to be received, because it is the word of God:’ and that, ‘The supreme Judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the holy Spirit speaking in the scripture;’ according to Confession, chap. i. §. 4, 10.; and the answer to the third question in the *Larger*, and the second question in the *Shorter Catechism*; with the scriptures cited.—And they hereby *reject* and *condemn* all Deistical, Socinian, and Popish errors, contrary to, or inconsistent herewith.

III. Likewise, they hereby acknowledge, declare, and assert, That the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, by ineffable, incomprehensible, and necessary generation, is ЖЕHOВАН, the most high God, self-existent and independent: and that he is necessarily existent; and that the terms, *necessary existence*, *supreme Deity*, and the title of the *only true God*, cannot be taken in a sense that includes the personal property of the Father; but belong to the *Son* and *Holy*

Ghost, equally with the *Father* : and that the three persons of the adorable Trinity, are *numerically One* in substance or essence, equal in power and in glory : according to the doctrine held forth from the word of God, in our Confession, chap. ii. §. 3. ; and the *answer* to the Question, in the Larger and Shorter Catechism, *How many persons are there in the Godhead?* and the *answer* to the Question in the Larger Catechism, *How doth it appear that the Son and the Holy Ghost, are God equal with the Father?*—And they hereby *reject* and *condemn*, all contrary principles vented by Mr. Simson; and all other Arian, Socinian, and Sabellian tenets, contrary to the above doctrine, or inconsistent therewith.

IV. Also, they acknowledge, declare, and *assert*, That God has, from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably decreed and ordained whatever comes to pass in time : and particularly, that he hath predestinated some of mankind unto eternal life before the foundation of the world was laid, and according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the counsel and good pleasure of his own will *allenerly* ; and that they who are thus predestinated, are chosen unto everlasting glory out of his mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith, good works, or perseverance in either of them ; or any other thing in them, as conditions, or causes moving him thereto ; and all to the praise of his glorious grace : according to the doctrine held forth from the scriptures, Conf. chap. iii. §. 1, 5.—And they hereby *reject* and *condemn*, all contrary principles contained in the *Assembly's Catechism revised*, and all other Pelagian and Arminian errors, inconsistent herewith.

V. Likewise, they declare, acknowledge, and *assert*, That, when God created man, he entered into a covenant with him ; wherein life was promised, upon condition of his perfect and personal obedience ; and that in this covenant, (commonly called the covenant of works) the *first Adam* stood in the capacity of a *public covenant-head* and *representative* unto all his posterity : and that, by reason of his breach of this covenant, all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him their head and representative ; and fell with him in his first transgression : and that his sin is *truly* and *justly* imputed to them every one ; and that, upon account of this sin imputed, all infants, descending from Adam by ordinary generation, *want* that original righteousness wherewith Adam was created ; and are *by nature children of wrath* ; according to Conf. chap. vi. §. 3, 4, 6. chap. vii. §. 2. and Larg. Cat. Quest. 20, 22, 25, and 27. Short. Cat. Quest. 12, 16. ; and the scriptures cited.—And they hereby *reject* and *condemn*, all contrary tenets maintained by Mr. Simson, and the Reviser of the *Assembly's Catechism* ; and all other principles contrary to, or inconsistent herewith.

VI. Likewise, they acknowledge, declare, and *assert*, That man, by his fall into a state of sin, is wholly dead in trespasses and sins ; and hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation : and that man, in a natural state, being enmity against God, and averse from all spiritual good, is not able, by his own

strength, to convert himself, or prepare himself thereto; and consequently, that there is no necessary nor certain *connexion*, either in the nature of things, or by any divine promise, between the *morally serious endeavours* of man, in a natural state, and the obtaining special or saving grace; according to the doctrine held forth from the scriptures, Confession, chap. ix. §. 3. chap. x. §. 2, 3.—And they hereby *reject* and *condemn* all opposite principles maintained by Mr. Simson, and all Arminian errors inconsistent herewith.—Notwithstanding they *assert*, that it is the duty of all, and every one, to give diligent attendance upon the ordinances of divine institution and appointment; particularly the *reading* and *bearing* of the word and prayer; these being the ordinary means by which converting and quickning grace is communicated to such as are dead in trespasses and sins; according to Larg. Cat. Quest. 153, 154. and Short. Cat. Quest. 85. and 88.

VII. Also, they acknowledge, declare, and *assert*, That the *light of nature* is not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and of his will, which is necessary to salvation: and therefore they who do not profess the Christian religion cannot be saved, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and the law of that religion they do profess; according to Confession, chap. i. §. 1. and chap. x. §. 4. Larg. Cat. Quest. 60.—And they *condemn* all Socinian, or other tenets inconsistent therewith, in the fore-said *Catechism revised*: and particularly Mr. Simson's erroneous doctrine concerning an *obscure* revelation and offer of grace made to all without the church; and Mr. Campbell's erroneous opinion, that the laws of nature are in themselves a certain and sufficient rule to direct rational minds to happiness; and that our observing of these laws is the great mean and instrument of our real and lasting felicity.

VIII. Further, they acknowledge, declare, and *assert*, That the second person of the adorable Trinity did, in the fulness of time, assume the human nature into a personal union with his divine; that he took to him a true body and a reasonable soul, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and born of her, yet without sin; and that he is *very God* and *very Man*, in two distinct natures, and one person for ever; according to Confession, chap. viii. §. 2.; and the scriptures cited.—And they hereby *reject* and *condemn* all Nestorian and Sabellian principles and tenets, contrary to, or inconsistent herewith; whether vented in the fore-said *Catechism revised*, or other erroneous treatises of that kind.

IX. Further, they acknowledge, declare, and *assert*, That the eternal Son of God, who was *made manifest in the flesh*, did in our nature, as the *second Adam*, the public head and representative of elect sinners, and the undertaking Surety for them, yield a perfect obedience to the law as a covenant of works, in the room and stead of elect sinners; and that, in their room and stead alone, he bore the whole of that punishment threatened in the law, and incurred by the breach of it: and that, in his sufferings unto death, he substituted himself in the room of sinners, and endured that curse, bore that wrath, and died that death, which is the wages and just desert of

every sin, and which the sinner himself should have undergone; and that the sufferings of the Son of God in our nature, were a true, proper, and expiatory sacrifice; and a proper, real, and complete satisfaction unto the justice of God for sin; according to Confession, chap. viii. §. 1, 4, 5. and chap. xi. §. 3.; Larg. Cat. Quest. 71. and the scriptures cited.—And they hereby *reject* and *condemn* all opposite principles held forth in the foresaid *Catechism*, and all other Arminian and Baxterian tenets, contrary to, or inconsistent herewith.

X. Also, they declare, acknowledge, and *assert*, That the obedience of Christ in his life, and sufferings unto death, (commonly called his *active* and *passive* obedience,) is that perfect and complete righteousness, on the account of which alone a sinner is justified in the sight of God; and that it is upon the account of this righteousness imputed, that sin is pardoned, and the persons of any are accepted as righteous in the sight of God; and that this righteousness imputed, is the only foundation and ground of a sinner's right and title unto eternal life: And although the grace of faith be the instrument whereby we receive and apply Christ and his righteousness; yet neither faith, gospel-repentance, nor our sincere obedience, either all of them together, or any of them separately, are our justifying righteousness in the sight of God, or the ground of our acceptance, or of our right and title unto eternal life; according to Confession, chap. xi. §. 1. Larg. Cat. Quest. 73. and the scriptures cited.—And they hereby *reject* and *condemn* all opposite principles contained in the foresaid *Catechism*; and all other Popish, Arminian, or Baxterian tenets, contrary to, or inconsistent herewith.

XI. Also, they acknowledge, declare, and *assert*, That any want of conformity to the righteous and holy law of God, is a sin, as well as all actual and voluntary transgressions of the law; Confession, chap. vi. §. 4, 6. Larg. Cat. Quest. 24. Short. Cat. Quest. 14. And that every sin doth, in its own nature, deserve the wrath and curse of God, both in this life and that which is to come; according to Confession, chap. xv. §. 4. and Larg. Cat. Quest. 152. And consequently, that the original corruption and depravation of our nature is a damnable sin; Confession, chap. vi. §. 6.; and that sinning and suffering will be the misery of the damned in hell through eternity.—And they hereby *reject* and *condemn* all contrary principles, contained either in the foresaid *Catechism*, or maintained and defended by Mr. Simson; and all other contrary Pelagian and Arminian tenets whatsoever.

XII. Likewise, they acknowledge, declare, and *assert*, That the *supreme* and *only* standard, measure, and rule of all virtuous and religious actions, is the righteous and holy will and law of God; and not our own self-interest and pleasure: according to the doctrine held forth from the word, Confession, ch. i. §. 2. Larg. Cat. Quest. 3. Short. Cat. Quest. 2.—And they do hereby *reject* and *condemn* all contrary principles and tenets maintained by Mr. Campbell, and others.

XIII. Also, they hereby acknowledge, declare, and *assert*, That although all that believe in Jesus are delivered from the moral law as a covenant of works, so as thereby they are neither justified nor

condemned; yet they are under perpetual and indissoluble obligations to conform themselves to the moral law as a rule of their obedience, not only because of blessings and benefits which they have received, but from the authority of God, as he is JEHOVAH, the great Lawgiver; whose perfections are infinitely glorious and excellent, and whose dominion is over all: according to Confession, chap. xix. §. 5, 6.—And they hereby *reject* and *condemn* all contrary principles held forth in the foresaid *Catechism*; and all other Antinominian principles and tenets inconsistent herewith.

XIV. Further, they acknowledge, declare, and *assert*, That God hath all life, glory, goodness, and blessedness in and of himself, and is alone in and unto himself All-sufficient; not standing in need of creatures which he hath made, nor deriving any glory from them, but only manifesting his own glory, in, by, unto, and upon them: And that he hath most sovereign dominion over them, to do by them, for them, or upon them, whatsoever himself pleaseth: And that any rewards that he has promised to any of his creatures are free and voluntary; and that, in all their obedience, worship, and service, they can neither profit him, nor be any way advantageous unto him; according to the doctrine held forth from the word of God, Confession, chap. ii. §. 2. chap. 7. §. 1.—And they hereby *reject* and *condemn* all contrary principles and tenets maintained by Mr. Campbell and others.

XV. In like manner, they hereby acknowledge, declare, and *assert*, That the principle and leading motive and spring of true love to God, or of acceptable obedience and service unto him, is not our own *self-interest*, or our own happiness and felicity, though the same is by divine condescension inseparably connected therewith; but that the leading motive of all true love to God, is the supereminent and glorious perfections and excellencies of his nature, as they shine forth and are manifested in the person of him who is IMMANUEL, *God with us*; and that all who truly love God, do love him chiefly for *himself*: As also, that all acceptable obedience and service unto him is primarily and chiefly influenced from a regard unto the authority of God in Christ expressed in his holy law, and proceeds from a principle of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ: And that the principal and chief end of all such obedience is, that God may be honoured and glorified in our bodies and spirits which are his; and consequently, all that obedience and service to God, that is principally influenced, and primarily springs from *one's self-interest*, advantage, or applause, or from fear of punishment, or the hope of a reward, is *legal, mercenary, and servile*; and moves in no higher sphere, than what men in a natural state, may attain unto; according to the doctrine held forth from the scriptures, Conf. chap. xvi. §. 2, 7. Larg. and Short. Cat. Quest. 1.—And they hereby *reject* and *condemn* all contrary errors maintained by Mr. Simson and Mr. Campbell, as having a direct tendency to make all our acts of obedience and worship, *servile* and *mercenary*; and so to destroy and overturn the specific difference that is between *common* and *saving grace*; or between the obedience of the temporary and the obedience of the

found believer; and to establish only a *gradual* difference between common grace in the one, and saving grace in the other, which is a gross error of Mr. Baxter, and of the Arminians, and others.

XVI. In like manner, they acknowledge, declare, and *assert*, That all such as have saving faith, believe in the Lord Jesus, as *the Christ*, the Son of God: and that the apostles and disciples of our Lord, in the days of his humiliation, did acknowledge, believe in, and worship their Lord and Master, as the true promised Messiah, the Son of the living God, the *only begotten of the Father*; and expected from him spiritual and eternal life and salvation: and that all who truly believe in the Lord Jesus, can neither *totally* nor *finally* fall away from a state of grace; and that the faith of the apostles and disciples of our Lord did not fail in the interval of time between his death and resurrection: and therefore whatever clouds and doubts they were under, they were never so far left as to conclude, that their Lord and Master was a *downright deceiver* and *impostor*; according to Confession, chap. viii. §. 1. ch. xiv. §. 2. ch. xvii. §. 1, 3. Larg. Cat. Quest. 72. Short. Cat. Quest. 86.; and scriptures cited.—And they hereby *reject* and *condemn* all contrary principles and tenets maintained by Mr. Campbell, or contained in the forefaid *Catechism revised*; and all other principles and tenets inconsistent herewith.

THE PRESBYTERY likewise taking to their serious consideration, That the testimony of the church of Christ in this land has, ever since our Reformation from Popery, been stated in a special manner for the *prerogative royal* of the *Prince of the kings of the earth*, as *King, Head, and Lord* over his own house; and for the government, worship, and discipline, which he has appointed and instituted in the same; though, in this perilous time, wherein their lot is cast, the *doctrine* is also undermined and subverted; which (as has been observed) was not the trial of this church in former periods: Therefore they judge it their duty to bear testimony for the *Sovereignty* and *Headship* of the Lord Jesus over his own house; and to declare their adherence to the contendings, wrestlings, and testimonies of this church, and her several members, both *Ministers* and *Professors*, for the same.

I. Likewise, the *Ministers associate* for the exercise of church government and discipline, in a *Presbyterial Capacity*, being now *met in Presbytery*, did, and hereby do acknowledge, declare, and *assert*, That the Lord Jesus Christ, our great IMMANUEL, and he *alone*, is *King over Zion the hill of his holiness*; and that he is the only Head, Lord, and *Lawgiver* over his own house: and that to him alone it appertains, to give officers, laws, and ordinances to the church, which is his spiritual, free, and independent kingdom;—and that the office-bearers in the house of God, in all their several spiritual and ecclesiastical functions and administrations; as also all the courts and judicatories appointed by the Lord Jesus in the church, his spiritual kingdom, are *subordinate to him alone* in their ecclesiastical administrations;—

and that the office-bearers of the church have power, warrant, and authority from the Lord Jesus, to hold General Assemblies, as well as other subordinate ecclesiastical judicatories, for the exercise of church-government and discipline, either at *stated times*, or *occasionally*, as the circumstance or necessity of the church requires;—and to dissolve themselves, and appoint the time of their next meeting, according to the word of God, (Psal. ii. throughout. Isaiah ix. 6, 7. Matth. xvi. 19. chap. xxviii. 18, 19, 20. Eph. i. 20,—23.) and the laudible acts and constitutions of this church, (particularly, Act Sess. 26. Assem. 1638. and Act Assem. 1647. *approving the Confession of Faith*, Sess. 23. :) it being always free to the civil magistrate to call Synods, and Assemblies of ministers and elders, for consulting and advising with them, in matters of religion, upon any necessary occasion, according to the foresaid acts.—And they hereby *reject* and *condemn*, the following *Erasian* principles and tenets :

1. That the civil magistrate is supreme over all persons, and in all causes, ecclesiastical as well as civil.

2. That the office-bearers of the church, in their spiritual and ecclesiastical functions and administrations, are subordinate unto the civil magistrate.

3. That the external government of the church is *precarious*, or depends upon the will and pleasure of the civil magistrate.

4. That the ordering and disposing of the external government and policy of the church, doth properly belong to the civil magistrate, by virtue of his prerogative and supremacy in causes ecclesiastick: and that the civil magistrate may emit such *constitutions*, *acts*, and *orders*, concerning the administration of the external government of the church, and concerning all ecclesiastical meetings and matters to be proposed and determined therein, as he in his wisdom shall think fit; as was enacted by parliament, and practised in the late persecuting times.—All which, and the like principles and tenets, have a direct tendency to confound the ecclesiastick and civil jurisdictions; and have been witnessed against by the faithful ministers and members of this church, as dishonouring to the Son of God, and divesting him of his prerogative royal, as King over the church, his own *free*, spiritual, and independent kingdom.

II. Likewise, they acknowledge, declare, and *assert*, That the Lord Jesus, the alone *King* and *Head* of his church, hath appointed a *particular form of government* to take place therein, distinct from the civil government, and not subordinate to the civil magistrate; which form of government is to continue to the end of the world *unalterable*: and that Presbyterian church government, without any *superiority* of office above a *teaching* Presbyter, in the due subordination of judicatories; as of Kirk-sessions to Presbyteries, of Presbyteries to Provincial Synods, and of Provincial Synods to General Assemblies, is that *only form* of government laid down and appointed by the Lord Christ in his word; which form of government has been received and owned by this church, as the *only* government of divine institution and appointment; as is evident from her public acts and constitutions, particularly from the *second Book of Discipline*, and the *propositions* cou-

cerning church-government, with the scripture proofs and arguments annexed, as the said propositions were received and approved by the Assm. 1645. Sess. 16.—And they hereby *reject* and *condemn* the following principles and tenets, whether Erastian, Prelatick, or Sectarian.

1. That the Lord Jesus hath not appointed in his word any particular form of government in his church, under the New Testament; a principle highly reflecting upon the head of the church, as if he had not been as *faithful in his own house as a Son, as Moses was as a servant*.

2. That the *Diocesan bishop*, or prelate, is an office superior to a teaching presbyter; which principle stands condemned by several acts and constitutions of this church, as contrary to the word of God, and as a gross usurpation in the house of God, and which brought forth ANTICHRIST, *that man of sin*.

3. That a particular congregational church is not subordinate, nor accountable unto any superior judicatory; which principle and tenet is also condemned by the laudible acts and constitutions of this church, as contrary to the word of God, and as having a native and direct tendency to introduce a licentious laxness in principle, and an universal disorder in practice, in the house of God.

III. Also, they acknowledge, declare, and *assert*, that unto the *office-bearers* of the church, and to them alone, the *keys of the kingdom of heaven* are committed: particularly, the *key of doctrine* for expounding and preaching the word, and determining controversies of faith according to the scriptures;—the *key of government and discipline*, for preserving the beauty and purity of the church, and for inflicting of church censures upon the erroneous, the scandalous, and obstinate, that she may be preserved, or purged from such errors in principle, or such scandals in practice, whereby she may be in danger of being corrupted;—as also the *key of ordination and mission*, for the ordaining and sending forth of church-officers, for spiritual service and ministrations in the house of God; according to Mat. xvi. 19. John xx. 23. Matth. xviii. 18. Acts xv. and xvi. 4. Matth. xxviii. 19, 20. Mark xvi. 15. 2 Tim. ii. 2.; the book of discipline, propositions concerning church-government, and ordination of ministers; and other laudible acts and constitutions of this church.

And concerning that *power and authority*, which belongs to the office-bearers of the church, in their judicative capacity, they further declare and *assert*, That the same is only a *stewardly and ministerial* authority, subordinate unto the authority and laws of the *Head* of the church, declared and published in his own word: and, to express it in the words of our Confession, chap. xxxi. §. 3.

‘ It belongeth to Synods and Councils, ministerially to determine
 ‘ controversies of faith, and cases of conscience; to set down rules
 ‘ and directions for better ordering of the public worship of God,
 ‘ and government of his church; to receive complaints in cases of
 ‘ mal-administration, and authoritatively to determine the same;
 ‘ which decrees and determinations, if consonant to the word of
 ‘ God, are to be received with reverence and submission, not only

‘ for their agreement with the word, but also for the power whereby they are made, as being an ordinance of God appointed thereunto ‘ in his word.’

And they hereby *reject* and *condemn* the following *Sectarian* principles; that the keys of government and discipline are given, by the Head of the church, to the whole community of the faithful; and that ecclesiastical Synods and Councils have only a mere *consultative* power and authority: Which principles they condemn, as contrary to the word of God, the laudible acts and constitutions of this church, founded thereupon; and as having a native tendency to introduce anarchy and confusion into the house of God.

IV. Likewise, they acknowledge, declare, and *assert*, That *ministers*, and other *office-bearers* in the church, ought to be set over congregations, by the call and consent of the *majority* of *such* in these congregations, who are admitted to *full communion* with the church in all her *sealing ordinances*; and that there should be no *preference* of voices in this matter, upon the account of any secular consideration: according to Acts i. 16. to the close of the chapter. Acts vi. 2,—6. chap. xiv. 23. John x. 4, 5. 1 John iv. 1. James ii. 1,—6. with many other scriptures; and according to our *Books of Discipline*, and *Acts of Assembly*, agreeable thereto.—And they *reject* and *condemn*, all contrary principles, tenets, and practices, whereby the scripture rule and pattern, in this important matter, is denied and rejected; and ministers are imposed upon dissenting and reclaiming congregations.

V. In like manner, they do hereby own and *assert*, The *perpetual obligation* of the *national covenant* of Scotland, frequently subscribed by persons of all ranks in this kingdom; and particularly, as approved of and explained by the General Assembly 1638, and sworn by all ranks of persons, *Anno* 1639, and ratified by act of Parliament 1640.—As also, they own and *assert*, the perpetual obligation of the *solemn league and covenant*, for maintaining and carrying on a work of Reformation in the *three Kingdoms*; taken and subscribed by all ranks in Scotland and England, *Anno* 1643; ratified by act of Parliament of Scotland, *Anno* 1644.: and particularly, as renewed in Scotland, with an acknowledgement of sins, and engagements to duties by all ranks, *Anno* 1648.—Concerning which oaths and covenants, they declare and *assert*, that, as to the *matter* of them, they were *lawful*, being plainly contained in the word of God; and, as to their *ends*, they were laudible and necessary: and therefore, they did, and hereby do, declare, their *adherence* to the same.

VI. Likewise, they hereby receive, acknowledge, and *approve* all the several pieces of Reformation attained unto by this church in her several reforming periods; particularly, the *Confession of Faith*, compiled by the *Assembly of Divines*, who met at Westminster, with *Commissioners* from the church of Scotland: which Confession, they receive and own as the *confession of their faith*, as the same was received and approved by act of Assembly 1647, Sess. 23.—As also they receive and own, the whole doctrine contained in the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, compiled by the foresaid Assembly at West-

minster; and approved by acts of Assembly 1648, Sessions 10, and 19, as a part of uniformity, in catechising, for the three kingdoms; and ratified by act of Parliament, February 7th, 1649.—As also the *Form of church-government*, and *ordination of ministers*; as the same was received and approved by act of Assembly 1645, Sess. 16.;—and the *Directory for public worship*, as the same stands approved by Assembly 1645, Sess. 10.;—together with all the *Acts of Assembly*, from 1638, to 1650, and since that time, in so far as they were adapted to advance and carry on a covenanted Reformation, agreeable to the word of God, and the received principles and constitutions of this church.

VII. Likewise, they hereby declare their *adherence* to the several regular and scriptural *Testimonies, Declarations, and Warnings* emitted in behalf of the covenanted Reformation of this church, from the year 1650, to the year 1688.: particularly, to the contendings and wrestlings during that period, whereby a great *cloud of witnesses resisted even unto blood*; in testifying for the supremacy and headship of the Lord Jesus over his own house, and other branches of our covenanted Reformation, in opposition to *abjured Prelacy*, and that blasphemous supremacy, usurped by the civil powers over the house of God, under the forefaid period.—And they hereby *condemn* all ecclesiastical censures whatsoever, passed or inflicted upon any, whether ministers, elders, or others, from the year 1650, to this time; for their adherence unto, or witnessing for, any branch of our covenanted Reformation.

VIII. Also, they hereby declare their *adherence* to the several *Testimonies*, whether given in by representations and petitions to the several General Assemblies, or otherwise emitted and published, since the year 1688, against the several *sinful omissions* of the judicatories of this church above-mentioned; or the several steps of declining and backsliding in this present age, from a covenanted Reformation once attained unto; in so far as these were calculated to maintain the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the church of Scotland, founded on the word of God:—and particularly, to the several *Representations* offered by the *ministers of this Presbytery*, to the Commission of the General Assembly, that met at Edinburgh, August 1733.; and to the *Paper* that was afterwards emitted by them, intitled, *A Testimony to the Doctrine, Worship, Government, and Discipline of the Church of Scotland**; as also, to the *Reasons*, published by them, *Why they have not acceded to the Judicatories of the established Church*.

THUS this PRESBYTERY have endeavoured to discharge themselves of what they apprehend to be their duty in their *present situation*. And their design in the whole is, to *bear testimony to the truths of God*, opposed or assaulted in the present age; and against the detentions and backslidings, whether in the present or former times, for the glory of God, and the honour of his truth; and (if the Lord

* See this Testimony printed above, p. 18,—78.

may be graciously pleased to bless this mean) to excite the *present generation to search and try their ways, and to turn again to the Lord, from whom we have every one deeply revolted:—As also, to bear testimony to Scotland's covenanted Reformation, for the sake of the generations to come; that they may consider the palaces of Zion, and mark her bulwarks, and may know what the Lord has done for Scotland; that they may set their hope in God; and may neither forget his works, nor be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not stedfast with God.*

And they *obtest* and intreat all ranks of persons whatsoever, into whose hands this their ACT, DECLARATION, and TESTIMONY may come; that laying aside all carnal and *politic intendments*, every thing may be weighed in the *balance of the sanctuary*: and that, in the fear of that great and dreadful name, *The Lord our God*, they may consider both *their own*, and the iniquities of our *fathers*, and may return unto the Lord, by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and a particular acknowledgement of sin, and unfeigned and thorough Reformation: and in returning to the Lord, we may hope and expect, that He who hath *torn us, will heal us*; and that, *He who hath smitten, will bind us up*.—But, if we go on obstinately in our trespasses, we have just ground to fear, that, as we are at *present pining away* in our sins, and consumed under our manifold *spiritual strokes* and judgments; so a righteous and holy God may be provoked to come out of his place, and punish the inhabitants of this land for their iniquities: and that he may send a *sword*, or some desolating calamity and judgment, to *avenge the quarrel of his covenant*.

May the Lord himself return: May he look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; the vineyard which his own right-hand hath planted, the branch which he hath made strong for himself: it is burnt with fire, it is cut down; they perish at the rebuke of his countenance. May his hand be upon the man of his right-hand, upon the Son of man whom he hath made strong for himself; so shall we not go back from him: May he quicken us, and we will call upon his name. Turn us again, O Lord God of Hosts; cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.

Extracted by

JAMES FISHER, *Cl. Pres.*



A C T concerning the A D M I S S I O N of the
 Rev. Mr. RALPH ERSKINE and Mr. THOMAS
 MAIR, as Members of Presbytery.

AT the Kirk of Orwel, the eighteenth day of February, one thousand seven hundred and thirty-seven years. Which day and place, the ministers and elders *associate together*, being met in Presbytery, there was presented unto them, by the Rev. Mr. Thomas Mair, minister at Orwel, a Paper signed by them, and intitled, *Declaration of Seceſſion from the preſent Judicatories of the Church of Scotland, &c.* And, at preſenting the ſaid Paper, he repreſented unto the Presbytery, that it was a true and juſt *double* of his *Declaration and Proteſtation*, given in to the Presbytery of Dunfermline, at their meeting on the *ſixteenth current*; and he craved, that the ſame might be read and conſidered by this Presbytery; whereupon they agreed to read the ſame: The *tenor* whereof follows;

DECLARATION of SECESSION from the preſent Judicatories of the Church of *Scotland*, by Mr. THOMAS MAIR, Miniſter at *Orwel*, given in to the Reverend the Presbytery of *Dunfermline*, met at *Dunfermline* the ſixteenth day of February, 1737 Years.

WHEN I joined in the *Representation and Teſtimony* therein, given in to the Commiſſion in Auguſt laſt, by Mr. Ralph Erſkine; though I had a general view of ſeveral other things among us as juſt ground of humiliation, and what ought to be teſtified againſt, which there was not then opportunity to digeſt into order: yet I had not then any formed intention of carrying the matter further than was done at that time; or at moſt than a tabling of ſome *Representation and Teſtimony*, of the ſame nature, before our Presbytery and Synod; partly for my own exoneration, and partly as a mean proper to be uſed in a way of communion with the judicatories of the church, for exciting to what I think is the neceſſary duty of this church at this day. Neither had I any thought of ſtating all the particulars contained in that *Representation*. as *grounds of Seceſſion* from the judicatories of the church; and far leſs as *grounds of preſent Seceſſion*, or of looking on them all as *terms of Chriſtian or miniſterial communion*.

Yet being in providence thus called out (though moſt unworthy)

to essay witnessing for the Lord in a day of his great anger and contending with us, in many remarkable instances: as I think myself bound to adhere to every one of the particulars already represented as matter of *Testimony*; so the things contained in that *Representation*, together with the treatment it has met with from the Commission, and otherwise, have, in concurrence with several other considerations, engaged me to a further and more closs enquiry into the state of matters with us in this church, and the judicatories thereof: and particularly to enquire in what respects, and how far the present judicatories of this church have *receded* from the *Law* and *Testimony*; and what I am called to upon the whole. And,

1st, The *Recessions* of the church from the *Law* and *Testimony*, are what appear very great and dismal; whether we take a view of the particular ministers, preachers, and members in the diffused church; or the church as represented in her judicatories, in their own actings, and the manifest accession to the guilt of the particular members thereof.

1. The *Law* and *Testimony* requires, That the *Lord's people*, the *multitude of his disciples*, have liberty to chuse their own overseers, Acts i. 23. vi. 3. xiv. 23. But many ministers in the church are not only privately, but even publicly, and in open court, denying and impugning this; and charging the perfect rule with an utter want of any rule or statute as to this important matter, except the general rules of *edification* and *order*, which they manifestly abuse and misapply to their own purposes; contrary to the evident design of these golden rules, which make exceedingly against their principle and practice in this matter. And, as they are from time to time openly declaring their mind on this head, without receiving any check or censure for the same: so the judicatories of the church are, in their practice, going the same way; yea, acting in contradiction to the rule, by thrusting in men into the pastoral charge among even reclaiming congregations, who not only are willing to chuse an unexceptionable person, but have actually made choice of one according to rule.—And though the act of Assembly 1722, anent settlements, be repealed, or laid aside: yet, as there is no acknowledgment in the repeal of the iniquity of that act, as contrary to the word of God; so the act continues to take place in practice, even as that method of settling congregations, was much practised before that law was framed; yea, both before and since the repeal of that iniquitous act, many settlements have been made in congregations, even worse than the said act requires: by all which, many are now settled in congregations, wanting one special branch of a lawful calling to the ministry. And we cannot omit here observing, that the church of Scotland is, in this point, more corrupt than the church of Rome was, even in the 7th century; at least when, though come to a great height otherwise in superstition and idolatry, they had not as yet given up with that principle of Christianity, that the choice of the people was necessary in the election of a pastor †; and that, where

† Petrie's History, p. 63, 65.

this was wanting, the election was null. Yea, as some observe, it was the 11th century before this right was taken from the people; and they were then robbed of it by Pope John the 17th, (or, as others, the 19th,) a necromancer. And however long and frequent use, together with the said prevalency and generality of the defection, may have much extinguished the impression of the weight of this matter from the mind of many: yet, as I cannot but look upon it as most nearly concerning the very foundations of a Christian church; so it is very evident, that both the primitive and reforming church had this matter very deeply at heart, as a principle which ought by all means to be maintained.

The objection and evasion some here make use of, is weak and frivolous, *viz.* 'That by the people, to whom the right belonged, may be understood the heritors and elders, or the like, as representing the people: and that the robbery committed by the Popish church, was their restricting the choice to their clergy.' For, as is observed by Calvin, after that the clergy had robbed the people of their right of chusing their pastors, the princes assumed (and thus far took from the clergy) the right of presenting to congregations, as reckoning they had as good right and warrant for this as the clergy. But according to the original constitution*, it was the *Plebs*, the *Multitude*, the *ALL*, over whom the pastor was to have charge, that were to chuse, or give consent to his being set over them. And, as a further evidence of this, in the following section we find the people expressly distinguished from heritors, or these in honour, and from elders and clergy; where, for the greater order in the election, and preventing tumult and abuse, the different part each of these should act, is expressly assigned. *Teueatur honoratorum testimonium, subscriptio clericorum ordinis consensus ac Plebis, aliter fieri nulla ratio fuit.* So,

2. The *Law and Testimony* requires, That judicatories be constitute of such as are *lawfully ordained office-bearers in the church*; as is plain from the very nature of church-judicatories, and the professed end of their meeting. Those who profess to meet in the name of Christ, for managing the affairs of his house, must be clothed with his authority; *No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God*, Heb. v. 4. And so even the great high Priest of our profession, Jesus Christ, came not without a commission from the Father: Yet now, there is scarce any of our judicatories, but what have fewer or more that are obtruded upon congregations, without a lawful calling, and may therefore be too justly said to have *run unsent*; and therefore, have no just pretension to authority from the Lord to manage the affairs of his house, or judge in his Name.

3. The *Law and Testimony* requires, That judicatories be careful and faithful to have such *purged out* as either by their doctrine or conversation act for the *destruction of souls*, and the *perverting of the gospel* †. But though there are multiplied heavy complaints through

* *Calv. Inst. lib. iv. c. iv. §. 11, 12.* † *Gal. i. 7, 9. v. 12. Rev. ii. 14, 15.*

the land, against many who bear the name of ministers, both as to their doctrine, their corrupting the simplicity of the gospel, and giving poison instead of food to souls; and as to their vain, carnal, and unbecoming conversation, whereby they make the sacrifice of the Lord to be abhorred: Yet, so far is there from a suitable zeal and concern shown for prosecuting the ends of discipline, in searching out and censuring such, that, in the management of judicatories, there are such methods taken for covering them from censure, as gives too sad evidence there is nothing of due faithfulness this way to be expected; as appears evident from the management of both first and second processes against professor Simson, and in the conduct with reference to professor Campbell, who was dismissed without the least censure; yea, without so much as any narrow enquiry into his Scheme, either by the Assembly, the Commission, or their Committee. For, whatever length the sub-committee brought that enquiry, yet the Committee, who put that work upon them, would not so much as examine or judge of their report, so as either to adopt or reject it; but wrapt all up in a few generals, to put an end to the process, in such manner as might screen from censure the broacher of that very dangerous scheme. Yea, such was the issue it was brought to, as while the Committee and Assembly endeavoured to cover professor Campbell from the imputation of error, and from censure for the same, they themselves are entangled in the snare of his pernicious errors, while they make the ground of their assailing him from the charge of error to be his asserting, 'That our delight in the glory of God is the origin, chief spring, sole standard, &c. of all virtuous and religious actions: And so, that self-interest, or pleasure and delight, is still the highest and chief motive to obedience; only that this delight should terminate on, or extend to the glory of God.' By which professor Campbell means (as he elsewhere explains himself) 'our enjoyment of an infinitely glorious God, who alone can fully satisfy our desires, or gratify our self-love.'

These are instances of the conduct of judicatories as to doctrine. And the charge seems no less verified against their conduct with reference to *Processes* anent the conversation of ministers, if we take a view of the issue against Mr. Greenlees at Ceres, and that against Mr. Young at Leslie; (not to insist on the management with reference to the several candidates for the ministry, who accepted presentations, and had accusations led against their moral character; and, in the judgment of many, so far at least instructed, as rendered a delay of their settlement, in order to further enquiry, necessary for edification.) When such instances of error and scandalous behaviour have been wrapt up in the manner wherein particularly these four specified were; what ground have any to hope for redress in other cases? Or, what conclusion can they draw from the procedure in these, but that it is in vain to table any complaint of that kind? Seeing all that will be gained, will be much trouble and charge to the pursuer, without any redress of the grievance complained of.

4. The *Law and Testimony* requires the Lord's people to *see from strangers and hirelings*, and not hear them, because they are *thieves*

and robbers; to beware of *false prophets*, who are known by their fruits; and declares, that they who *run unsent*, shall not *profit the people*: Yet our judicatories will have people to hear such, or to be deprived of ordinances altogether; Act Assem. 1733, *anent the Presbytery of Dunfermline*.

5. Ministers, and so judicatories, are called to be at pains to *gather the flock of Christ*; and there is a *woe* pronounced against the shepherds that *scatter the flock*, and *gather them not*: But judicatories are now at much pains to scatter the flock, and deprive them of their spiritual food, by their acts, intrusions, &c.

6. Judicatories are called to lay out themselves for *reforming what is amiss*, and that by returning to the law and testimony: But now the practice of judicatories seems too plainly to speak out a stated design (at least of those who are the special springs of the management) to have a covenanted work of reformation altogether overthrown, and the church modelled in a conformity with England, if not worse. And, though a good act was of late made anent gospel-preaching, and a recommendation anent settling congregations, which some valued as seeming to be some kind of reviving of the old good rules of this church on that head; yet it is evident, that this recommendation, so far as it might be called a reviving of these old rules, together with the above act anent doctrine, are in a special manner transgressed and broken through without controul; yea, transgressed, as it were, with the same breath by the Assemblies by which they were made: Particularly in the affair of professor Campbell, when the Assembly, together with the Committee appointed to ripen that affair, did not only involve themselves in the guilt of the scandal, given by his scheme, by dismissing that affair without due enquiry into it, or inflicting the least censure upon the said Mr. Campbell; but also, they have materially adopted his scheme, particularly by their making his asserting that which is the very substance of it, (*viz. That our delight in the glory of God, is the origin of moral virtue,*) to be the ground upon which they assolzie him from the charge of error. So that now, not only according to Mr. Campbell's opinion, but even according to the Assembly's decision, 'our delight, 'pleasure, or satisfaction,' (all which, among other terms, Mr. Campbell makes synonymous,) 'terminating on the glory of God,' (by which, as Mr. Campbell explains himself, is meant the enjoyment of an infinitely glorious God, as he who can give us full satisfaction, or fully gratify our self-love) 'is the first spring and chief 'motive of all virtuous and religious actions.'—And as to the recommendation anent settlements, it was no less palpably broke thro' by the Assembly in the case of Traquair and Denny: And what then can be expected of inferior judicatories? I am far from instituting a comparison of designs, especially with the worthy members of Assembly who were active and zealous for that act anent doctrine, and for the reviving of our old rules anent settlements: Yet it is to be lamented, that the event has too much of a parallel with that of king Charles's proclamation against profanity, which ushered in a very deluge thereof: and the exception made in the late toleration of

Popery, and those who deny any of the persons of the Godhead; both which evils do in a special manner prevail in the land, without effectual check.

7. While the Lord requires the stewards of his house to be faithful, and particularly not to *spare to shew unto the house of Jacob their transgressions*; he surely calls judicatories to encourage and strengthen the hands of such as are thus faithful in the discharge of their work. But the judicatories of the church have not only discountenanced and censured faithfulness this way; but have even *thrust out four* of their *fellow-labourers* from their communion upon account thereof.

8. They who bear the office and character of builders in Zion, are called to build upon the *foundations of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief corner-stone*. But the judicatories of the church, and office-bearers therein, are (may we not say) at least in a great measure *gone off* from these foundations: Many of them in their *doctrine*, as appears from their materially adopting Mr. Campbell's scheme, intirely waving Mr. Simson's scheme, in his first libel, and slightly censuring his Arian errors. And as to *government*, they are too palpably building on the foundations of worldly policy (some of them even openly denying that there is any rule in scripture directing how to settle congregations, or in opposition to patronage;) and some of them building upon Latitudinarian principles (giving liberty to every man to worship God in their own way, or according to their own sentiments:) and thus building on principles *opposite* to the doctrines taught by the apostles and prophets, which are the foundations of the building, whereof Jesus Christ is the chief corner-stone.

9. The *Law and Testimony* requires ministers and judicatories to commit the gospel, that is intrusted unto them, unto *faithful men, who shall be able to teach others*, 2 Tim. ii. 2. But is it not for a lamentation, that while those who have most evidence of their having obtained grace to be faithful, are discouraged and discountenanced, such are taken by the hand, and appointed office-bearers in the church, not a few of whom give little evidence, either by their doctrine or conversation, that they are, or will be faithful?

2dly, I come next to enquire, Whether I can warrantably, with safety, and without manifold hazard, *continue in communion* with the judicatories of the church; or, if the Lord be calling to a present withdrawing and coming out from them? And,

1. It seems evidently *unsafe and dangerous* to continue in communion with the judicatories of this church, if we consider the manifold proofs she has given of her hating to be reformed. This may appear partly from what is above-said; and we may further observe, that the Lord has been using a great variety of means with us for a long time, not only by a plentiful dispensation of his word and ordinances; but also by manifold dispensations of adorable providence, both adverse and prosperous: And, when he has, in more than ordinary remarkable ways, been of late years threatening us with sword, or famine, or pestilence, or all the three, and punishing us by many temporal and spiritual judgments; yet, in midst of all, not only are all ranks su-

ning still more and more; not only are many accounting these the best days, and the generality sinking more and more deep in carnal security; yea, even the wise as well as foolish virgins slumbering and sleeping, and cannot be awaked by all the alarms we have hitherto met with: But even the judicatories of the church, after all endeavours used for their excitement to reformation, do not only neglect to fall in with these means, but slight, contemn, and treat with disdain, such endeavours used; and this after long continuance of light, and fullest means of conviction. And when, notwithstanding of exceeding great backslidings, and the Lord's remarkably lifting up his hand, against the church; yet the judicatories cannot be brought to a free and unhampered acknowledgment of the causes of the Lord's controversy; yea, is sometimes even denying the need of solemn fasting and humiliation, as was the case at last commissions. Have we not reason to apprehend, that the Lord is about to plead with us, because we say we have not sinned? and that he is about to take away the hedge of his vineyard, and suffer it to be trodden down? and that continuing in the judicatories in such a case, (especially when opportunity may be had of essaying, in a judicative capacity, that work and duty which they will by no means comply with) will involve in the guilt of that neglect and refusal, and so expose to the judgments threatened for the same?

2. When the judicatories of a church are so far infatuated, as to *thrust out* from church-communion and society, both faithful watchmen, because of their faithfulness; and the purer part of her members, who cannot go along with the courses of defection, but desire to keep their garments clean; and when the judicatories continue thus to treat multitudes of the Lord's people, who, according to the rules of the church, stand debarred from church-communion for their non-submission to intruders, &c. As this may be compared to the case of a city or nation thrusting out their chariots and horsemen from among them, even at a time when the enemy is not only entered their borders, but is wasting the country, which is the present case; and as this sudden ruin and destruction is loudly threatened, so I reckon it both *duty* and *interest* for me to adhere to, and embark with, those who are in this manner thrust out; especially when they are essaying, under the conduct and influence of the Spirit of the Lord, to lift up a standard for the Lord's cause and truth, and against the enemy that is come in like a flood. So,

3. I think it appears evident, that as the true church, the tabernacle of David, is built on the foundations of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief corner-stone; so, at this day, the tabernacle is, by a chain of extraordinary providences, removed without the camp: There is now a constitute church thrust out from the society of the judicatories of this church for their faithfulness; and these who are thrust out, are building upon the true foundations of the church of Christ, while the judicatories of this church are many ways overthrowing these foundations, both as to doctrine and government, and building upon the foundations of human reason and carnal policy. And therefore it is my duty, as I would desire to be

approven of the great builder of Zion, to *bear hand* to those, who are by grace aiming at building on the true foundation.

4. If the flock of Christ are called to flee from, and not hear strangers, hirelings, and such as are wolves, thieves, and robbers; then I cannot see either duty or safety in *joining* with these, especially in such a near and close union, as that of one sacred society, met in the name of the Lord, for the management of the affairs of his house; or the consistency of doing so, with ministerial faithfulness in warning people to flee from such: And as little is it consistent with the very end of such meetings, which, if at all valuable, is to take joint counsel and measures in the management of the affairs of the church, to the glory of God and the good of souls. To pretend to do this with declared enemies of our covenanted reformation, and who are embracing every opportunity of pulling down the carved work of God, seems exceeding inconsistent, and contrary to reason and religion. Sure it would be a most incongruous and unnatural part, for a company of shepherds to resolve to associate with a herd of foxes and wolves; to consult for the welfare of the flock, and so to adhere to these strange counsellors, as nothing of any moment shall be done without their knowledge and consent. But that this is and must be the case of the judicatories of this church, in their present situation and constitution, is most evident: And therefore it is high time for any who desire the good of the flock, to *withdraw* from such a mixture.

5. The duty of maintaining the *peace* and *unity* of the church, the body of Christ, requires this withdrawing from the present judicatories of this church, as they are constitute and managed: For, (1.) Christ is the centre of union, from whom the judicatories have a long time been making deep defection: and as there can be no spiritual union, but by meeting in the head; so sure it is vain to pretend union, or the maintaining of true unity, in a way of *departing* from the head. True it is, there may be differences in lesser matters, when yet, as to the main, there is a centring in the head: But that this is not the case now, is plain, seeing the very foundations of both the doctrine and government of the church of Christ are overturned, both in word and practice, by the present judicatories, and such as are by them kept in communion with this church; as appears from what is above. So, (2.) What peace, concord, or unity in a society, especially a sacred one, where the principles of the constituent members of it are *opposite* to, and *destructive* of one another, and that in matters of the greatest moment to the very being of a sacred society? which is the present case with the judicatories of this church: And therefore it is my duty, especially when I see a society of the Lord's servants pointing toward the centre of union, to withdraw from the present judicatories, and *adhere* unto them in promoting the ends of a gospel-ministry.

6. The judicatories of this church have been doing what in them lay to *pull the crown off from Christ's head*, and refusing to give him the glory due to his name; to give him the glory of his supreme

deity, by resenting suitably the blasphemous denial of the same; and, instead thereof, have even kept the blasphemer in full communion with the church, and refuse all calls to lay to heart, or acknowledge their sin in this: whereby they have sadly involved themselves in the guilt of *denying the Son of God*, 1 John ii. 22, 23. which is one special mark of Antichrist: They have refused to give him the glory of his sovereignty, as the sole King and Lawgiver of his house; yea, have usurped a legislative power over the same, and will not acknowledge any sin therein: They have refused to give him the glory of his prophetic office, by vindicating his truths; and have suffered wounded truth to lie bleeding on the ground, rather than inflict censure upon the subverters of the truth, and those who preach another gospel, and bring another doctrine than is taught in the scriptures of truth: And therefore it is my duty to withdraw from them, and adhere to those who are endeavouring to *maintain* the crown on Christ's head, and to lift up the standard of a testimony for his injured cause and truth.

7. It is duty, in the Lord's sight, to make a *Secession* from those who combine to *slay the witnesses of Jesus Christ*: But that this has been, and is the way of the judicatories of this church, is plain from their suppressing ministerial freedom and faithfulness, and thrusting out several of their members for their faithfulness; while, at the same time, they are embracing intruders, and such as may contribute more and more to a burying the testimony of Jesus: And therefore I ought to *withdraw* from them.

8. The Lord requires all, and so in a special manner, ministers of the gospel, to shew a *concern* for his glory and the welfare of Zion, preferring Zion to their chiefest joy: and that ministers particularly testify this, by endeavouring, by all means, to have the knowledge of the Lord's name propagated in the land; and to have the generations to come in case to praise the Lord. But, as the native tendency of the present practice of the judicatories of this church, particularly ancient settlements, is the training up the rising generation in ignorance and error; so, according to the present constitution and ways of managing, there is little or nothing can be done, for preventing this evil, in a way of communion, while the young generation are altogether destitute of a gospel-ministry, having hirelings intruded upon them, who cannot preach, because they are not sent: And therefore I reckon it duty to essay in a way of *Secession*, what cannot be done in a way of *communion* with the present judicatories of the church, and which yet is necessary to be done, for the advancement of the gospel, and good of souls.

9. Those whom the Lord seems to be polishing for his work, are *neglected* as useless; yea, ordinarily traduced as *dangerous* in the church: and there is no rational prospect, in the present situation of matters in the church, of their receiving encouragement. Several are discouraged from attempting preparation for public service in the church; yea, considering the state of matters as to the fountains of sacred learning, what prospect can we have of a succession of gospel-ministers? And, while matters are thus with us, I think it an evi-

dent call to essay *other methods* for maintaining the Lord's testimony in the land.

10. There are many evidences that the *sun* is gone down upon us; that the *night* is come on us; that the *Lord* is departed in his anger, particularly and in an eminent manner from the present judicatories: while not only is there a general deep sleep as at midnight; not only further are the beasts of prey come abroad (while Arians, infidels, necromancers, are treading down the vineyard of the Lord; yea, infernal spirits, as loosed by law, coming abroad in the land;) but, in the judicatories, truth, and the cause of Christ, receive new wounds from time to time: And even those who desire to be faithful, are either so blindfolded, that they cannot see the snares laid for them, and the plots against the cause of God; or their mouths so shut, that they cannot speak with freedom and boldness in the cause, even when the need is greatest: So that, may we not say, *Counsel is perished from the wise, and the man of might cannot find his hands*; while counsel, courage, and strength is retained by the opposite party? As this is a sad evidence of the Lord's forsaking the judicatories of this church; so I think he is making the light to shine upon his servants that are encamped in the wilderness, and countenancing them in their essay of bearing testimony for him, his truths, and cause, and in opposition to the defections of the judicatories of the church; and thus giving some clear evidence, that it is his work and cause that is in the hands of his servants: And therefore, as I think it both duty and interest to follow the light; so the warning is awful against refusing to come out to *the help of the Lord against the mighty*.

Wherefore, and upon all the above-mentioned reasons, and others that might be added, I judge it my duty to *declare* and *protest*; Likeas, I hereby declare and protest, That I find myself obliged to make *Secession* from the present judicatories of this church; and that I can no longer join in communion with them, in a judicative capacity, until they set about the reformation of the above-mentioned, and many other evils complained of. And, notwithstanding of this my present Secession, I hereby declare my resolution, through grace, constantly to adhere to our received standards of doctrine, worship, discipline, and government; particularly to our *Confession of Faith*, as the same was received and approved by the act of Assembly 1647; which *Confession* I still own as the Confession of my Faith; and to our *Larger and Shorter Catechisms*; and also to our *Form of church-government, Directory for public worship, and ordination of ministers*, as the same were received and approved by the several acts of Assembly adopting the same.—In like manner, I hereby protest, That it shall be *lawful* and *warrantable* for me to join with such of my brethren as have been thrust out from ministerial communion with the present judicatories, and who are associate together in a Presbyterial capacity, and endeavouring to lift up a judicial Testimony against the prevailing evils of the present day, and the sins and backslidings of former times; according to the word of God, the foresaid stan-

dards of doctrine, &c. and the national covenant of Scotland, and the solemn league and covenant of the three nations.—And I further protest, That notwithstanding of this my Secession, my pastoral relation to the congregation of Orwel, shall still be held firm and valid; and that, if in consequence of this my present Secession, any thing shall be done by the present judicatories, in prejudice of my pastoral relation to the said congregation, or in prejudice of my ministerial office and the exercise thereof, &c. the same shall be held and reputed *null and void*: in regard, I desire and hope, through grace, still to adhere to our covenanted uniformity, both in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, which is not only sullied, but subverted by the present judicatories, not only in the particulars I have represented, but in others, that may be afterward more fully laid open.

And, *finally*, I protest, That my ministerial conduct and character, both now and hereafter, shall only be under the trial and cognisance of the foresaid ministers associate together. And I crave, that this my Declaration and Protestation be recorded in the Presbytery books, and I allowed an extract thereof. And upon the whole of the premises I take instruments.

THOMAS MAIR.

AFTER reading the above *Declaration*, the Reverend Mr. RALPH ERSKINE, minister at Dunfermline, gave in to the Presbytery a signed *Adherence* to the same: and he also represented, that the said Paper was a just *double* of his *Adherence* given in to the Presbytery of Dunfermline at their foresaid meeting: And the same was read; the *tenor* whereof follows.

I Hereby adhere to the same Protestation as above, with the grounds thereof, as sufficient, complexly considered; and to the same Secession; but under the limitation, and in the sense following, which I think fit to explain more fully than is above expressed. I having been called forth in providence to lay before this Presbytery, as well as formerly before the Commission of the General Assembly, the fore-mentioned Representation and Testimony, not only judge it my duty to adhere thereunto; but also judge it would be a sinful omission in me, not to embrace any opportunity providence shall offer, in conjunction with others, for emitting to this, and transmitting to the rising generation, the same Testimony more fully, which I have offered to the judicatories in shorter hints, and for doing it in as formal and explicit a way as can be; which I think, not only the four brethren above-mentioned, in their present situation, but also any other part or number of the ministers of this church meeting together in the name of the Lord, may lawfully do; especially in a day of the Lord's anger, on account of the sins, errors, and backslidings of the church; in order to bear witness for the cause of Christ and his truths, and against the defections of the church and land wherein they live. And the four brethren being particularly

stirred up to this work by a remarkable chain of providences, I think myself obliged to join with them in this matter; not as they are a Presbytery, or judicatory, separate from the church of Scotland; but as they are a *part* of that same church, constituting themselves in the Lord's name, as a judicatory of ministers associate together, distinct from the present judicatories of this church, and witnessing against their corruptions and defections; insomuch that, by withdrawing from these judicatories at present, and joining with the said brethren, I intend and understand no withdrawing from ministerial communion with any of the godly ministers of this national church, that are groaning under, or wrestling against, the defections of the times, even though they have not the same light with us in every particular, contained in the foresaid testimony. Nor do I hereby intend, to preclude myself from the liberty of returning and joining with the judicatories of this church, upon their returning to their duty; and so far as my joining with the foresaid, or any other ministers in their lifting up the said Testimony, and promoting the end and design thereof, and the said return can consist together; seeing, if the judicatories, who at present either unjustly refuse, or unduly delay, to receive that Testimony, were acting a contrary part, and putting hand to Reformation, the same reasons that induce to this withdrawing, would necessarily induce to a returning, which I cordially wish I may quickly see good reason for.

So that, (as an eminent light in this church expresses it on another occasion,) 'Here is no separation from the church of Scotland, either in her doctrine, worship, discipline, or government;' but rather a cleaving more closely thereto, by 'departing or going forth from her backslidings and defections, as we are commanded by the Lord,' and from some judicatories because of these; 'and only a negative, passive, and conditional withdrawing;' not importing any 'resolution, never to join with them in any circumstance, but a present refusing to follow the declining part of the church,' while carrying on these defections, 'and a choosing rather to stand still and cleave to that part, though smaller, that is endeavouring to retain and maintain a covenanted Reformation.' Which Reformation, and the standing obligation of our covenants, national and solemn league, I was obliged judicially to own, both when licensed and ordained in this Presbytery; insomuch, that I look upon this present step I make for asserting and advancing these covenanted principles, and opposing the defections made therefrom, to be every way agreeable and consequential to these solemn vows and engagements.

And though I am sensible what a bad tendency division natively has, and desire to abhor and shun all divisive principles and practices, contrary to the doctrine, worship, government, and discipline of the church of Scotland, agreeable to, and founded upon the word of God; and judge it my duty to endeavour, through grace, to follow after that peace, that has truth for the ground and ornament of it: yet the safest way for pursuing peace, being to cleave unto Jesus Christ, who is the centre of all true and holy union, and to advance

the truth as it is in him; I therefore think myself obliged, leaving events to the Lord, to take the present opportunity of joining with other brethren, in what I reckon a faithful testimony for it, such as I have no access to promote, in the same manner with the forefaid judicatories as presently stated. Adhering, therefore, to the above Protestation and Seceſſion, as here explained, I thereupon take instruments.

RALPH ERSKINE.

AFTER reading the above *Adherence*, Mr. MAIR declared to the Presbytery, That he was of the same mind with his brother, Mr. ERSKINE: And both the said brethren, further represented, That they had read and considered the *Act* and *Testimony*, approved by this Presbytery, the third day of December last; and, that they *adhered* to the same.—And also they declared, That they were willing to *join* themselves to this Presbytery as members thereof.—After reading of both the above papers, and hearing their brethren fully thereupon, the Presbytery proceeded to *consider* the same; and they *found*, that the grounds upon which their reverend Brethren had declared a *Seceſſion* from the present Judicatories of the church of Scotland, were the *same*, upon the matter, with these upon which the ministers of this Presbytery had sometime ago declared *their Seceſſion* from the said judicatories.—And further, the said brethren having declared their *adherence* to the *Act* and *Testimony*, concluded at Perth; and their willingness to *join* themselves to this Presbytery as *members* thereof: Therefore, they *unanimously* agreed to receive them. Likeas, the PRESBYTERY did, and hereby do, cheerfully *receive* and *admit* their reverend Brethren, Mr. RALPH ERSKINE, minister of the gospel at Dunfermline; and Mr. THOMAS MAIR, minister of the gospel at Orwel, as *members* of this Presbytery; and appoint their names to be added to their Presbytery-roll. And this being intimated to them, they took their seats accordingly.

Extracted by

JAMES FISHER, *Cls. Pres.*



A P P E N D I X :

In which the Judicial ACT and TESTIMONY is extended to some PUBLIC TRANSACTIONS which have happened in this *Church and Nation*, since that *Testimony* was first Published; and the *Affertory Articles* pointed directly in opposition to other DEFECTIONS in both.

IT is almost impossible to determine what degree of influence a popular prejudice, or a violent attachment to a favourite interest, will acquire in the minds of particular persons. Neither is it to be supposed, in this degenerate state of human nature, that the most public *assertion* of the TRUTH, in opposition to the most palpable *deviations* from it, will make a deep impression on the minds of those who are sunk in an invincible ignorance; or are guided in their reasoning by obstinate bigotry*. On the other hand, those who are disposed to pronounce upon indisputable facts, with candour and impartiality; and who know any thing, either of the state of religion in Scotland, or of those measures which have been openly avowed, and invariably pursued by the judicatories of the established church, since the period in which the two preceding *Testimonies* were published to the world, will admit, upon the principles of our ecclesiastic constitution, that the GROUNDS of *Secession* from these

* It hath been held as fashionable language with some to say, that the *Secession* is *bigotry*, and *Seceders* are *bigots*. If, by *bigotry* is meant an ADHERENCE to the principles of the *Church of Scotland*, as these are exhibited in her excellent standards of doctrine, worship, government, and discipline, in agreeableness to the word of God, the *Seceders* frankly acknowledge that they are *bigots*; and if this has in it any thing criminal, they are condemned in good company, and may be kept in countenance by the whole body of *Reformers, Confessors, and Martyrs* in this, and other Nations, who held the same principles which they adopt. But if *bigotry* is understood to mean blind zeal, prejudice, or an unreasonable attachment to absurd opinions, it is long since they published a *Testimony* containing the principles which they wish to maintain; and they submit to the judgment of an impartial world, the candour and ingenuity of those who are pleased to brand them with the name of *bigots*. To determine this point is to give a fair answer to a plain question, Whether or not the rigorous prosecution of an *unscriptural* and *oppressive* plan of church polity, in opposition to repeated *remonstrances* against it; and in spite of all those fatal consequences with which it hath been followed, implies as much, or more *bigotry* to a party and particular opinions, as a conscientious adherence to the principles of that same church which are founded on the word of God, and represented accordingly in her received standards?

Judicatories, are vastly more strong and extensive now, than they are represented to be in these *Testimonies*, at the time when that *Secession* commenced. The truth of this, it is presumed, will appear from the following short Narrative of undeniable facts, which it is thought no less seasonable, than necessary at present, to subjoin as an APPENDIX to the preceding Testimonies; and as a public evidence before the world, that the *Associate Synod* are under *stronger obligations* than ever, to adhere stedfastly to the *Spirit*, and uniformly to prosecute the *design* of these Testimonies.

I. In the year 1737, and 1738, the greatest part of the *ministers* of this church, sinfully complied with a requisition of the British Parliament, enjoining them to read, from the pulpit, once every month, for the space of one year, after some part of divine service on the Lord's day, an *Act* for apprehending the murderers of Captain John Porteous; and that under the penalties of exclusion from their seat in church judicatories, and deprivation of stipend, in case of failure. While the Parliament of Great Britain usurped an unlawful supremacy over the church of God in Scotland, by imposing, as in this *Act*, their *civil mandate*, as a piece of pastoral service to be performed on the Lord's day; the *Ministers* who read that *Act*, agreeable to the order of Parliament, did, in so far, practically and publicly deny the *royal prerogative* of the SON OF GOD, who ALONE is King and Head of his church; and who ALONE hath power to enact laws for the government of this his Spiritual Kingdom, which is entirely distinct from, and independant of the kingdoms of this world: Or, what is little less dishonourable, they admitted the civil rulers of this nation, to a *degree* of power and authority over the church, which belongs unalienably to the glorified MEDIATOR between God and man.

II. The General Assemblies of this church have persevered in dismissing from the bar, without an adequate censure, such of their members as were impeached of palpable and gross *errors*; as is evident from the following instances, among others which might be mentioned.

I. Mr. JOHN GLASS, at that time minister of the gospel at Tealing, was brought under a process, first before the Presbytery to which he belonged, and afterwards before the Provincial Synod of Angus and Mearns, for teaching and publicly asserting; ' That the kingdom
' of Israel was of an ecclesiastical nature: That both the church
' and commonwealth of Israel were merely typical: That our co-
' venants, national and solemn league, were an unwarrantable con-
' founding and blending of church and state with one another:
' That NO CONFESSIONS OF FAITH, OR CREEDS, OUGHT TO BE
' USED as tests of orthodoxy in the church: That the civil magi-
' strate hath no more power, in ecclesiastical affairs, than the meanest
' private Christian: And that Jesus Christ hath appointed no jurif-
' diction in his church, superior to that of a particular congregation*.

* See Glass's works, published in 4 volumes at Edinburgh, 1761. Vol. I. page 142,—154.

2. Dr. WILLIAM WISHART, late Principal of the University of EDINBURGH, was brought, by process, before the General Assembly 1738, for asserting and publishing in his printed discourse; ‘That men are not altogether, if at all, vitiated by original sin* : That the light of nature may, in some instances, be sufficient to lead mankind to complete happiness † : That freedom of enquiry should not be restrained by any FORMULA of doctrine, or CONFESSIONS of Faith ‡ : That the minds of children should not be biased to the principles of a PARTY, by learning, or getting Catechisms by heart § : That the civil magistrate hath no power to punish heresies of any kind; but that his jurisdiction reacheth to those crimes only which are committed against the state: And, that all men ought to have a liberty to speak and write as they please, provided their sentiments do not endanger the welfare of civil society §.’

3. Dr. WILLIAM LEECHMAN, Professor of Divinity, and at present Principal of the University of GLASGOW, was, by process, brought before the General Assembly 1744, for asserting, in a printed Sermon †; ‘That God, merely as CREATOR, is the proper object of prayer: That an assured trust in the goodness and mercy of God, AS CREATOR, is the principal means of acceptance in prayer: That heathens, who never had a divine revelation of the mind and will of God, were, and still are, capable of offering unto God acceptable prayer; and that they were heard, accepted, and saved: and that man’s NATURAL ABILITIES are sufficient for the acceptable performance of prayer, without any regard to the INTERCESSION of CHRIST, or the influences of the HOLY SPIRIT.’

4. Mr. JAMES MEEK, minister at Cambuslang, was, at the instance of some of the elders, and others, members of that congregation, brought under a process, before the Presbytery of Hamilton, in 1774, (which process came before the General Assembly 1775,) for teaching and preaching, publicly; ‘That sincerity is the ground of our acceptance with God.’ And when speaking of Christ’s agony in the garden, ‘That we know not what was the cause of this bloody sweat, if it was not what he was to suffer from his disciples, one of whom was to betray him, another to deny him, and the rest to forsake him; or, what he was to meet with from the hands of his enemies: That all have a right to come to the Lord’s table, however ENORMOUS their crimes have been, if they RESOLVE to do better: That sinners can make some compensation to God, for their former enormities; and, that they have the merits of Christ to CO-OPERATE with their SINCERE endeavours: And, that when faith goes above or beyond reason, it is CREDULITY.’

In the first of these instances above-mentioned, respecting the case of Mr. Glas, it is well known, that instead of retracting his perni-

* See Dr. Wishart’s discourses, printed at London in one volume 12mo. Anno 1753. page 13. † Page 160, 161. ‡ Page 162, 216, 217. § Page 122. § Page 217.

† See Dr. Leechman’s sermon on prayer. The latest impression of it, is in the first volume of the *Scotch Preacher*.

cious sentiments, he adhered to all of them with an uncommon degree of confidence, if not obstinacy; disseminating them in every corner of the nation, where his influence could reach; setting forth an example in his own conduct, which his *disciples* have very faithfully imitated, by treating a conscientious adherence to the Reformation principles of the *church of Scotland*, with an unjustifiable degree of ridicule and levity*. The Commission of the General Assembly, it is true, did, in 1730, depose this noted sectary, from the office of the ministry: but it is as true, that the Assembly 1739, reponed him, in his office, as a minister of Christ; after which he became the father of a *sect* formed upon his own principles.

In the second and third instances here condescended upon, two of the most eminent seminaries of learning in this nation, were visibly contaminated with heresy; and the minds of youth, and more especially those who were rising to the office of the ministry, were, in the most imminent danger of being imbued with these pernicious principles which were held by their teachers: Yet the General Assembly, instead of inflicting an *adequate censure* on the offenders, which might deter others from adopting such dangerous sentiments, or giving their suffrage in support of injured truth, dismissed the process against those gentlemen, upon their making some *general* profession of their orthodoxy, and adherence to the Confession of Faith, received in this church; while, in the mean time, they never made any formal *retraction* of their sentiments, respecting the articles upon which they were libelled.

In the last instance, respecting the very extraordinary case of Mr. Meek, it will not be denied, that the Presbytery of Hamilton refused to receive the charge of error exhibited against him; that the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, reversed a part of the sentence of the Presbytery of Hamilton, relative to that affair; at the same time signifying their disapprobation of the Presbytery's conduct in almost the whole of that process: and that when the Presbytery of Hamilton carried the cause, by an appeal, to the General Assembly, the whole process was there dismissed; Mr. Meek was sustained as minister of Cambuslang; and not even the SMALLEST NOTICE TAKEN OF HIS ERRONEOUS DOCTRINE †.

* See a Preface, prefixed to the last edition of Mr. Glas's *Testimony of the King of Martyrs*, by ROBERT FERRIER; where, in very homely language, the Preface affects to ridicule the Seceders, and those principles which they maintain; that is, the *Reformation principles* of the church of Scotland.

† The sentence of the General Assembly, respecting the whole process, is in these words; 'The General Assembly having reasoned on this affair, did, and hereby do, UNANIMOUSLY dismiss the Process, in respect the parties were not regularly before the Presbytery; and do hereby set aside the whole procedure, posterior to the first of September last, had therein by the Presbytery of Hamilton, and the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr; WAVING THE CONSIDERATION OF THE CONDUCT OF THE PRESBYTERY OF HAMILTON, RESPECTING THE OBJECTIONS OFFERED BY THE PARISHONERS OF CAMBUSLANG; but sustain Mr. James Meek as minister of Cambuslang.'

For a more full account of this affair, the reader may, if he please, look into a *Narrative of the Case of the Parill of Cambuslang*, printed at Glasgow, 1775.

Very different from this was the conduct of the General Assembly towards those ministers, who were endued with integrity and fortitude, to oppose the prevailing defections of their times.—When the Seceding Ministers published a *Judicial Testimony* for the injured truths of God, and endeavoured to shew to the men of that generation their own and the iniquities of their fathers, as a mean to bring them to repentance and reformation; and when, with much labour, they dispensed divine ordinances to those of their fellow-christians, who could not in conscience submit to the ministry of intruders, and their violent partisans;—they were, in 1740, *deposed* from the office of the ministry; and, by a most arbitrary stretch of ecclesiastical power, were *thrust out* from their kirks, as if they had been the most infamous criminals.—Nor was this the only instance in which the Assembly carried rigorous and oppressive measures into full execution. When Mr. Thomas Gillespie of Carnock, by refusing to assist at the admission of an intruder to the parish of Innerkeithing, steadily resolved to obey God, rather than men, preferring the rights of conscience to an ecclesiastical mandate; he too was *deposed* from the sacred office of the ministry; and some of his brethren, members of the same Presbytery, who entertained sentiments similar to his, were, for several years, *deprived* of their seat in the judicatories of the church.

III. The *intrusion* of ministers, by a presentation from the Patron, where there is not even the *shadow* of a concurrence on the part of the congregation, is now become so common, that the greater part of the people, so long accustomed to that *oppressive* yoke, and to the *Arminian* or *Socinian* doctrines, which very frequently attend it; together with the *immoral* conduct of many of the clergy, have lost all sense of their Christian privileges, and of the essential qualifications of a *pastor according to God's own heart*. This again hath made way for a tame and abject submission to any Presentee, even of the most *worthless* character; who, if he can but obtain the appointment of the Patron, it will be in vain for the reclaiming congregation to plead either the *divine right* of the people, to elect their own pastors, or *his* natural or moral incapacity, in bar of his ordination, as the judicatories of the church, it would seem, are determined to proceed in spite of the most relevant and scriptural objections. The truth of this hath been fully demonstrated in the late settlement of Dunbar, Shotts, Eaglesham, Cambuslang, St. Ninian's, the Kettle, and many other parishes in Scotland. The effects of these measures have already been severely felt; and far from spending their whole force in the present age, they are likely to prove extremely fatal to generations yet unborn.—The sacred revenues of the church are grossly misapplied; and the important charge of many thousands of precious souls is committed to such as have no proper call to the holy office of the ministry, either from JESUS CHRIST, or *his* people; who, instead of preaching and instructing their hearers in the knowledge of the doctrines of Christ, which doctrines they solemnly engaged to maintain, in their ordination vows, have the effrontery to publish and propagate the contrary errors: instead of be-

ing *instant in season and out of season*, in the faithful discharge of the pastoral duties, they allot that precious time to the study and practice of agriculture, or other unimportant mercenary pursuits, which ought to be devoted to the service of God in the sanctuary.

On the other hand, it is to be regretted, that those of a more amiable character, who seem to have a real desire for the salvation of souls; and whom, it is hoped, God hath actually called to be his ambassadors to a sinful world, by a guilty compliance with the temper of the times; and by prostituting the gifts and grace which God hath given them, while they witness the ordination of intruders, and assist with them in the administration of the Lord's supper, should make themselves *partakers with them in their evil deeds*; and, instead of reclaiming them from the error of their ways, become the undesigned means of hardening them in their *detestable profligacy*. And, alas! that the conduct of those who have come out from among them, and are separated, should ever, upon any occasion, rather *provoke them to more ungodliness*, than bring them to shame, and an acknowledgment of the truth!

IV. The regular exercise of *government and discipline*, according to the word of God, and the standing *acts and constitutions* of this church, is grown into almost universal dissuetude; which hath drawn after it a long train of alarming evils.—The laws of God and the church are very seldom executed upon the crime of *adultery*, and many other prevailing immoralities; especially if the perpetrators of these crimes, are persons of rank and distinction in society. An indulgence, or abolition is, in many places of the nation, bought with money.—The seals of God's covenant are basely prostituted, when those who are *grossly ignorant*, as well as the *scandalous and profane*, are permitted to present their children at baptism, without any proper enquiry into their knowledge and moral character; or whether they ever make conscience of performing those duties to which they bind and oblige themselves, by solemn promise, upon that occasion: as also, when a *promiscuous* admission to the Lord's table is allowed, and tokens distributed indiscriminately to people of the *worst* of characters, provided they will only take the trouble to ask them, or even to send for them by the hands of their common servants. Nay, they are sometimes sent even unasked, by the hands of the kirk-officer; and many persons of the most *flagitious* characters are admitted to partake of that holy ordinance, provided they are not, at that time, under a *process* for immoralities; while, at the same time, no enquiry is made into their character or conduct in life, whether either the one or the other be such as becometh the gospel.—For the same reason it frequently happens, that gentlemen obtain a seat in the *General Assembly*, whose practice either in their family, or their social intercourse with mankind, is of a very different nature from that which is requisite by the word of God, and the standing laws of this church, for qualifying an elder to sit, reason, and vote, in the highest ecclesiastical judicatory of this nation*.

* By the standing laws and constitutions of this church, it is enacted, that in the commissions of elders to the General Assembly, it is to be duly attested, that

V. It cannot admit of a doubt, that many of the *ministers* in the established church, who profess to be firm friends to the essential principles of the constitution, and upon every occasion rank with the *minority*, who oppose the public measures of the prevailing party, have tamely acquiesced in the most *rigorous* and *oppressive administrations*; or, at least, have contented themselves with signifying their disapprobation in a *formal speech*, or a simple *vote*, which, perhaps, never had any other effect, than to raise a contemptuous *laugh* among the gentlemen in the other side of the house. Intimidated by the prospect of losing the fruits of their *benefice*, or filled with an unfirmountable attachment to a *national* establishment; or, perhaps, under the influence of something very different from either of these, they have never duly attempted to stand forth in defence of *bleeding truth*, by a vigorous and seasonable judicial testimony; or, by conscientiously withdrawing from the oppressing majority. And if, upon any extraordinary occasion, they use an uncommon liberty of speech, or adventure to disobey the commands of the church, as to what they apprehend to be really unlawful, some of them have afterwards, in the most public manner, *counteracted* their own professed principles; and, by a very singular accommodation of conscience, to particular circumstances, have, at the bar of the General Assembly, tamely submitted to *cenfure*, for refusing to do what, by their own Declaration, was *absolutely sinful* †.

‘ the Commissioner maintains the worship of God regularly in his family; and is known for his strict observation of the Lord’s day:—that he is of an unblemished character; circumspect in his walk; regular in his attendance on the ordinances of divine institution; and behaves, in other respects, agreeably to his office.’ But, by an *overture* introduced into the Assembly 1766, the attestation of the above is *dropped* out of the Commission; so that gentlemen may be elected, and received as Commissioners to sit and vote in the supreme judicatory of this church, who neither make conscience of worshipping God in their family, nor pay any regard to the religious observance of the Christian sabbath, or to punctuality in their attendance on divine ordinances.

† When Mr. Thomas Randal, minister of the gospel at Stirling, and other members of that Presbytery, were cited to the bar of the General Assembly 1774, to answer for their conduct in not attending at the admission of Mr David Thomson, to be minister in the parish of St. Ninian’s, they made answer to this effect: That it was impossible for them to attend, on account of the particular situation of their families at the time, and other circumstances: but they did not mean to rest their defence there; for, whatever respect they entertained for the judicatories of this church, yet that respect must give place to the duty they owed to God and their consciences, CONSISTENT WITH WHICH THEY COULD NOT ASSIST AT THE ADMISSION OF MR. THOMSON. After very long debates in the Assembly, the Moderator *rebuked* them from the chair; TO WHICH THEY SUBMITTED, WITHOUT UTTERING A SINGLE SYLLABLE.—*Tell it not in Gath!*—Are these the friends of the church of Scotland? Hath such conduct as this, before the bar of a General Assembly, any the least tendency to introduce reformation into her judicatories? Will it not rather stimulate them to perseverance in their present oppressive administrations; while it cannot fail to present to the leaders of the church, the most ludicrous and contemptible view of the feeble minority, when those who would be thought their champions, in the desperate contest, are struck with such notorious pusillanimity, in a cause of such magnitude and importance, in which the honour of God; the interest of religion; their own character, as ministers of the gospel; the edification of immortal souls; and the

C O N C L U S I O N.

THE present astonishing increase of *error and impiety*, in this nation, being only an advancement to greater maturity, from that state in which they were about forty years ago, the preceding papers ought, at this present time, to be considered as a *standing Testimony* for the truths of God, exhibited in our ecclesiastical standards, in opposition to the prevailing errors and practical deviations from them, in every subsequent period, either by open enemies, or professed friends.—When the first four of the Seceding Ministers made such public and repeated declarations of their steadfast adherence to those vows, which they made at their ordination, in the established church; and of their uniform attachment to those standards of *doctrine, worship, government, and discipline*, which she, as a church of Christ, hath received and avowed; it is certainly undeniable, notwithstanding the noisy clamour which some have attempted to raise to the contrary, that they never stated a Secession from the *constitution* of the *Revolution church*, or that religion *professed* in it; but only from the *prevailing party* in the *judicatories*, which were acting in direct opposition to the spirit of that constitution: and that the design of their Secession was to maintain a more steadfast adherence to that religion, which they had all along professed, than was consistent with their continuing in the established church.

On this account, the forgoing Testimonies are a standing witness against those who are called ANTIBURGHERS; because of their *unjustifiable separation* from their brethren, and the *unscriptural sentence* of *suspension, deposition, and excommunication*, which they in a most unprecedented and presumptuous manner, passed upon their fellow-ministers and Christians; not for any *error* in their doctrine, nor *immorality* of practice, but MERELY because they refused to exclude from sealing ordinances, all those of their fellow-christians, who had sworn, in their burghers-oath, to maintain the TRUE RELIGION, “presently *professed and authorized* within this realm, in “opposition to the *Remish* religion, called PAPISTRY.”*

peace of the country, are so deeply concerned?—But, since these professed friends, of the church, will prefer a *tame submission* to a *public Testimony*, do they look with a friendly eye upon those who have openly stated a *Secession* from the present judicatories, and are neither ashamed nor afraid to avow their principles? Nothing like it. Some of them have shown their aversion to the Secession, and to the principles professed by Seceders, in such a manner, as is better calculated to excite contempt than procure attention.

* *Error in doctrine* was not so much as insinuated in the pretended grounds upon which the Antiburgher brethren proceeded in their unchristian censures; and they have never been able to prove, (and, it is believed, they never will) that those eminent ministers of Jesus Christ, upon whom they inflicted such undeserved censure, were guilty of any *immoral practice*, which, according to the word of God, could make them *proper objects* of such a censure.—Passion and prejudice may coin moral evils, and retail them to the world with all the heat of an extravagant zeal; but if the Spirit of God, speaking in the scripture, does not put his stamp upon them, *reprobate silver* shall men call them, because the Lord hath *rejected them*. Never, perhaps, did a more fruitless controversy, than that about

The power which is lodged in ruling elders, equal to that of ministers, when sitting in church-judicatories, which is so fully ascertained in the Presbyterian form of church-government, and plainly avowed in the foregoing sheets, is likewise a standing *Testimony* against the *Antiburghers*, their extravagant pretensions to the whole power of the Associate Synod, while they were only a *protesting minority*, who had withdrawn in the *utmost disorder* *. For the same reason, their absurd decision, THAT RULING ELDERS ARE NOT PROPER JUDGES IN MATTERS OF FAITH, OR CASES OF CONSCIENCE, is most justly condemned; and every attempt to vindicate that absurdity, is, in so far, a DEPARTING FROM THE TESTIMONY.

The assertory article, in the *second Testimony*, relative to our great Redeemer's SOLE and ABSOLUTE sovereignty over the church, exclusive of all the powers on earth, is a standing witness against every *Eraastian*, *Prelatic*, or *POPISH* infringement of his royal prerogative †.

The repeated adherence of the four ministers, who composed and first published these testimonies, to their ordination vows, as ministers of the Revolution church; their open profession of subjection to the civil powers that then were; their repeated declaration of their adherence to our covenants, *national* and *solemn league*, in which allegiance to a *PRELATIC PRINCE* is solemnly *sworn*; their subscribing to the doctrine of our Confession of Faith, which, under the article

the burghs-oath, take place among any society of professed friends to Jesus Christ, under the New-Testament church. But, as the nature and tendency of some late acts of the British and Irish parliaments, seem to place this unhappy controversy in a more important point of view, than that in which it was formerly seen by the contending parties on either side: it may not be improper to propose the following *Queries*, to the impartial world; and a proper answer to these will show whether the extraordinary censure inflicted upon those who thought, and still think it lawful to swear that oath, were well or ill founded. 1. When our ancestors inserted the controverted clause into the burghs-oath of some of the principal burghs of Scotland, were they persuaded, that the *Protestant* religion and *Popery* were so perfectly inconsistent with each other, that the growing increase of the latter, would undoubtedly issue in extirpation of the former? 2. Did they reckon it absolutely *necessary*, not only for their own safety, but that of their posterity, that no man should be admitted a burghs, or put into places of power and authority in the burgh, who was a *Papist*, or secretly inclined to that cruel and intollerant religion? 3. While they acted under these views, was it *absurd*, or improper, to require a solemn proof that their fellow-burghesses and magistrates were to be their real friends, and not their implacable enemies? 4. Can it in any respect deserve the name of *persecution*, if they required this public test, considering what they had suffered from the hands of *Papists* in the preceding period, the remembrance of which was fresh in the minds of many? 5. Considering the *temper* of the present times, is it as expedient *now*, to swear to the controverted clause in the burghs-oath, as it was *then*; or, is it more so? 6. Considering the present *danger* arising from the attempts to obtain a toleration to *Papists* in Scotland, is it any how like professed witnesses for the truths of God, to make the swearing of the burghs-oath a term of *church-fellowship*, and ground of the *highest censure*?

* See an Act of the ASSOCIATE SYNOD at Stirling, 1747. declaring the NULLITY of the *pretended Synod*, that met at Mr. Gib's house. This Act is inserted towards the end of this Collection.

† See this article above, p. 149, 150.

of the *civil magistrate*, so plainly and explicitly asserts, That 'infidelity, or difference in religion, BOTH NOT MAKE VOID the Magistrate's just and legal authority, nor FREE THE PEOPLE from their due obedience to him †,' are, to this day, standing *Testimonies* against the absurd and unprecedented extremes of the *Antigovernment Party*, who call themselves, *The reformed Presbytery*. Attempting to support, by divine authority, their singular tenets, with regard to civil government, they have injuriously pressed the holy scriptures into their service; and, in manifold instances, as may be seen in their own printed *Testimony*, they have perverted the genuine sense and meaning of the oracles of the living God. Their practice, in many cases, is entirely opposite to that of the saints of God, mentioned in scripture, particularly those who lived under the Old-Testament dispensation of grace, who were frequently reduced to more peculiar circumstances, on many occasions, than any Christians ever were, who live in these latter days, and yet they never resisted the civil powers, under whose oppression they frequently groaned. Their conduct is directly contrary to the open and avowed practice of those faithful saints and martyrs of Jesus Christ in Scotland, whose offspring and successors they arrogantly pretend to be. These worthy men never refused subjection to CHARLES II. till the most oppressive methods were used to compell them directly, or indirectly, to acknowledge his *supremacy*, not only in the *state*, which they never denied; but even in the *church of God* in Scotland. Refusing to acknowledge this last, and oppressed by the powers that then were, they were obliged by the laws of God and nature to defend themselves with arms against the violent stretches of arbitrary power that was exerted upon them. Nay, the practice of those who adhere to the *reformed Presbytery* is, in some cases, a direct contradiction of their avowed principles; as is evident, from their paying regularly, in common with other subjects, the several taxations imposed by the present government, and their joining in processses carried before the civil courts, by which they openly declare, their obedience and subjection to the *civil powers that now are*, notwithstanding their professed principles to the contrary*.

† See the Confession of Faith, chap. xxiii. §. 4. with the scriptures quoted.

* There is not, perhaps, a moral duty incumbent on Christians, living under the dispensation of the gospel, upon which the *holy Spirit*, speaking in the *New Testament*, is more direct and explicit, than that of *subjection to the civil magistrate*. See Rom. xiii. 1,—8. Titus iii. 1. 1 Pet. ii. 13,—18. To elude the force of these scriptures, which, with all the weight of divine authority, strike at the very vitals of the *antigovernment* system, on this article; and, if possible, to make them say what the inspired writers never thought, and far less practised, the *reformed Presbytery*, (whose *Testimony* the reader is desired to consult,) have tortured them in a very extraordinary manner, with a view to reconcile them with their own professed principles. For a consistent view of those scriptures above-mentioned, the reader is desired to look into Mr. Boston's excellent sermon on schism; the *Associate Presbytery's* answers to Mr. Nairn's reasons of dissent; Mr. John Thomson, minister at Kirkintilloch, his *Presbyterian Covenanter DISPLAYED* in his political principles; with his *Presbyterian Covenanter DEFENDED* in his political principles, and the *IMPOSTOR CONVICTED*. That the Martyrs acknowledged king Charles his civil supremacy, and never took up arms in self-defence, till methods were used

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 every species of *Sectarian* principles.

They 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 steadfast attachment to the Reformation principles of the church of Scotland.—This 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*; the moral obligation of which, they absolutely *deny*, and treat with the utmost contempt †. Many of their ministers, contrary to the standing laws of the church, deserting their charge in the establishment, or elsewhere, without the consent, or intervention of ecclesiastical authority, are chargeable with a most *glaring schism*, while they pretend to be still within the bosom of the established church, and actually hold communion with her; and yet have erected ecclesiastical judicatories distinct from, and independent of her. It does not, to this day, appear to the world, that they abandoned their former charge, on account of those *defections*, which prevail in the church, and which obliged others, in former times, to withdraw from her communion; since, it would seem they never offered a *testimony* against any one of them, before the judicatories to which they were then in subjection, even when some of them might have done so at the bar of the General Assembly*. They have evidently perverted

to enforce their acknowledgement of his supremacy, as head of the church, is confessed by Messrs. Fairlie and Thorburn, as quoted by Mr. Thomson, in the second of the tracts above-mentioned, page 67, and 68.—But it will be said, the antigovernment people *do not* pay cefs, and other taxes. Perhaps they do not, in their own persons: but if they see another to do it for them, it makes no great odds. Is not this a species of vile juggling? If compliance with our present civil government, in any respect, be so sinful, it would certainly be more consistent, and more like those who act from conscience, to refuse that compliance, both directly and indirectly in every article: but if any belonging to the antigovernment societies, and in full communion with them, shall employ another, for fee or reward, annually to pay for *them* the land-tax, or other assessments laid on the subject, by the British Parliament, does not this rather look like tampering with conscience, than acting agreeably to the dictates of it?

† It is no more than justice to say, that those of the *Relief* communion do not stand single in these sentiments. A vast number, if not the greatest part of professing Christians in Scotland, as well as the ministers within the establishment, and even some of these last who wish to be thought hearty friends to the constitution, are remarkable for treating these solemn covenants with as much *obloquy* and *contempt*, as ever were thrown upon them by any of their brethren of the *Relief*.—Such a revolution in sentiments, and such a change of conduct, hath a century produced in a nation, the established religion of which is still that of Presbytery!

* If any minister in the church of Scotland shall, at his own hand, forsake his charge, his conduct is deemed extremely *condemnable*: as will appear from the following passages in the *Books of Discipline*. Book I. chap. iii. *Of admission of*

the doctrine of our Confession of Faith, relative to the COMMUNION OF SAINTS: and *their terms* of communion are indeed very different from those of the Church of Scotland in her best times; and are so general and undetermined, that they will admit Protestants of every denomination *. They seem to be under too little concern to keep

ministers, par. 11. 'The minister publicly admitted, may neither leave the flock at his pleasure, to which he hath promised his fidelity and labours; neither yet may the flock, &c. &c. But once being solemnly admitted, we can not approve that they should change at their own pleasure.' Book II. Chap. iv. par. 4. 'They that ar anes callit be God, and dewlie electit be man, eftir that they have anes acceptit the charge of the ministrie, may not leave their functions: The desertours sould be admonisht; and, in case of obstinacie, finally excommunicate.' Par. 5 'Na pastor may leive his flock, without licence of the provinciall or nationall Assemblie; quhilk, gif he do, eftir admonition not obeyit, let the censures of the kirk stryke upon him.' The reader may also look into Calderwood's history, near the end, in *Anno* 1564, and 1583. where the conclusion of a strong *Act* enent this affair, is expressed in these words: 'And if any be found to remove himself (from his flock) without the consent foresaid, the Assembly ordained, that he be deposed from his function and calling of the ministry.' Now, it will not be refused, that many ministers in the Presbytery of Relief, such as, Messrs. Baine, Cruden, Monteith, Boston, &c. deserted their respective charge in Scotland and England; and one of them (Mr. Cruden) hath of late deserted even his Relief congregation in Scotland, and gone into England, in the same disorderly manner, without giving any testimony against those evils which prevail in that communion, which they abandoned; and therefore, their departure out of it, did not, it would appear, proceed from any scruple of conscience. Mr. Baine had the most fair opportunity that ever was offered to any man, of giving his Testimony in the face of the General Assembly; but said not a word on that subject. Did Mr. Baine's separation from the established church proceed from principle, or from something else? If it could have been foreseen, that Dr. Wothertpoon would have so soon emigrated to America, would Mr. Baine have deserted his charge at Paisley?

* See the Confession of Faith, chap. xxvi. The ministers of the Relief take up their ground upon this chapter; and particularly upon the second section of it, in offering such *extensive* terms of communion: but it may not be improper to put them in remembrance, that our Confession speaks not here of *church-communion*, as some of them have openly declared to their people; but of *Christian communion*, in ministering with our substance, by *communicating* of it to supply the necessities of the saints, or, in doing other offices of kindness; as is fully evident from the scriptures quoted by the venerable Assembly at Westminster, in support of that article. That their terms of communion are very different from those of the church of Scotland, expressed in her standing *Acts*, agreeably to the word of God, will fully appear from the following extract of their minutes, expressive of their procedure as to this affair — 'The meeting being of different opinions, put a vote; Hold communion with those of the *Episcopal*, or *Independent* persuasion occasionally, upon supposition always, that they are by profession *visible* saints, or not? And the roll being called, and votes marked, it carried, Hold communion. And therefore, the meeting find it agreeable to the principles of THE PRESBYTERY OF RELIEF.—' Edinburgh, June 1st, 1774. We (the Synod of Relief) have been mistaken, and misrepresented exceedingly, either by the weak, or the designing; who have thought, as if in that judgment of ours, (quoted above in the first extract from their minutes) we had not been of the same mind, with what is expressed in the 25th chapter of the Westminster Confession of Faith, sections first and second, where our opinion of that important point, (namely, of communion with others in sealing ordinances,) is fully set forth; and the doctrine contur'd therein, is accordingly adopted by us. Nor, have we been less injured by any, who have alleged, as if by that judgment, we had opened a door to fellowship with the unbound IN THE ESSENTIALS

pure and intire ALL the ordinances of Christ, according to his exprefs command: and while they separate the *privileges* from the *discipline* of the church, not duly considering, that the latter is the guardian of the former, they attempt to put afunder what God hath joined together, to the open encouragement of immorality, by neglecting the exercife of some of the moft effential branches of church government and *discipline* †.

of the Christian faith, or the immoral; or even with Epifcopalians, in their hierarchy, and unferiptoral ceremonies; or with Independents, in their peculiar notions of church-government. While, at the fame time, we fcrupe not to affirm, becaufe we believe there are of both thefe denominations, who, from the moft fatisfying marks, appear to be received by Chrift; and therefore, we DARE NOT DENY THEM:—Though, when they join in communion with us, we do not conform to them, but they to us.' In the firft of the above extracts, the way in which the minute is expreffed is pretty fingular; for the Synod of Relief does not find thefe terms of communion which they have adopted, to be agreeable either to the word of God, or to the received standards and principles of the church of Scotland; but agreeable to the principles of the SYNOD OF RELIEF. In this, it muft be owned, they are very candid. It is upon thefe grounds that they admit to church-communion people of every different opinion, with refpect to church-government, notwithstanding what is asserted in the fecond extract; and even thofe who daily attend the miniftry of intruders, and regularly join with fuch in fealing ordinances. And thus inftead of giving proper relief to the oppreffed, agreeable to the professed design of their erection into a Presbytery, or Synod, they become instrumental in hardening them in their finful compliance with the defections of thefe times; in regard they cannot pretend to exercife upon them any of the discipline of the church, on fuppofition that they fhall be guilty of other scandalous offences, becaufe they are not properly under their infpection.

† The popular plea advanced, in fupport of fuch vague and extenfive 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. But, will the minifters in the Presbytery, or Synod of Relief, plead an *exclusive* privilege to difcern who are the children of God, and who are not? May they not often be in a *miftake* as to this matter? Hath the church any other ground upon which fhe can proceed in judging of real faintfhip, and in granting admiffion to the Lord's table, but a competency of knowledge, a profefion of faith in Chrift, and the purity of external deportment? May not a perfon have a right to the Lord's table, in the fight of God, and yet be inadmittable by the church, on account of fome particular circumftances in their cafe? And if fhe rejects them, on that account, will this amount to a denial of their faintfhip, of which, by the way, none is judge, or can be judge, but God himfelf? Is not an *error* in the head, with regard to the doctrine, or DISCIPLINE of the church of Chrift, as really a scandal in the fight of God, as an *immoral practice*; and therefore fufficient to exclude from fealing ordinances, in a church formed upon that plan of *discipline* which Jefus Chrift hath delivered to her in the holy fcriptures? If the apoftle authoritatively fays to the church of Theffalonica, and to all other churches, 2 Theff. iii. 6. *Now we command you, brethren, IN THE NAME of our Lord Jefus Chrift, that ye WITHDRAW yourselves from every brother that WALKETH DISORDERLY, and not after the tradition which he RECEIVED of us, whether it be by denying that form of government and difcipline, which Chrift by his apoftles hath appointed in his church; or, if he acts DISORDERLY in the criminal neglect of it, as a thing indifferent, as well as in any other part of his moral conduct, muft the church in any fubfequent period be condemned, becaufe in obedience to that apoftolical precept, fhe withdraws from him, and refufeth to hold communion with him?*

What has led thofe of the Relief principles, as well as a vaft number of others in Scotland, many of whom, it is hoped, are gracious perfons, to adopt and de-

The repeated condemnation of POPISH errors, and the cordial approbation of the precious truths of God, in opposition to them, so often mentioned in the preceding *Testimony*, in agreeableness to the word of God and our excellent standards; a stedfast adherence

send such vague and unwarrantable terms of communion, is an unhappy distinction which they make between those things in religion that are *fundamental*, or *essential*, and those that are *circumstantial*, or *indifferent*. But in what page of the inspired volume is this distinction to be found?—It is frankly admitted that there are some divine truths, and articles of faith, more clearly revealed in the holy scriptures, and of greater importance than others, in a comparative view; but will it therefore follow, that any truth revealed in the word of God, any ordinance of divine institution, or any thing that relates to the honour and glory of our exalted Redeemer, is, or ought to be, accounted a matter of such *indifference*, that professed Christians may either maintain, or deny it, adopt it into their Creed, or reject it, as shall be found most agreeable to their own inclinations, or the interest of their party? If any divine truth, or any divine ordinance, or any thing relative to the comely order and government of the church, could, with propriety, be called a thing *circumstantial* or *indifferent*, certainly our Lord Jesus Christ, would not have given such a peremptory and particular charge to the prophet Ezekiel, as that which is recorded, CHAP. xliii. 10,—13. *Shew them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and the goings out thereof, and the comings in thereof; and ALL THE FORMS thereof, and ALL THE LAWS thereof: and write it in their sight, that they may keep the WHOLE form thereof, and ALL the ordinances thereof, and do them.* Another solemn charge, exactly similar, and of the same import with that now mentioned, is recorded for our instruction, CHAP. xlv. 5. *The Lord said unto me, Son of man, MARK WELL, and behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, ALL THAT I SAY unto thee, concerning ALL the ordinances of the house of the Lord, and ALL the laws thereof; and mark well the ENTERING IN of the house, and EVERY GOING FORTH of the Sanctuary.* Now, if any thing might reasonably be thought *INDIFFERENT* about the form and order of the house of God, here delineated in vision upon the mind of the prophet, the comings in and the goings out of it; the terms upon which the worshippers may enter it, and the principles upon which they may go out from it, might be these *circumstantial* and *indifferent* things. Far from it. It is given in charge to the prophet, and to the whole house of Israel, to MARK WELL, and observe diligently the fashion of the house of God, in ALL THE FORMS thereof, and ALL THE ORDINANCES, and ALL the laws thereof; to set their mind to the serious study and careful OBSERVANCE of them, not as if they were things of *INDIFFERENCE* about which they might, or might not agree, and yet hold *communion* with one another, but as things of the greatest IMPORTANCE. It will be said, perhaps, that the whole of this passage in Ezekiel hath an immediate respect to the Jewish dispensation; and therefore is not a proof directly in point to the present argument. If any will be so hardy as to deny, that this whole passage, as well as the context, is a prophetic representation of the gospel church, it will be to very little purpose to reason with them upon any point of revealed truth. But is the solemn charge which Jesus Christ, the alone King and Head of the church, left with his disciples, a little before his departure to the Father, liable to any such critical exception? *Go, said Jesus to the disciples, Matth. xxviii. 19, 20. and teach all nations — to observe ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER I have commanded you.* Did the King of Zion appoint no particular form of government or discipline in the church, which is his spiritual kingdom, to be observed unalterably to the end of the world; or did he leave it as a thing *AMBULATORY*, to be accommodated to the temper of the times, which professing Christians in future ages, might practise in what form they please, or neglect it in a great measure altogether, as a thing *INDIFFERENT*, or *CIRCUMSTANTIAL*, provided this should suit either their inclinations or interests? If the blessed Jesus hath appointed, (as he certainly hath) a particular form of government and discipline, to be observed in his church, can we suppose, if we think and reason like Christians, that he took no notice of it in his instructions to his apostles, or that

to our solemn COVENANTS, so frequently expressed, in which POPYRY is in very particular terms abjured *, especially in the *National Covenant* 1581, in which a multitude of Popish abominations are distinctly mentioned, and publicly abjured, are standing *Testimonies* against the whole of that Antichristian system adopted and maintained by PAPISTS.—The condemnation of those tolerations granted to *Papists* by Oliver Cromwell and Queen Anne, and especially of that granted by James II. very plainly points its edge against all and every attempt to give countenance or support to that *grand apostacy* of the Christian church, the interest of which is totally incompatible with that of the pure and undefiled religion of the blessed Jesus, and tends no less to the subversion of civil society †.

he left them at full liberty to reckon it a matter of *indifference*, and to teach us to think of it in the same manner. Certainly not. *Teach THEM to observe ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER I have commanded YOU*, is the express commission; and those who, under the character of ministers of Christ, teach men otherwise, by calling some things *essential*, and others *indifferent*, with respect to the form and order of the house of the Lord our God and Redeemer, do, in so far act in direct opposition to his express orders.

* See a WARNING against *Popery*, lately published in name, and by appointment of the ASSOCIATE SYNOD. See also a small Tract intitled, *The ORACLES of CHRIST, and the ABOMINATIONS of Antichrist compared*; where the doctrines of Popery are distinctly pointed out, in their direct opposition to the whole current of holy scripture.

† In our *National Covenant*, sworn in the year 1581, we particularly abjure the ‘*usurped authority of that Roman Antichrist upon the scriptures*,’ by which he pretends to give them authority, fix their meaning, add to, or take from them, dispense with their obligation, forbid or allow the reading of them, as he pleaseth;—‘*upon the kirk*,’ pretending to be her infallible Spouse and Lord, having power to appoint whatever offices, officers, laws, ordinances, and ceremonies of worship, or even objects of adoration, he thinks fit;—upon ‘*the civil magistrates*,’ claiming a power to admit them to their authority, depose them from it, or require them to act implicitly as his tools, in enforcing his decrees or censures, with war, burning, or other like punishments;—and ‘*upon the consciences of men*,’ requiring them implicitly to regard his authority, believe his dictates, obey his commands, and submit to his censures, whether they be according to the word of God or not:—‘*all his tyrannous laws made upon indifferent things against our Christian liberty*,’ forbidding to eat flesh on Fridays, or in Lent,—to labour on days allowed by God for our civil employments, — to marry persons that are allowed by the scripture, &c. :—‘*his erroneous doctrine against the sufficiency of the written word, the perfection of the law*,’ pretending, that the Old and New Testaments are in themselves but an imperfect, obscure, unsensed, and unbinding rule of faith and manners; and therefore must have apocryphal books, traditions of fathers, and decrees of popes and councils, added to them; and must have their meaning fixed, and their authority to bind the conscience, given them by the Romish church;—against ‘*the office of Christ and his blessed evangel*,’ pretending, that saints can merit eternal glory for themselves, or even for others; that saints departed, and angels are advocates with the Father, subordinated to and along with Christ; that popes, and their underling priests share in his priesthood, while they blasphemously pretend to offer him up as an atoning sacrifice in the mass;—and in his prophetic and royal headship over the church, by authorizing doctrines, and enacting laws to bind men’s consciences; instituting seasons and ordinances of worship; setting up images instead of the gospel, to manifest him to men; substituting the works of men in the place of his justifying righteousness, and their natural abilities instead of his Spirit and grace, offered in, and communicated by the gospel :—‘*his corrupt doctrine concerning original sin*,’ pretending, that an inward proneness to evil thoughts, words, or actions, is no part of it; and that

In fine, while the FIRST assertory article in the preceding *Testimony*, bears witness for the *law of nature*, in opposition to the infatuated *Atheistical* writers of the present age, the SECOND maintains

it is perfectly washed away and abolished in baptism;—concerning ‘*our natural abilities, and rebellion to God’s law,*’ pretending, that even in our regenerate state, we can so far keep God’s law, as to merit saving grace for ourselves;—concerning ‘*our justification by faith alone,*’ pretending, that in justification, our sinfulness is abolished, that it is founded on our inherent holiness and good works, and that we are not justified through faith receiving the righteousness of Christ offered in the gospel, and divinely imputed to our persons;—concerning ‘*our imperfect sanctification, and obedience to the law,*’ pretending, that believers may in this life be as perfect, or more perfect in holiness, than the law requires;—concerning ‘*the nature, number, and use of the holy sacraments,*’ pretending, that these of the New Testament do not seal the promises of God, and benefits therein conferred to us, but effectually work real grace in us; and that beside baptism and the Lord’s supper, there are other five, *viz.* marriage, ordination, confirmation, penance, and extreme unction, which are his *bastard sacraments*, none of them having any divine appointment as seals of God’s covenant; and the last three, as used by Papists, no warrant at all in the scripture;—and of which, they say, baptism, confirmation, and ordination, imprint an indelible holiness or office on every receiver:—‘*with all his rites and ceremonies,*’ such as, marking the baptized person with the sign of the cross on his forehead and breast, exorcising the devil out of him, blowing thrice in his face, putting adjured salt in his mouth, anointing his nostrils with spittle, and his breast and shoulder-blades with oil, and the crown of his head with chrism, or sacred odoriferous ointment, putting a lighted candle into his hand, and a white robe on him, &c. all of which are practised by the papists at baptism;—the priest approaching, kissing, and perfuming of the altar, singing the *INTROITE*, lifting up the wafer and cup, washing his fingers, praying with his arms stretched out in the form of a cross, and many other antic ceremonies, which they use in the Lord’s supper;—and all these being ‘*without the word of God,*’ the sole standard of religious worship, must be sinful, profane, or devilish:—his ‘*false doctrine added to the ministration of the sacraments,*’ as that of themselves, or by virtue of the intention of the administrator, they are effectual to abolish sin, or confer grace:—‘*his cruel judgment against infants departing without the sacrament; his absolute necessity of baptism,*’ pretending, that such as die without it, must certainly be excluded from heaven:—‘*his blasphemous opinion of transubstantiation, or real presence of Christ’s body and blood in the elements,*’ of the Lord’s supper, ‘*and receiving of the same by the wicked, or bodies of men,*’ pretending, that by the officiating priest, his muttering of Christ’s words, ‘*This is my body, this is my blood,*’ over the bread and wine that he is consecrating for the Eucharist, they are really changed into the very substantial body and blood of Christ, and are eaten and drunk in a corporal manner, as other food, by all the communicants, however wicked:—‘*his dispensations with solemn oaths, perjuries,*’ allowing men, for money, services, or the pretended advantage of the church, to swear oaths, or enter into engagements, which they intend not to perform;—or to violate their lawful oaths of allegiance, treaty, marriage, vows, or other engagements, which they have contracted;—and ‘*with degrees of marriage forbidden in the word of God,*’ allowing uncles, nieces, nephews, aunts, or even brothers and sisters, by affinity or blood, to marry one another:—‘*his cruelty against innocent divorced,*’ holding them guilty of adultery if they marry, while the criminal party is in life:—‘*his devilish mass; his blasphemous priesthood, his profane sacrifice for the sins of the dead and the quick,*’ pretending, by the hand of the officiating priest, with a multitude of antic and devilish ceremonies, to offer up Christ in the consecrated wafers and wine of his supper, as an atoning sacrifice to the Father, for the sins of such as are in purgatory, or still alive on the earth:—‘*his canonization of men,*’ ceremoniously enrolling them in the list of saints, fit to be worshipped and served, as subordinate gods:—‘*calling upon angels or saints departed;*’ (N. B. Some of these last were monsters of wickedness,) praying to them for

the *divine authority* of the holy scriptures, against the shameless crowd of *Deists*; and the THIRTEEN following articles, are slated *Testimonies* against the *Socinian, Arian, Pelagian, Arminian, Antinomian*, and *Neonomian* errors of the times.

mercies needed, and worshipfully thanking them for favours received;—‘*worshipping of imagery*,’ such as pictures, or statues of divine persons, angels, saints, crosses, &c.;—‘*relics*,’ such as bones, hair, garments, houses, graves, &c. said to have once pertained to Christ and his saints;—‘*dedicating of kirks, altars, days*,’ with much ceremony, pretending thereby to put the former under their protection, and render them the property of some divine person, angel, or saint, and to make the latter sacred and venerable;—‘*vows to creatures*,’ directed to some angel, saint, or the like, binding the person vowing to their worship and service:—‘*his purgatory, prayers for the dead*,’ pretending that persons, who in life, were neither sufficiently fitted for heaven, nor bad enough for eternal damnation, are after death confined in a state of torment, till by their own miseries, and the indulgencies, prayers, and masses of priests on earth, their sins are fully expiated and purged away;—‘*prying or speaking in a strange language*,’ that is to say, their performing public worship in the Latin language, which the people, and sometimes the priests do not understand;—‘*his processions*,’ in which the clergy and people, in order to avert some calamity, or procure some notable favour, carry thro’ the streets to some church, images, crosses, consecrated wafers, or the like, singing *litanis*, and other prayers, as they move along in great appearance of order, requiring every one to mark a religious respect to the image, cross, or wafer, by kneeling, or the like;—‘*his blasphemous litany*,’ addressing angels, saints, crosses, especially the virgin Mary in prayer, and thanksgivings, as if they were really divine persons;—‘*his multitude of advocates and mediators*,’ pretending, that angels and departed saints plead our cause with God, avert his wrath, and procure his favours:—‘*his manifold orders*,’ of monkish or regular clergy; such as, *Benedictines, Augustinians, Franciscans, Dominicans, Carmelites, Jesuits, &c.*; and of secular clergy, whether cardinals, archbishops, bishops, deans, priests, deacons, subdeacons, acolyths, conjurers, readers, porters;—‘*auricular confession*,’ in which every person, under pain of damnation, must once a year, whisper into a priestly confessor’s ear, an acknowledgment of his most secret sins, in order to receive a judicial absolution;—‘*his desperate and uncertain repentance*,’ which, however great and sincere, leaves men without any solid hopes of escaping the punishment of their sin in hell, at least in purgatory:—‘*his general and doubtful faith*,’ in the exercise of which, men must make no particular application of God’s promises of mercy and salvation to themselves in particular; and hence have no solid persuasion of God’s gracious grant of salvation in the gospel, or expectation of the fulfilment of his promises; which faith is attended with no assuring marks of our being in a state of grace, or that we are certain heirs of eternal glory:—‘*his satisfactions of men for their sins*,’ by donations to clergymen:—*pilgrimages* to images, churches, tombs, or the like; *self-macerations*, by hunger, hard labour, lying in purgatory, &c.—‘*his justification by works*,’ pretending, that though the sufferings of Christ be the meritorious cause of our justification, yet our inherent holiness and good works, constitute us formally righteous before God as a Judge, and entitle us to eternal life:—‘*his opus operatum*,’ pretending, that the mere external reception of the sacraments is effectual to forgive or abolish bypast sins, and to justify us or confer real grace and holiness;—‘*works of supererogation*,’ in which some saints, as it is pretended, perform more obedience, and give more satisfaction for sin, than the law and justice of God demand, for themselves,—which overplus is put into the pope’s treasury; that, along with the superabundant merits of Christ, it may be, by the pope and his deputed priests, imputed to such as have not a sufficiency of merits for themselves:—‘*merits*,’ of congruity or suitability, by which the good works of unregenerate men, are said to deserve God’s saving grace;—and of condignity or equal value, by which the good works of regenerate persons, deserve the eternal happiness of heaven;—‘*pardons*,’ in which, at a certain rate of satisfaction by money, services, masses, or the like, the pope and his agents pretend judicially to absolve professed peai-

But while these our public TESTIMONIES strike so strongly, and to such an extent, against the errors and corruptions of others, are not we ourselves loudly called to use our most strenuous endeavours in the strength of the grace that is in Christ Jesus, that our practice may correspond with our profession? Ought we not to press after an increasing knowledge, faith, and experience in our own souls, of the sanctifying power of the great doctrines of salvation; that, being established in the PRESENT TRUTH, *we may no more be as children tossed to and fro, with every wind of doctrine?* How necessary is an holy and intelligent zeal for God, that we may declare his testimonies, *which we have heard and known; and our fathers have told us.*

tents, not only from ecclesiastical censures, but from all obligations to divine punishments, in time or eternity:—‘*peregrinations,*’ in which persons travel to visit some church, image, tomb, or the like, pretended to belong to Christ or his saints, in order to procure pardon of their sins, avert impending calamities, or obtain singular favours;—‘*stations,*’ weekly fasts on Wednesdays and Fridays, or little chapels to pray in, for obtaining indulgence in, or pardon of sin; also singing of anthems before the images of Christ and his mother;—‘*holy water,*’ consecrated for sprinkling persons or things, to sanctify them for public worship, or to protect them from satanical influence;—‘*baptizing of bells,*’ washing, anointing, and naming them after some saint, with manifold ceremonies, benedictions, and prayers, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,—to render their sound truly comfortable and edifying to Christian souls, and terrible and confounding to devils;—‘*conjuring of spirits,*’ ceremoniously charging them to come out of possessed persons or places; or to answer questions put to them:—‘*crossing,*’ marking with the sign of the cross,—‘*saining,*’ sprinkling with holy water, or repeating charm-like prayers over persons or things;—‘*anointing*’ them with consecrated oil or chrism;—‘*conjuring God’s good creatures,*’ ceremoniously charging storms, diseases, and other troubles to depart, as if produced by the devil;—‘*hallowing of God’s good creatures,*’ consecrating persons or things, water, oil, salt, ointment, altars, priest’s garments, utensils for worship, &c. to render them holy and effectual means of annoying the devil and his agents,—‘*with the superstitious opinion joined therewith,*’ that, being thus sanctified, they deserve a religious veneration:—‘*his worldly monarchy,*’ in which the pope acts as a civil prince, and claims an unlimited power over all the kingdoms of the world; particularly of professed Christians:—‘*his wicked hierarchy,*’ in which he, as heading the subordinate orders of cardinals, archbishops, bishops, &c. pretends to govern the spiritual concerns of the church, as the vicar of Christ:—‘*his three solemn vows,*’ of perpetual celibacy, voluntary poverty, and implicit obedience to clerical superiors;—‘*with all his shavellings,*’ monks or friars of many different orders, who have their heads shaven in different forms, to mark their distinguished holiness:—‘*his erroneous and bloody decrees made,*’ in the council held ‘at Trent,’ between A. D. 1545 and 1563.; in which most of the abominations of Popery, craftily varnished over, were publicly and solemnly established in the name of Christ and his Spirit, and a curse extending to all the miseries of time and eternity denounced against every opposer; which curse is to this day yearly, solemnly, and publicly denounced against every Protestant on the Thursday before Easter:—‘*with all the subscribers of that cruel and bloody band conjured against the Kirk of God,*’ the creed of pope Pius IV. formed for the full confirmation, and perpetual establishment of the decrees of the council of Trent; the articles of which, all that enter into office, or military orders in the popish church, are sworn to believe, maintain, and teach their people, under pain of the displeasure of almighty God, and of his holy apostles, Peter and Paul:—‘*with all his vain allegories,*’ in the interpretation of scripture, or in dispensing the Eucharist;—‘*rites, signs, and traditions, brought into the Kirk without warrant, from or against the word of God,*’ and consequently sinful and superstitious.

—*Shewing the generation to come, the praises of the Lord; and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done.—That they should make them known to their children: that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God; but keep his commandments: and might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not stedfast with God.*

How criminal is it in itself, and how cruel will it be to our descendants, if we either renounce in our heart, or betray by our conduct, those sacred truths which have been sealed by the precious blood of the Son of God, and conveyed to us at the expence of so many solemn vows, and severe persecutions! And when the church of God is, in the present age, so miserably rent into different parties, and so visibly stained with error and apostasy, let us discover a dutiful and becoming regard to her interest, by mourning in secret over her abominations; and, by our frequent and fervent supplications, let us give JEHOVAH no rest, 'till he revive us as in the days of old;—'till he make our JERUSALEM a praise in the earth;—causing her righteousness to go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth.

The END of the JUDICIAL TESTIMONY.



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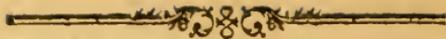


A
COPY OF THE LIBEL,
EXECUTED AGAINST THE
MINISTERS OF THE ASSOCIATE PRESBYTERY,
IN
Virtue of an Order from the General Assembly 1738.

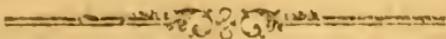
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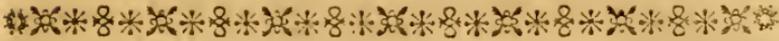
The Presbytery's REMARKS upon said Libel; containing
a genuine COPY of Mr. Ebenezer Erskine's PROTEST
in the Pulpit of *Stirling*, February 25th, 1739.

With a DEFENCE thereof.



THE Associated Ministers finding it in vain to remonstrate, as they had frequently done, against the growing Defections of these times, at last erected themselves into a *Presbytery*, and exercised a judicial Presbyterial Power. Sometime thereafter they published the preceding ACT, DECLARATION, and TESTIMONY; in which they took the liberty to point out, with a good deal of freedom and faithfulness, those oppressive and unconstitutional measures, in which the prevailing party were still persevering; and that in such terms as the judicatories had not, for some time past, been accustomed to hear. This, together with their preaching and dispensing sealing ordinances, agreeable to the word of God, and the call of providence at that time, irritated to such a degree, those who had the management in the established church, that the *General Assembly* 1738, passed an *Act*, strictly injoining their *Commission* to draw up and execute a LIBEL against the ministers of the *Associate Presbytery*. Accordingly the *Commission*, which met in March 1739, served each of those ministers with said libel, in order to their comparing upon it, before the next ensuing Assembly.—Here follows a Copy of that Libel, with some short Remarks upon it, which were afterwards published by the Presbytery.





A

COPY of a LIBEL, &c.

Edinburgh, the fifteenth day of March, One thousand seven hundred and thirty-nine Years.

WHEREAS, the government of Christ's church within Scotland, now happily established by the laws of this kingdom, agreeably to the word of GOD, is settled in the Kirk-sessions, Presbyteries, Provincial Synods, and General Assemblies of this national church; to which government, every preacher and minister of this church, at his admission, 'solemnly engages and promises to submit, and firmly and constantly to adhere to the same, and never endeavour, directly nor indirectly, the prejudice or subversion thereof; and to follow no divisive course from the present establishment of this church.' And whereas, the observance of these vows and engagements is absolutely necessary to the preservation of government and order in the church, and to prevent the ruin and subversion thereof: and the contrary practice of schism, division, and separation from the church, by ministers who have been admitted therein, and come under these solemn engagements, are crimes and offences that are contrary to the holy scriptures; particularly to the several texts and passages thereof, which require love and charity, peace and unity, to be promoted and cultivated in the church; these which condemn schism and division, and the forsaking of the Christian assemblies; and, finally, these which require all things to be done in the church decently and in order: and also, the said offences are contrary to the Confession of Faith and Catechisms, and stand condemned by a great many acts of General Assemblies; and also contrary to the foresaid engagements, and therefore deserve to be severely censured: **NEVERTHELESS**, it is of Verity, that you, Messrs. EBENEZER ERSKINE, minister at Stirling; WILLIAM WILSON, minister at Perth; ALEXANDER MONCRIEFF, minister at Abernethy; JAMES FISHER, minister at Kinclaven; RALPH ERSKINE, minister at Dunfermline; THOMAS MAIR, minister at Orwel; THOMAS NAIRN, minister at Abbotshall; and JAMES THOMSON, minister at Bruntisland, ARE guilty of the above-mentioned offences and crimes; in so far as you, the said ministers, have seceded from this church, without any justifiable grounds, by a total and constant withdrawing from the attendance upon, and submission, or obedience to the judicatories thereof; and are persisting in your unwarrantable secession, notwith-

standing your solemn engagements to the contrary, at your ordination and admission; the clemency shewed to some of you in the year one thousand seven hundred and thirty-four; and the tenderness to all of you ever since.—Further, you, the ministers above-named, have assumed a power of associating and erecting yourselves into a Presbytery, and have exercised a judicial Presbyterial Power, not only over your own congregations, but also over the whole church; a power to which never any Presbytery, duly constitute in this church, could or did lay claim; that, as a Presbytery, and in a pretended judicative capacity, you, or some or other of you, have framed and published to the world a printed Paper, called your *Act, Declaration, and Testimony*, wherein you have pretended, not only to assign the grounds of your unreasonable and irregular conduct; but also, with the air of a paramount power and authority, to condemn this church, and the judicatories thereof, for their proceedings; and to cast many groundless and calumnious reflections upon her and them.—That further, not confining yourselves to your own congregations and particular charges, you dispense ordinances to persons of other congregations, without the knowledge or consent of the ministers to which they belong: and have taken upon you, in some of these congregations, to ordain elders, to appoint and keep fasts in different corners of the country; and, by these practices, your proper ministerial work in your own parishes, is in a great measure neglected.—Moreover, that your schism may not die with yourselves, you have presumed to take some persons under probationary trials; and have actually licensed one or more to preach the gospel.—More particularly, you, the said Messrs. Ebenezer Erskine, William Wilson, Alexander Moncrieff, and James Fisher, have from and since the month of June, one thousand seven hundred and thirty-four years, been guilty of a total and constant withdrawing from the attendance upon and submission to the judicatories of the church; and have been absent from the meetings of the respective Presbyteries, within these bounds you have your fixed parochial charges, and that without offering any relevant excuse therefore: and you, the said Messrs. Thomas Mair and Ralph Erskine, have, from the sixteenth of February, one thousand seven hundred and thirty-seven; you, the said Mr. Thomas Nairn, from the twenty-second of September that year; and you, the said Mr. James Thomson have, from the twentieth day of June last, one thousand seven hundred and thirty-eight, the respective dates of your giving in to your several Presbyteries respective, formal secessions from this church, withdrawn, and been absent from the Presbytery's meetings, and sent no excuse for such your conduct.—And you, the haill defenders above-named, or some other of you, did, at a meeting of your pretended Presbytery, held at Abernethy, upon the twelfth day of May, one thousand seven hundred and thirty-eight; or one or other of the days of that month, or of the months of June, or July that year, license one Mr. JOHN HUNTER, to preach the gospel, as a probationer for the ministry; and thereafter, upon the thirteenth day of December last, one thousand seven hundred and thirty-eight; or upon one or other of the

days of the said month, you did, at a pretended meeting held at Stirling, appoint and direct the said Mr. John Hunter, to preach at, and within the parish of Larbert, and other places, in several corners of the country.—Further, you, or some or other of you, did, upon the twentieth day of May last, one thousand seven hundred and thirty-eight, or upon one or other of the days of that month, or of the months of June, July, or August that year, in a pretended judicial manner, take under your cognizance the case of ARCHIBALD EDMUND, against whom the sentence of the lesser excommunication had been past by the Presbytery of Dumblain; and you found, that the said Presbytery had acted unwarrantably; and you declared the said Archibald free from the scandal for which he had been censured, as above, by the said Presbytery; and appointed the said Mr. Ebenezer Erskine to baptize the said Archibald's child. At least, you the said Mr. Ebenezer Erskine did, in the church of Stirling, upon the tenth day of August last, or one or other of the days of that month, baptize the said child; and, at the same time, declared your warrant for so doing to be as above.—SIK LIKE, you, or some one or other of you, in a pretended judicial way, at a meeting, on occasion of a fast held by you on the twenty-eight day of September, one thousand seven hundred and thirty-seven, in the parish of Balfroun, did absolve from scandal THOMAS BUCHANAN, in the parish of Kippen, and FLORENCE GRAHAM, in the parish of Drymen.—LIKE AS, you, or some of you, did, at a meeting of your said pretended Presbytery, held at Perth, upon the twentieth day of October last, one thousand seven hundred and thirty-eight, or one or other of the days of the said month, take upon you to excommunicate one DAVID LESLY, baxter in Pleasance, in the Parish of the West-kirk near Edinburgh.—MORE OVER, you, the above-mentioned defenders, or one or other of you, did, upon the twenty-second day of March last, or upon one or other of the days of the said month, convene, with great numbers of your followers, at Braid's-Craigs, within the said parish of the West-kirk of Edinburgh, and then and there you did preach and baptize several children, without proper certificates from the ministers of the said parish, or the authority of the Presbytery of the bounds.—As also, you did, upon the first, seventh, and eight days of March instant, or upon one or other of the days of the said month, preach and baptize children, as aforesaid, in the parish of Stitchill, Morbottle, and Chanel-kirk.—Further, you, or some one or other of you, did, at a meeting held in the parish of Linton in Tweedale, upon the tenth day of March, one thousand seven hundred and thirty-eight, or one or other of the days of that month, or upon one or other of the days of March, April, or May that year, pretend to ordain, as elders, a certain number of persons belonging to other parishes than your own: and by these, and many other enormities, you have carried on and persisted in your schismatical courses; and your offence is aggravated, as to all or some of you, from your obstinate refusing to confer with the ministers of your respective Presbyteries, who, in obedience to an act of the late Assembly, desired conferences with you, in order to reclaim you.—

Lastly, you the said Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, upon the twenty-sixth day of February last, or one or other of the days of that month, protested against five elders, members of the session of Stirling, as elders of men's making, not of GOD's, and intruded upon the congregation by an Erastian and tyrannical ecclesiastical sentence, and summoned them by name and surname, their aiders and abettors, from the pulpit of the church of Stirling, to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, on the day determined in God's secret decree, to answer for their presuming to officiate as elders; and this notwithstanding, that the said five elders had been duly admitted into that office; and, by sentence of the last Assembly, were declared to be intitled to the full exercise of their office, for which they had been for some time interrupted, by certain irregular proceedings of you the said Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, and of other elders of that session concurring with you.—AND WHEREAS, by act of the late General Assembly, dated the seventeenth day of May last, one thousand seven hundred and thirty-eight, the Commission of the said Assembly is authorised and appointed to take such reports of representations, as were made to the Assembly concerning the conduct of you the said ministers, or as should be made to the Commission concerning your conduct, subsequent to that Assembly, under their consideration; and if the said Commission should see cause, to take all proper steps and methods for duly sitting you, the separating brethren therein named, before the next Assembly, to answer for your irregular conduct, and all the parts thereof; and also to do what they should think proper to prepare and ripen the case for the decision of that Assembly.—AND WHEREAS the Commission, at their meeting in November last, having considered the said representations, and your conduct before and since the last Assembly, DID RESOLVE and APPOINT, that a LIBEL should be drawn up and put into your hands, and that you be summoned to compare, at the bar of the next Assembly, to answer for your irregular conduct; and all the parts thereof: THEREFORE, the Commission of the General Assembly, in pursuance of the said act of Assembly, and of the resolution and appointment of the Commission, at their meeting in November last, and of the general powers committed to them by the Assembly, DID, and hereby DO, grant warrant to, and appoint

their officers in that part, conjunctly and severally, to pass and lawfully summon the said Messrs. Ebenezer Erskine, William Wilson, Alexander Moncrieff, James Fisher, Thomas Mair, Ralph Erskine, Thomas Nairn, and James Thomson, ministers, personally, or at their dwelling-houses, to compare before the next General Assembly at Edinburgh, the tenth day of May next, one thousand seven hundred and thirty-nine years, within the Assembly-house there, in the hour of cause, with continuation of days, to answer for the several particulars above-mentioned, and to hear and see the same sufficiently verified and proven; and being so proven, to hear and see the said Assembly give their judgment, and pass sentence in the said matter, as they shall find just: WITH CERTIFICATION, if the

said defenders fail to compear, that the General Assembly may proceed as if they had been present, or censure them for such their contumacy and contempt. AND LIKEWISE, the Commission grants warrant to the officers foresaid, to summon all persons contained in a list subscribed by the clerk to the Commission, to compear the time and place above-mentioned; with continuation of days, to bear true and faithful witnessing, in so far as they know, or shall be enquired at them in the said matter; with certification as effects. — This, by warrant and appointment of the said Commission of the General Assembly of the church of Scotland, dated the fifteenth day of March, one thousand seven hundred and thirty-nine years, is given at Edinburgh, and subscribed by

WILL. GRANT, *Clr. Eccl. Scot.*



ANSWERS to the foregoing LIBEL.

A Copy of the above *Libel* was put into the hands of every one of the Seceding Ministers, by appointment of the Commission of the late General Assembly, that met at Edinburgh, March 1739. It is not here intended to trouble the world with every *just* and *particular* remark that might be made upon the said *Libel*; but only to offer a few general observations upon the same, for the *vindication* of the conduct of the seceding ministers, and to shew the *injustice* of the charge that is laid against them by the present judicatures of this national church.

In the *preamble* to the *Libel*, it is narrated, That every preacher and minister of this church at his admission, ‘solemnly engages and promises to submit to our Presbyterian church-government; and firmly and constantly to adhere to the same: and that they shall never endeavour, directly, or indirectly, the prejudice or subversion thereof; and that they shall follow no divisive course from the present establishment of this church: and likewise, that the observance of these rules and engagements is absolutely necessary to the preservation of the government and order in the church, and to prevent the ruin and subversion thereof, &c.’—From the above and the other particulars narrated in the *preamble*, a *general charge* is subsumed against the seceding ministers, of being guilty of the crimes of schism, division, and separation from the church; and of walking contrary to the above solemn engagements.

The seceding ministers must, with regret, observe, That the present judicatures of this national church are counteracting the above-solemn engagements and promises, by an habitual act of *tyranny* in the administration; some particular instances whereof the Associate

Presbytery have given in their ACT and DECLINATURE, read in the presence of the late General Assembly; and therefore the charge may be justly laid against them, of pursuing such measures as have a lamentable tendency to the ruin and subversion of our Presbyterian government and order, whereby they are guilty of schism, division, and separation, by their departure from our covenanted order and unity, and exercising a *lordly* dominion, contrary to the word of God and laudable acts and constitutions of this church, both over ministers and other church-members.

It may be here justly enquired, how the libellers of the seceding ministers come to pass over, in their preamble, the *solemn engagements* that each minister comes under, firmly and closely to adhere to the doctrine contained in our Confession of Faith; as also their engagements, that they shall, to the utmost of their power, in their station, *assert, maintain, and defend* the said doctrine.—The present judicatures cannot but be conscious to themselves of the *heinous violation* of the above awful promise and engagement, by their dismissing the *erroneous* from their bar, either without *any* censure at all, or with such censure as was no way *adequate* unto the scandal and offence that they had given; yea, though they have had many *gross and pernicious* errors under their judicial cognizance, yet they have obstinately refused to *assert and maintain* the doctrines contained in our Confession of Faith, in opposition unto the many dangerous errors subverting the same, which they have brought to their bar.

The preamble charges the seceding ministers as guilty of such offences as are contrary to the *holy scriptures*, and particularly to those texts that require *love and charity, peace and unity, &c.*; as also of offences contrary to the *Confession of Faith and Catechisms*: but here the accusers of the seceding ministers wrapt up their charge in general. The seceding ministers are libelled as walking *contrary* to the scriptures, Confession of Faith, &c.; but not *one* particular text of scripture is condescended upon; neither is there any *one* article of our Confession and Catechisms mentioned, nor *any* particular act of Assembly named.—In every *well-regulate* court, where the procedure is legal, and not arbitrary, the *law* is particularly and expressly mentioned, to which the crimes libelled are supposed or alledged to be contrary; and the said crimes are duly compared unto the law, and if they are not contrary to the same, the libel is found to be *irrelevant*: but the above general charge, laid by the judicatures of the church against the seceding ministers, is of a piece with their former *arbitrary* procedure against the protesting ministers, *Anno 1733*: they charge them with acting contrary unto our standards, both supreme and subordinate; yet they have not pointed out one particular text of scripture, or any one of their laudable acts and constitutions, unto which their practice is contrary.—It is true, they alledge, that they are guilty of such offences as are contrary unto *these* passages of scripture which require love and charity, peace and unity, to be promoted and cultivated in the church; but all the passages of scripture which require love, peace, and unity, they also

require that TRUTH should be the foundation of peace, and the bond of unity and harmony: Zech. viii. 19. *Love the truth and peace.* The unity that we ought to pursue after, is the *unity of the Spirit*, Eph. iv. 3.; and the Holy Spirit is *the Spirit of truth*.—That love and charity which the Scripture requires, is very consistent with a faithful witnessing against the *sins* of a backsliding people; yea, a free and faithful witnessing against the sinful opinions and practices of our brethren, is inseparable from, or essential to the very nature of the law of love; Lev. xix. 17. *Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou shalt in any ways rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him;* or, according to the marginal reading, *that thou BEAR not sin for him.*—And it is plain, from the whole tenor of the libel, that the practices of the brethren, which are alledged to be contrary to love and charity, are only such practices as are necessarily involved in a free and faithful testimony against the present course of defection; which is so far from being their *sin*, that it is manifestly their *duty*; unless the law of love and charity is supposed to oblige them to forbear a proper Testimony against a *course of defection from the Lord*: but a supposition of this kind is a manifest contradiction to the whole tenor of the holy scriptures.

After the above general charge, a great many particular instances are adduced to support the same, and these are laid as special articles of libel against the seceding ministers; such as.

1^{mo}, 'That the said ministers have seceded from this church without any justifiable grounds, &c.; as also, that they persist in their unwarrantable secession, notwithstanding their solemn engagements to the contrary at their ordination and admission, and the clemency shewed to some of them in the year 1734; and the tenderness to all of them since that time.'

The seceding ministers have always owned, that they have made a *secession* from the present judicatures of this national church; but they refuse that ever they have seceded from the *communion* of the church of Scotland: and they have published to the world the *reasons and grounds* of their said secession, particularly in their first Testimony, emitted Anno 1734*; which contains their reasons at large for their protestation entered before the Commission of the General Assembly, November 1733. when four of the seceding ministers were *thrust out* from the judicatures by the said Commission, and thereupon declared their secession from them.—They have likewise, in the said paper, made it evident, that their *solemn engagements* at their ordination, stedfastly to adhere to the doctrine, worship, government, and discipline of the church of Scotland; and that they shall never do any thing, directly or indirectly, to the prejudice or subversion of the same, *indispensibly* oblige them to *depart from communion* with the present judicatures, who are carrying on with a high hand, a course of *defection* from our covenanted doctrine, go-

* See this Testimony printed above, p. 19.; and the reasons and grounds alluded to, p. 40,—71.

vernment, and discipline; and who refuse to be reclaimed, though the ordinary means have been used for this end.—When the libellers mention the *clemency* of the Assembly, *Anno* 1734. towards some of the seceding ministers, they no doubt mean the act past by the said Assembly, empowering the synod of Perth and Stirling to *relax* the said ministers from the sentence past by the Commission against them: but it is to be regretted, that justice was not done to the cause of truth by that Assembly, whereby a *doctrinal testimony* for truth, and a *protestation* for just and necessary exoneration, were both condemned, after a summary and arbitrary manner; and while the act of Assembly 1733, stands unrepealed, the seceding ministers can never judge, that the above clemency, in which the libellers boast, should have had the least influence upon the said ministers to depart from their protestation, or give up with their testimony concerning secession, given in to the Commission, November 1733.; especially when it is considered, that the judicatures are persisting in carrying on a course of defection from the Lord.

It is proper also to observe, upon the above article of libel, that the secession from the present judicatures is alledged to be *without any justifiable grounds*; and the said secession is condemned as *unwarrantable*, and the seceding ministers are, through the libel, charged as guilty of *schism*; yet the judicatures have never enquired into the *GROUNDS* of the present secession: they have never compared them with the *law* and the *testimony*; neither have they examined them by the *approved* acts and constitutions of this church.—We are told, that the grounds of secession are *unjustifiable*; and that the conduct of the seceding ministers is a *dangerous schism*: but what is offered on this head to *persuade* and *convince* the members of the church, of the justice of this charge? nothing at all.—They must take the *bare assertions* and *allegation* of the libellers, *viz.* of the Assembly 1738. and their Commission, as sufficient evidence and proof, that the grounds of secession are *unjustifiable*, and that the present secession is *unwarrantable*.—This is a dealing with men by mere church-authority, and unbecoming such courts who profess themselves to be presbyterian; and who, according to their principles, have no other than ministerial or stewardly authority from the head of the church, and who ought to declare his mind and will from his word, for the edification of the members of his body.

The second article of libel is, ‘That the seceding ministers have assumed a power of associating and erecting themselves into a Presbytery, &c.’ The said ministers judge that they have warrant from the word of God for their presbyterial association; and that they have given their grounds and reasons for judging so in the Preface to the Judicial Act and Testimony, to which they refer; and when they endeavour to testify against the defections of the present judicatures, as also judicially to assert the truths of Christ, that have been opposed and controverted in our day, they exercise no other power but what any Presbytery duly constitute, and in the same situation with themselves, may warrantably lay claim to.

The third article of libel is, ‘That the seceding ministers, as a

‘ Presbytery, have framed and published to the world a printed paper, called, *Act. Declaration, and Testimony, &c.*’

In the above article of libel, the Act and Testimony is condemned in bulk, without condescending upon any one particular in it, as contrary to the word of God, or our approved standards: and the seceding ministers may safely challenge any of their accusers, to shew them any one principle adopted in their Testimony, but what is agreeable to the word of God, and the laudable acts and constitutions of this church. The libellers alledge, that the Judicial Act and Testimony casts many groundless and calumnious reflections upon the church, and the judicatures thereof; but they have not mentioned one of these many alledged *groundless* reflections. The seceding ministers judged it their duty to point out particularly the deviations of the judicatures from the law and the testimony, and from our Reformation standards agreeable thereto; and it is to be regretted, that the judicatures are so far from being sensible of their backslidings, that they justify themselves in the same; and that when they are told their sins, they condemn such as deal plainly with them. This is the way that a backsliding church and corrupt church-men have always pursued: they have pronounced themselves innocent, and libelled and prosecuted such as have dealt faithfully and plainly with them, Jer. ii. 35. *Yet thou sayest, because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me; behold I will plead with thee, because thou sayest, I have not sinned,* Jer. xviii. 18. *Then said they, Come and let us devise devices against Jeremiah, for the law shall not perish from the prophet; come and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.* It is further alledged, ‘ That the seceding ministers, in their Act and Testimony do, with the air of a paramount power and authority, condemn this church, and the judicatures thereof, for their proceedings.’ If the libellers mean, that a few may not judicially condemn the proceedings of a numerous body, which are to the prejudice of truth; then, according to them, *numbers* must always bear the sway; and if *truth* is voted out of doors by numbers, then it must be deserted without a judicial testimony for it. At this rate the Testimony of the reformed, against the church of Rome, must be condemned, because the Romish clergy had numbers on their side; and Luther and Calvin, and our other reformers, according to this reasoning, assumed to themselves a paramount power over the church, and the judicatures thereof: but the seceding ministers may boldly affirm, according to the judgment of all our reformed divines, that when the word of the Lord is against a church, and the proceedings of the judicatures thereof, any one minister may testify doctrinally against the same; and if one minister may testify doctrinally, then a few ministers associate together, have a warrant and authority from the word of God, to emit a Judicial Testimony against such proceedings.

The fourth article of libel consists of several branches. The first branch of the said article is, ‘ That they do not confine themselves to their own particular charges, but dispense ordinances to persons

‘ of other congregations, without the knowledge or consent of the ‘ ministers to which they belong;’ and the libel afterwards descends upon their preaching and baptizing children without the bounds of their own congregations, and without the consent of the ministers, or authority of the Presbytery in the bounds.

As for the above article of charge against them, the seceding ministers would reckon it much more easy work and labour for them to keep themselves within the bounds of their own congregations; but since the judicatures of the church are breaking down our constitution, and scattering and oppressing the Lord’s heritage thro’ the land, as the said ministers have made evident in the papers emitted by them, and particularly, in the Act and Declinature read before the last Assembly; therefore, the Associate Presbytery are obliged, and judge it their duty, in such a situation of the church, to send some of their number to preach and baptize in different corners of the land, upon application made unto them by many of the Lord’s aggrieved heritage, who have seceded from the judicatures, and who have declared their accession to the said Presbytery: and as they dispense the sacrament of baptism to none without sufficient testimony concerning their walk and conversation, and previous examination of their knowledge, so they cannot see any ground for a libel upon this head, unless it must be made an article of libel against them, that they dispense sealing ordinances to such who voluntarily, and from conscience of their duty, depart from communion with the judicatures, who are carrying on a course of defection, and who accede to a Judicial Testimony unto the covenanted doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the church of Scotland.

The second branch of this article of libel is, ‘ That the seceding ‘ ministers have taken upon them to ordain elders in some congregations.’ And this the Associate Presbytery judge it their duty to do, that our Presbyterian order and government may be maintained and kept up amongst such as have subjected themselves to the said Presbytery; and they judge it likewise necessary, in order to the dispensing of sealing ordinances amongst them with more safety, according to the laudible rules of this church, that elders may be ordained among them, who may watch over the walk and conversation of professors, and who may be capable to inform the Presbytery, or any of the ministers thereof, concerning the walk and behaviour of the forefaids.

The third branch of the above article is, ‘ That the Associate ‘ Presbytery keep fasts in different corners of the country.’ As this is a day wherein the Lord calls to fasting, mourning, and girding with sackcloth; so it is to be regreted, that the present judicatures are so very negligent in this duty; and when they appoint days of fasting and humiliation, they refuse particularly to acknowledge their own sins, and the sins of former times: and therefore the Associate Presbytery judge it their duty to appoint days of fasting and humiliation in such places of the land, and amongst such as apply to them for that effect, and who profess their willingness to humble them-

selves under the many awful signs, grounds, and causes of the Lord's quarrel and controversy against us. As for what is alledged, that the seceding ministers; by their above practices, do in a great measure neglect their proper ministerial work in their own parishes, it is a bare-faced calumny: they may be satisfied to have their diligence compared in their ministerial work in their own parishes with that of their keenest accusers; and they may likewise confidently affirm, That notwithstanding of their Presbyterial Association, and the duties which it does oblige them unto, they are as little diverted from their proper ministerial work in their respective charges, as when they were in connexion with the judicatures, and approved by them for their diligence.

The fifth article of libel is, concerning 'their taking some persons 'under probationary trials, and their actually licensing one or more 'to preach the gospel.' The particular instance afterwards condescended upon in the libel, is their licensing Mr. John Hunter to preach the gospel.

It is what the seceding ministers acknowledge and own, that they have licensed the said Mr. John Hunter to preach the gospel, after he had passed through the ordinary trials, and was approved in them: and they judge it their duty, not only to license, but also to ordain men to the work of the holy ministry, whenever providence shall open a door for it, particularly among the scattered and broken heritage of God, who are groaning under the weight of intruded hirelings, and can find no help and relief from the present judicatures: and as their relief is one of the main ends of their presbyterial association; so, seeing that they are a Presbytery constitute in the name of the Lord Jesus, they doubt nothing of his warrant to commit the gospel trust to faithful men, and to send forth labourers into his oppressed and wasted vineyard.

The sixth article of libel coincides with the first, only they date the departure of the first four ministers from the judicatures, from the month of June 1734.; but, if they had narrated matter of fact, they ought to have dated their withdrawing from the judicatories from November 1733. when the Commission, in pursuance of the act of Assembly that year, thrust the said ministers out from communion with all the said judicatures; and that is what the libellers do very well know was the case.

The seventh article of libel is, concerning the licensing of Mr. John Hunter, which has been considered already.

The eight article of libel is, 'That the seceding ministers did, 'as a Presbytery, take under their cognizance the case of Mr. Archibald Edmund, and declared him free of the censure of the lesser 'excommunication laid upon him by the Presbytery of Dumblain.'

The said Archibald having, for the help of his memory, drawn up a paper as subject of private communing with his minister, relating to the public defections, and any concern he judged his minister had therein, with a declared design, mentioned in the said paper, to pave the way for his continuing to join his ministry with the greater freedom and edification; at the same time submitting to his

minister's instruction, in case he was in the wrong. But the minister, instead of endeavouring to instruct or gain his parishoner, with a spirit of meekness, by a friendly communing, upon his reading the said paper, falls out into a passion, and carries it before the Session: the Session refers it to the Presbytery of Dumblain, where, after long dependence, it issues in a sentence of lesser excommunication against him; which was intimate by order of the Presbytery from the pulpit of Logie. The said Archibald judging himself injured, and having no hopes of redress from the superior judicatories, lays an abstract of the whole process before the Associate Presbytery, who finding, by the said extract, that the above paper for conversation was the only foundation of the process against him, and that the man had a good title to represent unto his minister what was aggrieving unto him, without fear of censure; and considering that the great end of their Presbyterial Association, was the relief of the Lord's oppressed heritage, groaning under the arbitrary proceedings of the present judicatures, did therefore relax the man from the said sentence, and appointed Mr. Erskine to baptize his child, which he did accordingly: and they can easily justify their conduct herein before the unprejudiced world, by publishing an extract of the whole process, if it be found needful.

The ninth article of libel is, 'That one or other of the ministers of the Associate Presbytery, did, on occasion of a fast held at Balfron, absolve from scandal Thomas Buchanan and Florence Graham.' The case is in short this: the said Thomas Buchanan and Florence Graham, being in accession to the Presbytery, were married at Stirling, upon the Monday after the dispensing the sacrament of the Lord's supper at Gargunnoch; and, in their way home, they passed by the meeting for worship at Gargunnoch, with a bagpipe playing before the company. As this gave just ground of offence, so they were convey'd before the Associate Session of Balfron, and appointed to be rebuked publicly, which was accordingly done, by one of the ministers of the Associate Presbytery: and it is left to the unprejudiced world to judge if this is just ground for an article of libel. It may only be further noticed, that though the said Buchanan opposed that practice of playing on that pipe at that time, and yet was censured as above for not opposing it more effectually; yet we have not heard that any of these that were in company with him, and who were more active in that scandalous practice, and are still in communion with the church judicatures, have ever been censured for the same.

The tenth article of libel is, 'That the Associate Presbytery did take upon them to excommunicate one David Lesly, baxter in Pleasance, in the parish of West-kirk, near Edinburgh.' The case is briefly as follows. The said David Lesly having acceded to the Presbytery, did, after the said accession, espouse some principles everfivish of civil government; and having read a paper before a Committee of the whole house, containing his said dangerous principles, he was cited unto the Presbytery; and though the Presbytery used means to reclaim him, yet he adhered tenaciously to his principles,

and at the same time shewed an insolent contempt of the Presbytery; and therefore they judged it their duty to testify against his extravagant principles and contumacious practice, by laying him under the sentence of the lesser excommunication; and by recommending it to those that are under their inspection to withdraw from him, as a brother that walks disorderly: and it may be surprizing, that judicatures, who make such liberal professions of loyalty to the civil government, should make it an article of libel against the Seceding Ministers, *viz.* their inflicting the above censure upon one who had not only vented, but with the greatest contumacy maintained and asserted principles ever sive of civil government, refusing and despising the proper means of information and instruction, that he might be reclaimed from the error of his way.

AFTER some other articles of libel which have been already upon the matter considered, the last article of libel is laid against Mr. EBENEZER ERSKINE, minister of the gospel at Stirling, for protesting from the pulpit of the church of Stirling, against five elders there; which protestation is narrated by the libellers after their own way: but, that the unprejudiced world may be satisfied, it is thought proper to give the following short NARRATIVE of the case.

The two ministers of Stirling, particularly the late Reverend Mr. Alexander Hamilton, having opposed the intrusion of Mr. James Mackie upon the parish of St. Ninians, who was obtruded upon that people by a riding committee, the said Mr. Mackie did his utmost, in a way of resentment, to disturb the peace and quiet of the ministers and congregation of Stirling; for which end he insinuated himself upon five of the members of Session, who had formerly lived in as much unity with their ministers as any of the rest, and who had concurred with them in witnessing against the proceedings of the judicatures, as is to be seen in the state of the process against Mr. Erskine. However, a little after Mr. Mackie was intruded upon St. Ninians, they began to withdraw from diets of session for prayer, privy censure, and ordinary business, except when they came to serve a turn; for which conduct they were *gravely* and *judiciously rebuked* by the worthy Mr. Alexander Hamilton, a little before the administration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper in Stirling, April 1737.

Instead of receiving the rebuke kindly, and as precious oil, they behaved as if that worthy man had broken their heads; for, immediately after it, they deserted the Session, without giving any reason for their so doing; and though sent for again and again to attend the Session, and the duties of their office, especially upon the occasion of the sacrament of the Lord's supper in the place, they obstinately refused, turning their back, not only upon their ministers and fellow-elders, but also upon the ordinances of God; all of them, except one, leaving the town and going to neighbouring congregations, that day the sacrament was celebrated in the place, to the great offence and scandal of religion.

The two ministers of Stirling, Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Erskine, in order to prevent the profanation of the table of the Lord, entered

upon a resolution to examine privately all that should be admitted, and to appoint diets for that effect; and at the same time agreed to read the public WARNING which follows.

ADVERTISEMENT with respect to intended Communicants, agreed upon by the ministers of the place. Stirling, Feb. 3d, 1737.

1mo, That none apply for the benefit of that ordinance who have not a tolerable acquaintance with the principles of our holy religion, with their lost state in the first Adam, and breach of the covenant of works, and the way of recovery by a second Adam, and the covenant of rich and free grace, and through faith in him; and who are unacquainted with the nature, use, and ends of the sacraments of the New Testament, particularly that of the Lord's supper now in view.

2do, That none apply for the benefit of that ordinance, who are enemies to the covenanted doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the church of Christ in this land; and who are not resolved, through grace, to cleave to the Lord with full purpose of heart, in faith, love, and gospel-obedience thereunto.

3tio, That none apply for the benefit of that ordinance, who live in the neglect of secret and family-worship; or do for ordinary absent from public worship, whether on Sabbath or week-day, unnecessarily; and slight diets of Catechising, as if those were not worthy of their attendance.

4to, That none apply for the above benefit, who have not a conversation becoming the gospel, in religion, righteousness, and sobriety, but are ungodly and immoral in their practice; such as, cursers, swearers, perjured persons, false-witnesses, liars, backbiters, Sabbath-breakers, unclean persons, drunkards, tipplers; also those that are unfaithful in their several stations and relations, whether as superiors, inferiors, or equals: particularly such as drive any unlawful trade or occupation, or who do not make a lawful use of their lawful callings, or who are cheaters, or oppressors of their neighbours: and likewise, all those that are at variance with their neighbours, or who entertain malice in their heart at them.

This practice of the two ministers, according to the above resolve, was mightily cried down by those who wanted to kindle the flame of jealousy and division in the place, as if it were a thing absolutely unlawful or unprecedented; although it is well known that the like practice has been observed by a great many ministers in this church, in order to prevent unworthy partaking of that solemn ordinance.

The five elders were prompted to make the above practice a ground of complaint unto the judicatures; accordingly, after the sacrament, when the session was met for distributing the collections to the poor, the foresaid five elders compare with a protest full of false and injurious reflections upon their ministers and fellow-elders; withal protesting, that all the acts and deeds of the session should be held null and void, while Mr. Erskine sit there as moderator or member, although his relation to the congregation of Stirling still subsisted.

Means having been used to bring this protest to the superior judicatures, the Rev. Mr. Hamilton was called home to glory, January 1738. while this process was in dependence; and as he was frequently heard to say, that these five men would bring his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave, so they expressed so little concern at the removal of that faithful minister of Jesus Christ from among them, that when his corpse was within two hours, or thereby, of its interment, they were insisting before the Presbytery then sitting, that their process against him and the other members of session should be called, and judged in: however, these are the men that must be supported in order to pave the way for the intrusion of a minister upon the congregation of Stirling. Accordingly, when the process is carried before the superior judicatures, these five elders are approved in their conduct, and declared to be the only session of Stirling; and the other twelve elders, who adhered to their ministers, in the faithful exercise of discipline, according to the rules and constitution of this church, and particularly in setting that rail about the table of the Lord, which they are expressly warranted and commanded in the word to do, are condemned, without any libel, or alledged crime: and it is left to the unprejudiced to judge, whether the conduct of the judicatures, in this matter, has not an evident tendency to set up the synagogue of Satan in the place, to the contempt and ruin of the discipline of the house of Christ therein.

AND now, to proceed to the special article of libel against Mr. Erskine, although no ecclesiastical judicature has found the twelve elders actually suspended from any part of their office, yet the magistrates of Stirling interposed their authority, by prohibiting them to collect the offerings for the poor; and appointing the five elders only to stand at the church doors for that effect: (which by the bye, they have done ever since, to the great loss of the poor of the place; and all of them, except one, withdraw from the public worship immediately after the congregation is convened:) whereupon Mr. Erskine, finding that the liberties and privileges of Christ's kingdom were so openly invaded, and seeing no visible way of redress, judged himself obliged, as minister of the place, upon the 25th day of February 1739. being the first day that the five elders collected, at the appointment of the magistrates, to exoner himself by a doctrinal protestation, in presence of the congregation, in the following express terms.

‘ In regard every thing in the house of the God of heaven ought
 ‘ to be done according to the will of the God of heaven; every pin
 ‘ of God's tabernacle in the Old Testament was to be framed and
 ‘ set according to the pattern shewed in the holy Mount; all the
 ‘ officers and offerings of that dispensation were to be of God's de-
 ‘ signation and appointment, much more ought it to be so under
 ‘ the New Testament church, of which the old tabernacle was a
 ‘ type and shadow. And because I perceive men standing at the
 ‘ gates of this house, collecting the offering of the Lord, who are
 ‘ intruded upon this congregation, to the exclusion of the lawful offi-

' cers, whom worthy ministers of this place, now in glory, as well
 ' as myself, have owned, and to whom this congregation have all
 ' along subjected as church-officers and rulers in the house of God ;
 ' but are now excluded by an erastian and tyrannical authority,
 ' civil and ecclesiastic, without any libel, process, or pretended
 ' crime, but merely by the arbitrary will of ecclesiastical courts,
 ' supported now by the civil authority of this place : **THEREFORE,**
 ' for my own exoneration, **I**, in the name of that great Lord, eter-
 ' nal Son of God, the only king and head of his church, by whose
 ' authority alone, officers are ordained or deposed in his church,
 ' and in the name of the injured elders of this congregation, and
 ' in the name of all this congregation, who adhere to them
 ' and me, as their officers and church-rulers, **DO PROTEST**
 ' against this violent intrusion of the five elders after specified, as a
 ' notorious invasion upon the prerogative of my great Lord and
 ' master Jesus Christ ; as a violent thrust at my own ministry, con-
 ' trary to the solemn covenant between this congregation and me ;
 ' as a robbery and rape committed upon this congregation, contrary
 ' to the liberties wherewith Christ hath made them free ; and an in-
 ' jury done to the lawful officers thereof : and I do **PROTEST,**
 ' that my officiating in this place is no countenancing of this intru-
 ' sion ; and that all the iniquity and bad consequences of this deed,
 ' with relation to the poor, and otherwise, shall be charged upon
 ' these elders, and those who have authorised them in this their way.
 ' —And I, for my further exoneration, as a messenger and herald of
 ' the great King, whose name is, *The Lord of Hosts*, do in his name,
 ' **SUMMON** the following pretended and intruded elders, Henry
 ' Christie, William Maben, Robert Banks, Andrew Millar, and
 ' Henry Allan, who have broken the comely order of the house of
 ' God in this place ; and all, whether in ecclesiastic or civil autho-
 ' rity, or others who have aided, abetted, and countenanced them
 ' in this their wickedness and iniquity, to compare before the bar of
 ' **CHRIST**, the king and head of his church, at the time he hath in
 ' sovereignty appointed, to answer for their conduct.—I do also,
 ' by the same authority as above, warn all in this congregation un-
 ' der my inspection, to beware of countenancing or owning the
 ' above-mentioned men as lawful officers in the church of Christ, as
 ' they would not partake of their sin and punishment.—As for par-
 ' ticular reasons of this protestation, they shall, if the Lord will, be
 ' extended at more length, and read openly to this congregation, if
 ' need be, and the occasion of this protest and declaration be continued.'

This protest and summons is by the Commission of the General
 Assembly looked upon with such an odious aspect, that they make
 it a special article of libel against Mr. Kirkcaldie : but had they con-
 sulted the history of this church, and considered the nature of the
 ministerial work, particularly of a doctrinal protest against notorious
 offenders, supported by corrupt judicatures, they would have been
 far from condemning this step as unprecedented, or any way incon-
 sistent with the duty of a minister, when unjust and unlawful sen-
 tences are passed to the manifest detriment of Christ's kingdom, and
 no probable view of redress.

The history of this church affords several examples of this sort, which shall be here insert as witnesses against the men of this generation, when they see how boldly the men of God, in former times, contended for the rights and privileges of Christ's house.

Mr. Andrew Duncan, minister at Crail, having compeared upon a citation before the high Commission court at St. Andrews, April 22d, 1619. he declined the court; and after they pronounced the sentence of deposition and imprisonment upon him, he gave in the following protestation. ' Now, seeing I have done nothing in this business, whereof I have been accused of you, but have been serving Christ Jesus my master, in rebuking vice in simplicity and righteousness of heart, I protest for a remeid at God the righteous Judge's hand, to whom vengeance belongeth, and who will repay; and summon you before his dreadful judgment-seat, to be censured and punished for such unrighteous dealing, at such time as his Majesty (meaning the righteous Judge of all the earth) shall think expedient, &c.' *

Mr. John Scrimgeor, minister at Kinghorn, having been deprived of his ministerial office, and sentenced to confinement in Dundee, by the high Commission court at St. Andrews, March 1st, 1620. he offered several reasons for stopping of their sentence, which being disregarded, he presented the following protestation. ' I protest before the Lord Jesus, that I get manifest wrong; my reasons and allegations are not considered and answered. I attest you to answer before his glorious appearance for this—and challenge *exceptionem fori ad legitimum forum et judicem*. Likeas, I appeal to the Lord Jesus his eternal word, the King my dread sovereign, his laws, the constitutions of this kirk and kingdom, the councils and assemblies of both; and protest that I stand minister of the evangel, and only by violence am thrust from the same.' †

The author of the fulfilling of the scripture relates the following passage concerning Mr. Robert Blair. ' After some time in the ministry at Banger, he with others of his worthy brethren, was silenced by the Bishop; and, as he told, himself was in the church when the Bishop (one Eckline) did himself intimate the sentence: upon which Mr. Blair rose up publicly in the congregation, and with great authority did cite the Bishop to appear before the tribunal of Jesus Christ, to answer for what he was doing, contrary to his own light and conscience, against those whom he knew to be faithful ministers of the gospel: whereupon the man was so astonished, that he immediately cried out, *I appeal from the tribunal of the justice of God, to the throne of his mercy*. To whom Mr. Blair replies, *Sir, your appeal is rejected; for you know what you are doing is directly against your conscience, which hath made you bear witness to us as the servants of Jesus Christ*. A few months after the Bishop fell sick, and the physicians enquiring about his case, he could only say, *My conscience*; and so died.' ‡

* Calderwood's hist. p. 730.

† Calderwood's hist. p. 749.

‡ Fulfilling of the scripture, 2d Edition 1671. p. 456.

Mr. Robert MacWard delivered himself in the following terms in a sermon: 'As for my own part, as a poor member in this church of Scotland, and an unworthy minister in it, I do this day call you who are the people of God to witness, that I humbly offer my dissent to all Acts which are, or shall be passed against the covenants and work of Reformation in Scotland, &c. 2dly, I Protest, that I am desirous to be free of the guilt thereof; and pray that God may put it upon record in heaven †.'

Although Mr. Erskine doth not pretend to the same measure of the Spirit with these great men, yet he judged it his duty to write after their example, especially when he found himself warranted by his commission in the word of God so to do, where the watchman is commanded of God to warn the wicked of the evil of his way, as he would deliver his own soul: and what is a doctrinal summons, but a warning that men must appear before God, to give an account of the deeds done in the body? And what is a doctrinal protest, but a solemn declaration and testimony against sin and for duty?—And for this way of solemn protesting or witnessing, Mr. Erskine, and every other minister have the prophet for a pattern *, 1 Sam. viii. 9. *Howbeit, yet protest solemnly unto them, and show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them*: where the Lord, to shew his great displeasure at the people's carriage towards him, commands the prophet, in his name, to protest against their procedure; howbeit, yet protest solemnly unto them: or, as the words are rendered upon the margin, *notwithstanding when thou hast solemnly protested against them*; which reading seems to agree both with the scope, and what is said, verse 19.—It is also clear from Jer. xi. 7. where the Lord sums up all his sharp expostulations, for not obeying his voice, and keeping his covenant in this very term of *protesting earnestly*. *For I earnestly protested unto your fathers, in the day that I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, even unto this day, rising early and protesting, saying, Obey my voice*.—The above practice is also warranted from 2 Thess. ii. 1. *Now, we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him*.—So that Mr. Erskine, or any other minister in like circumstances, may justify the above practice, both from the word of God, and the example of other ministers that have gone before us.

If the above remarks upon the libel against the Seceding Ministers are impartially considered, the reader may not only see that the said libel is groundless; but also that the present judicatures are still going on in a course of defection from the Lord, and that they refuse to be reclaimed; whereby they are filling up the cup of their iniquity: and this will further appear, when the act passed against the ministers of the Associate Presbytery, by the last Assembly, is likewise considered; which Act is subjoined to the end of the following Declinature.

† See Woodrow's history, p. 73.

* See Mr. MacWard's *Defence before the Council*, Woodrow's h. h. p. 80, 81.



ACTS and PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

MINISTERS and ELDERS Associate together

For the EXERCISE of

CHURCH-GOVERNMENT and DISCIPLINE, in a PRESBYTERIAL CAPACITY, met at Edinburgh, May 16th, 1739.

CONTAINING THEIR

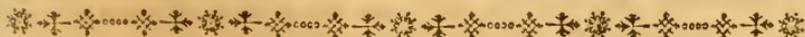
DECLINATURE.

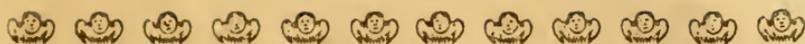
To which is Annexed,

The ACT of Assembly, May 19th, 1739. condemning the JUDICIAL ACT and DECLINATURE;

WITH

OBSERVATIONS upon said Act by the PRESBYTERY.





ACTS and PROCEEDINGS, &c.

At EDINBURGH, May 19th, 1739.

WHICH day and place, the ministers and elders associate together, in a Presbyterial Capacity, being met, there was laid before them the draught of an Act, *finding and declaring, That the present judicatories of this national church are not lawful nor right constitute courts of Christ; and declining all authority, power, and jurisdiction that the said judicatories may claim to themselves over this Presbytery, or any of the members thereof; or over any that are under their inspection.*

The said draught having been under the consideration of the Presbytery, at some former meetings, was at last meeting referred unto a Committee of their number to be transcribed *in mundo*, with such amendments as were agreed upon by the Presbytery. The said Committee laid the foresaid draught before them, transcribed and amended as appointed: whereupon the Presbytery proceeded to read over the said draught, finding and declaring as above, which was accordingly done; and, after some considerable time spent in prayer, and serious deliberation thereupon, the question was put, *Approve of the same, or not?* Rolls being called, and votes marked, it carried unanimously, *Approve*: wherefore the Presbytery did, and hereby do approve of the foresaid draught of an Act, *finding and declaring, That the present judicatories of this national church are not lawful nor right constitute courts of Christ; and declining all authority, power, and jurisdiction that the said judicatories may claim to themselves over this Presbytery, or any of the members thereof, or over any that are under their inspection; and they declare and enact accordingly: the tenor whereof follows.*

The DECLINATURE.

ACT of the ASSOCIATE PRESBYTERY; finding and declaring, that the PRESENT JUDICATURES of this NATIONAL CHURCH, are not lawful nor right constitute Courts of CHRIST; and declining all authority, power, and jurisdiction that the said Judicatures may claim to themselves, over the said Presbytery, or any of the members thereof, or over any that are under their inspection; and particularly declining the authority of a General Assembly, now met at Edinburgh, the tenth day of May, one thousand seven hundred and thirty-nine years.

At EDINBURGH, May 16th, 1739.

THE which day and place, the ministers and elders, associate together, in a Presbyterial Capacity, being met in the Presbytery; and seriously considering, That Provincial and National Synods, as well as classical Presbyteries, when duly constitute, and regularly proceeding, according to the laws laid down in the word by the Lord Jesus Christ, the only King, Judge, and Lawgiver unto his church and people, are special and effectual means, through the divine blessing, for edifying the body of Christ; for preserving his institutions in their beauty and purity; for asserting and vindicating the truths of Christ, when opposed and subverted, by cunning seducers; for maintaining the just rights and privileges wherewith Christ has made his people free; for purging the house of God of such as are erroneous in principle, or immoral in their practice; and for removing offences whereby the flock of Christ may be wounded, scattered, and broken: and consequently, for maintaining and preserving unity, peace, and truth, in the church of Christ, to the honour and glory of the Redeemer; for the perfecting of his saints, for the edifying of his body; till they all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, and to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; and that they may not be tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive: But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ, Eph. iv. 11,—16.—As also, the Presbytery considering, that though the foresaid judicatures are an ordinance of Christ, for the above and like valuable ends and purposes; yet it cannot be refused, that there have been ecclesiastical courts, under the designation of Synods, both provincial and national, so corrupt in their constitution, and so irregular in their procedure, that the keys of government and discipline, committed by the glorious Head of the church to the office-bearers of his house, for the

above-mentioned ends and purposes, have been *perverted* to quite contrary ends and uses: insomuch, that error has been countenanced and encouraged; a lax and corrupt ministry have been supported; and such as endeavoured to be faithful have been born down and censured; the heritage of God have been scattered and broken; laws and ordinances have been enacted, contrary to the laws and institutions of the Lord Jesus Christ, as will appear from the history of the Christian church in her different periods, and from the lamentable instances of this kind on record in the history of our own church, in her several backsliding and declining times.—Likewise, the Presbytery, taking under their serious consideration the state and situation of the present judicatures of this national church, have found, upon the weighty grounds and reasons afterwards specified, That the said judicatures, *are not lawful nor right constitute courts of Jesus Christ*; and therefore they are bound and obliged, in duty, to testify and declare so much *judicially*; and also to *decline* all authority and jurisdiction which any of the present judicatures of this national church may claim to themselves over this Presbytery, or any of the members thereof, as to their ministerial office, conduct, or character: and particularly, to *decline* the foresaid judicatures, as incompetent Judges in any question that may relate, either to the secession of any of the members of this Presbytery from them, or to the *Judicial Act and Testimony*, lately emitted by this Presbytery; as also, they judge themselves bound in duty to *refuse* and *decline* all authority, power, and jurisdiction, which the said judicatures may claim to themselves over any of the members of this church, who have declared their adherence to this Presbytery, and to the Act and Testimony emitted by them, and who have subjected themselves to their presbyterial oversight and inspection.

It is with regret, that this Presbytery find themselves obliged in duty to take this step. It would be matter of great satisfaction unto them, that they had not these grounds and reasons, which are of such weight and importance with them, as to oblige them to testify and declare in the above manner: and they reckon themselves especially called at this time, to declare themselves more fully and plainly, with respect to the present judicatures, than they have hitherto done; in regard, the several ministers of this Presbytery are cited to compare before this General Assembly, to answer unto a *Libel* framed against them, by the Commission of the late General Assembly, in consequence of an Act of the said Assembly: And therefore, they reckon themselves bound of necessity (as matters are presently situate) to take this step; and they judge, that they could not do otherwise, in a consistency with the principles of the reformed and covenanted church of Scotland, and with their duty to the glorious Head of the church; as also with the duty that they owe to the souls of them committed to their charge, and to the Lord's heritage and flock through the land. Neither could they do otherwise, in a consistency with the engagements they came severally under, when ordained to the office of the holy ministry, *viz.* 'That they should stedfastly

‘ adhere to the doctrine, worship, government, and discipline of
 ‘ the church of Scotland; and that they should, to the utmost of
 ‘ their power, in their station, assert, maintain, and defend the said
 ‘ doctrine, worship, government, and discipline; and also, that
 ‘ they should never do any thing, either directly or indirectly, to
 ‘ the prejudice or subversion of the same.’—All which do oblige
 them to testify and declare, That the present judicatures of this national church, are not lawful nor right constitute courts of Christ; and consequently, that they cannot warrantably claim to themselves any power or authority over the members of this Presbytery, or their forefald adherents. And they humbly and earnestly intreat all ministers, elders, and others, who desire to be found faithful unto the Lord in this day of perplexity and treading down, seriously to consider the following grounds and reasons of their present *Act, Declaration, and Declinature*, and to weigh them, without any partial bias, in the balances of the sanctuary.

I. When ecclesiastical judicatures not only receive into their number, but refuse to purge out from among them, and continue to support *intruders*, and such as are notourly known to be guilty of such *scandalous practices* as make them obnoxious to the censures of the church; and who therefore, have no warrant from the Lord and Head of the church to sit in his courts, they cannot be reckoned *lawful nor right constitute* courts of Christ: But the present judicatures of this national church, not only receive into their number; but refuse to purge out from among them, and continue to support intruders, and such as are notourly known to be guilty of such scandalous practices as make them obnoxious to the censures of the church, and who therefore have no warrant from the Head of the church to sit in his courts; therefore, the present judicatures are not lawful nor right constitute courts of Christ.

It will not be refused, that the Head of the church has clearly pointed out unto us, in his word, who they are that ought to *feed, rule, and govern his flock*. They must be such as he has *called*, Heb. v. 4.; and such as he has *sent*, Rom. x. 15.—If, in a civil court, where the judges are of the king’s nomination, any should presume to sit down upon the bench without the king’s warrant, or a commission from him; if this is known to the subjects, their allegiance to their sovereign binds and obliges them to *decline* the court, and to hold and repute all their acts and deeds as *null and void*. And this is not only the case at present, with respect to the judicatures of this national church, when such as have not the King of Zion’s warrant and commission to sit in the courts of his house are constituent members of ecclesiastical judicatures; but also the said judicatures support and encourage such, and refuse to purge them out from among them.—It is notour, that in all corners of the land, men are intruded into the pastoral office, and imposed upon the heritage and flock of God, in regard settlements have been carried on these many years bypast, by mere church authority, over dissenting and reclaiming congregations; and such as have been thrust into the

office of the ministry, are received into judicatures, and the right-hand of fellowship is given unto them.

Whatever sham pretences may be made, and whatever fig-leaf covers may be twisted together, to justify or palliate this violence that is done to the sheep of the Lord's pasture; yet this Presbytery judge, that they are warranted by the Lord's word to affirm, That such as are imposed by mere church authority, upon the footing of presentations, or otherwise, upon dissenting and reclaiming congregations, who are willing to chuse and call gospel-ministers, have no authority or warrant from Christ, the chief Shepherd of the sheep, to feed the flock; and that they are rather grievous wolves, who have entered in, to the tearing, renting, wounding, and scattering of the flock of Christ; and consequently, that they have no warrant from the king of Zion to sit in the courts of his kingdom: and that such courts who receive and sustain such men as constituent members, notwithstanding of remonstrances, and other means used by such as were aggrieved, to have them purged out, are not right constituted courts of Christ; and therefore his subjects have his warrant to refuse and decline their authority and jurisdiction. As the present judicatures of this national church are filled with many such constituent members; so it is notourly known, that through all corners of the land, notwithstanding of manifold petitions, complaints, and remonstrances, the present judicatures continue to support such intruders, and refuse to purge them out from among them.

Likewise, the present judicatures of this church are constitute of a great many members, who have given ground of offence to the church and people of God, by their *scandalous practices*, in promoting and carrying on a course of defection from our received and covenanted principles; and who, by these their scandalous practices, have rendered themselves obnoxious and liable to the *cessures* of the church, and against whom the spiritual sword ought to be drawn, if the discipline of the church were faithfully and impartially exercised. It is evident from the word of God, that such shepherds, who *scatter the sheep of the Lord's pasture*, are under scandal, and obnoxious to the censure of the house of God; for, a *wo* is pronounced against them, Jer. xxiii. 1, 2.—Likewise, the shepherds that rule the flock with *force and cruelty*, the Spirit of God pronounceth an awful sentence against them, Ezek. xxxiv. 1,—10. *Wo to the shepherds of Israel: should not the shepherds feed the flocks?—But with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them.—Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I am against the shepherds, and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock.*—Also, such as walk *disorderly*, and *not after the tradition which we have received from the apostles of Christ*, are declared to be under scandal, and liable to church censure, 2 Thess. iii. 6, 14, 15.

In like manner, according to the laudable acts and constitutions of this church; particularly act of Assembly 1638, anent *corruptions in the ministry*; and act of Assembly 1646, sess. 10. and act of Assembly 1648, sess. 26. if ministers are silent, and apply not their doctrines to the corruptions of the times; if they are flatterers and

dissemblers of public sins ; if they are silent and ambiguous in the public cause, they are to be censured according to the degree of these scandalous faults ; and, continuing in them, they are to be *deposed*.—And this is the lamentable state of the present judicatures of this national church at this day ; they are constitute of many such members as are not only *silent* in the public cause of God ; but, *dissemblers* of public sins : they are constitute of such members who *scatter* and drive away the flock of Christ, and rule them with *force* and *cruelty* ; and who depart from the traditions delivered unto us by the apostles of Christ in the holy scriptures ; and yet they are not ashamed of, but justify their scandalous practiees.—As for instance, the judicatures at present are constitute of such members, who have an active hand in exercising a *lordly* and *magisterial* power and authority over the flock of Christ ; and who have been active in *imposing* ministers, not only on dissenting and reclaiming congregations, but even where the Presbytery of the bounds have likewise been *dissenting* and *reclaiming* : and who have also invaded the power of Presbytery, in taking into their own hands the ordination of men to the holy ministry, under the shadow of a power and warrant from the Commissions of several Assemblies.—Likewise, the judicatures are constitute of such members, as have been active in *enacting laws* and *statutes*, contrary to the laws and statutes of the Lord and Master of the house : such as the act of Assembly 1732, anent the election of ministers to vacant congregations ; and the acts of Assembly 1733, against the protesting ministers, and the ministers of the Presbytery of Dunfermline. And though the act of Assembly 1732 is repealed ; yet the scandal that the contrivers, farmers, and enacters of it were guilty of, is unpurged to this very day, in regard the said act was repealed, only because it was contrary to some ordinary forms in passing acts of Assembly : But the dishonour done by the said act to the head of the church, and the injury done thereby to his members, has never been acknowledged and mourned over ; but, on the contrary, vacant congregations still continue to be planted according to the said act.—Also, the judicatures are constitute of such members as have been active, either in *screening the erroneous* from a just and adequate censure, or in *dismissing* them without any censure at all ; and they are not repenting of these and the like their sinful deeds : nay, rather in the whole tenor of their conduct and practice, they plead they are innocent, and justify themselves in a course of defection and backsliding from the Lord.—Therefore, these are the men who have *scattered* and *broken* the heritage of God at this day, and who have ruled them with *force* and *cruelty* ; and these are the men that *walk disorderly*, contrary to the traditions which we have received ; and who have caused *divisions* contrary to the doctrine which we have learned, whom we are called to *mark* and *avoid* : Yea, these are the men, who, according to the above cited passages of the word of God, and the above laudable acts and constitutions of this church, ought to be *deposed* from the holy ministry.

Wherefore, seeing the present judicatures of this national church have not only received into their number, but refused to purge out

from among them, and continue to support and countenance intruders, and such as are notoriously known to be guilty of the above scandalous practices, which make them justly liable to the censures of the church, and consequently have no warrant from the Lord and Master of the house to sit in his courts; this Presbytery cannot hold the said judicatures, who are constitute of such members, as *lawful and right constitute courts of Christ*; and therefore are obliged, in duty, to refuse and *decline* any authority, power, or jurisdiction, that they may claim to themselves over the members of this Presbytery, or such as adhere to the said Presbytery: as also, to hold all the acts, sentences, and deeds, that may be done or passed by the present judicatures against the fore-said, to be null and void in themselves.

II. If the conduct of the judicatures of this national church, for many years by-past, is duly considered; how they have been active in carrying on a course of defection and backsliding from the Lord, by *tolerating the erroneous*, by *supporting and countenancing error*; and by *enacting laws and constitutions*, contrary to the laws of the king of Zion: whereby ministerial freedom is suppressed, and new and unwarrantable terms of ministerial and Christian communion are imposed, and whereby the heritage of God is oppressed and broken, they cannot be held and reputed as free and lawful courts of Christ.

It is evident from the word of God, that the power and authority committed by the glorious Head of the church, unto her several judicatures, is a power for *edification*, and not for *destruction*, 2 Cor. x. 8. xiii. 10. The judicatures of the church can do nothing *against the truth*, but *for the truth*, 2 Cor. xiii. 8.; that is, for the vindication, support, and defence of the truth. The church-representative is in a special manner *the pillar and ground of truth*. She is obliged to publish and declare, to uphold and maintain the truth, in a direct opposition to such errors as are at any time vented to the prejudice and subversion of the same. The judicatures of the church ought to point out sin and duty; they ought to rid marches between truth and error: if they do not discharge their duty, when errors are broached and vented, they are chargeable with the prejudice done to truth, and with the growth and spreading of error; they are treacherous unto their Lord and Master, unfaithful to the flock and heritage of God, and unto succeeding generations.—But the present judicatures of this national church are *tolerating the erroneous*, and *supporting and countenancing error*; as will appear from their conduct, both towards Mr. Simson and Mr. Campbell; as also, from their conduct of late towards Mr. Wishart. It is well known, that a scheme of pernicious and dangerous principles was vented by Mr. Simson; as is evident from his answers to the first libel, in the first process that was commenced against him: yet the gross and dangerous errors which he maintains and defends, in his said answers, have never to this day been condemned; neither has the truth been judicially published and asserted in opposition to the said errors, even though the Committee of Assembly, *Annos 1728*, found it clearly proven, that he continued to teach the same dange-

rous errors. And when, as a just judgment upon this lukewarm church, from a righteous and holy God, he was afterwards so far left, as to impugn and deny the *necessary existence of the Son of God*, and the *numerical oneness of the three adorable persons of the Godhead*: and when this was found clearly proven against him, by the General Assembly of this church; yet, not only was he dismissed with a *slight censure*, but the judicatures have never to this very day asserted the *deity* of the Son of God, in opposition to the terms in which this important article of faith was subverted by the said Mr. Simson*.

—Likewise, though several dangerous errors, contained in some books published by Mr. Campbell, professor of church-history at St. Andrews, were taken under consideration by a Committee appointed for that effect; and though the said Mr. Campbell did maintain and defend his pernicious and dangerous principles before the said Committee; yet the General Assembly 1736, thought fit to *assolize* him from the charge of error; and to *dismiss* him without *any censure* passed against him, though his dangerous scheme of principles has a manifest tendency to subvert and overthrow natural and revealed religion; as is made evident in the *Judicial Act and Testimony*, published by this Presbytery, to which they refer †.—As also, the last General Assembly, when several gross propositions were brought to their bar, which had been excerpted by the Presbytery of Edinburgh, out of two sermons that Dr. Wishart had preached; yet that Assembly refused to examine, whether the said propositions were contrary to our *Confession of Faith* or not: but, instead of this, they acquit the Doctor, upon a declaration that he made before them of his adherence unto the several articles of our *Confession of Faith*, to which it was alledged the said propositions were contrary ‡.

—By their above conduct, the present judicatures of this church have involved themselves in the heinous guilt and sin of *tolerating* the erroneous in ministerial and Christian communion, and of *supporting* and *countenancing* the many gross and dangerous errors vented by them.

Likewise, *arbitrary laws and constitutions* have been enacted, whereby ministerial freedom is suppressed, and new and unwarrantable terms of ministerial and Christian communion are imposed: Such was the act of Assembly 1733, anent the ministers of the Presbytery of Dunfermline; whereby church members are debarred from sealing ordinances, if they receive them not at the hands of intruders; and ministers, by the same act, are threatened with the highest censures of the church, in case they dispense sealing ordinances to any, in such congregations where intruders are settled, without warrant from the said intruded incumbents.—As also, in the act and sentence passed against the protesting brethren by the said Assembly, both a doctrinal and judicial Testimony, against the above-mentioned and

* See an enumeration of Mr. Simson's errors mentioned above, p. 54, 55, 56; and more fully in the *Judicial Testimony*, p. 110,—118.

† See their condescension on above, p. 57. and more fully, p. 118,—121.

‡ See the Appendix to the *Judicial Testimony*, p. 169.

like defections of this church, was condemned. And the present judicatures of this church are so far from returning to their duty, that the violence done to the heritage of God, through all the corners of the land, is still carried on; as is evident from the conduct of the judicatures these several years bypast.

It shall only be further observed upon this head, That the supreme judicatures of this church have carried on a course of defection from the Lord, in opposition to *instructions* from many Presbyteries and Synods: as also, notwithstanding of *petitions* and *representations* given in to several General Assemblies from Provincial Synods; and from a considerable number of ministers, elders, and Christians thro' the land.—As the above means, of petitions and representations to the General Assembly of this church, were tried before a secession from the present judicatures was declared and stated; so the neglect and contempt that the General Assembly did cast upon the said petitions and representations, was an evidence that they hated to be reformed.

Wherefore, since the judicatures of this national church have been, these many years bypast, active in carrying on a course of defection and backsliding from the Lord, by tolerating the erroneous; by refusing to condemn errors that have been taught and vented; and to assert the truth, in opposition to the terms in which the said errors have been vented; as also by enacting laws and constitutions, contrary to the laws of the King of Zion, whereby ministerial freedom is suppressed, and new and unwarrantable terms of ministerial and Christian communion are imposed, and whereby the heritage of God is oppressed and broken: And since the judicatures of this church, instead of acknowledging and mourning over the above and like defections and backslidings, justify the steps they have taken; yea, libel and cite the several members of this Presbytery to their bar for censure, for no other reason, if their libel is duly considered, but because the said ministers endeavour to testify, in their sphere and station, that their above-mentioned deeds are evil; and all this, notwithstanding that the ordinary means have been used to reclaim them: Therefore this Presbytery judge they are well warranted from the law and testimony to declare, That the present judicatures of this national church are *not lawful* nor *right constitute courts of Christ*; and therefore to *decline* all authority, power, and jurisdiction, that the said judicatures may claim to themselves over any of the members of this Presbytery, or over any that have declared their adherence to their judicial Act and Testimony.

III. Though the office-bearers of the house of God, in all their spiritual functions and administrations, ought to walk only by the laws and statutes of the Lord Jesus Christ; and though their ecclesiastical courts are held in his name, who is King in Zion, and are subordinate to him alone: yet the present judicatures of this church have subordinate themselves unto the *civil powers*, in their ecclesiastical meetings, functions, and administrations; and therefore this Presbytery cannot own them as free and lawful courts of Christ.

It is very much to be regretted, that the rights of the Redeemer's crown have never been asserted by the judicatures of this church, in opposition to the manifold indignities done him, and the sinful encroachments made upon his spiritual kingdom, by parliamentary acts and deeds; and by unlawful oaths, bonds, and tests, during the late times of tyranny and persecution: and we have reason to acknowledge, that, as a just punishment of this our sin, the late act of parliament anent Capt. John Porteous, appointed to be read from the pulpits of Scotland the first Lord's day of every month, for the space of a year, is become a sad snare both to ministers and judicatures. The most part of the ministers of Scotland have read this act, in one shape or another; and they have thereby subjected themselves, in the exercise of their spiritual function, to the civil powers; in regard they have, in obedience to their authority, delivered the doctrines and commandments of men, instead of the lively oracles of God, to the church assembled together for the public worship and service of God; whereby the Sabbath of the Lord has been profaned, a wicked generation have been hardened, the sacred office of the ministry has been exposed, and the Lord's people stumbled and wounded.—Likewise, by their obedience to the foresaid act, they have directly consented to the parliament's taking the key of discipline into their own hands; in regard, that by one of the penalties annexed to the said act, it is declared, That such as do not read the same, shall be incapable of sitting and voting in any ecclesiastical court: whereby the parliament take upon them to suspend ministers of the gospel from the exercise of a considerable part and branch of their ministerial work. As this is a great encroachment upon the kingdom of Christ, and a sinful usurpation of his authority, who is the alone supreme Head, Lord, and Lawgiver to the church, his own spiritual kingdom; so the readers of this act have, in so far openly and expressly given up with his alone headship and supremacy over the same. And though all the judicatures of this church, supreme and subordinate, have met since the passing and reading of the said act; yet the readers of it are not censured; neither is there any judicial Testimony emitted by the said judicatures against the dishonour that is done to the king of Zion, and the encroachment that is made on his spiritual kingdom by this late act of parliament. And, indeed, it cannot be expected, that the present judicatures should do otherwise, when the most part of the ministers in Scotland are involved in this grievous sin and scandal.

And in regard that it is so, and that no judicial Testimony is emitted by the present judicatures against the foresaid act of parliament, and the reading thereof; therefore this Presbytery cannot but look upon the whole body of this national church to be involved in the sin; and that the judicatures thereof do now practically declare, that they hold their meetings in subordination to the civil powers, and not to the king of Zion alone; and that they have virtually and materially given up with the alone headship and supremacy of the Lord Jesus over the church, his purchased kingdom: Therefore they can-

not *own* the present judicatures as free and lawful courts of the King of Zion.

Upon the whole, in regard the present judicatures of this national church are constitute of such members as have *no right nor warrant* from the Head of the church to sit in his courts, nor to rule and govern his flock; yea, constitute of such members who are *scattering* the flock of Christ, and ruling over them with force and cruelty; by which, and the like practices, they have given great scandal and offence to the church of God: As also, in regard the said judicatures are, and have been, for many years bypast, in a judicative capacity, carrying on a course of *desfection* from our Reformation-principles, by protecting the erroneous, supporting and countenancing error, imposing sinful and unlawful terms both of ministerial and Christian communion, and otherwise: and further, in regard the said judicatures have virtually and practically given up with their *holding* of the King of Zion, in so far as they have neither censured the readers of the late act of parliament anent Capt. John Porteous, nor given any judicial Testimony against the indignities done to the Redeemer's crown by the said act.

Therefore, and for all the above reasons, this Presbytery judge it their duty to declare; likeas hereby they *find* and *declare*, That the present judicatures of this national church are not *lawful nor right constitute courts of Christ*; and therefore they did, and hereby do *decline* all authority, power, and jurisdiction, which any of the said judicatures may claim to themselves over this Presbytery, or any of the members thereof, as to their ministerial office, conduct, or character; or over any who have subjected themselves to their Presbyterial oversight or inspection. And particularly, for the grounds and reasons above-mentioned, they did, and hereby do *decline* any power, authority, or jurisdiction, that this General Assembly, now met at Edinburgh, may assume to themselves, of proceeding in a way of *censure* against all or any of the members of this Presbytery, for their secession from the present judicatures, their Presbyterial Association, or the matters contained in the Judicial Act and Testimony, emitted by them, or any other matters whatsoever, relative to the said secession, and the said Testimony; and that in regard the present judicatures cannot be competent judges, in a Testimony for the reformed and covenanted principles of the church of Scotland, from which they have so deeply swerved, by so many lamentable steps of desfection from the same.—And further, for the above grounds and reasons, this Presbytery did, and hereby do declare, That any act, sentence, or deed, that may be done, or passed against all, or any one of them, by any of the present judicatures, whereby their *ministerial office*, or the *exercise* thereof, or their pastoral office to their respective congregations, may be affected or prejudged, shall be held and reputed as *null and void* in itself; and that it shall be lawful and warrantable for them, notwithstanding of any such act, sentence, or deed, to exercise their ministry, in as full and ample a manner, as hitherto they have done; and as if no such act, sentence, or deed had been done

or past against them.—In like manner, they did, and hereby do declare, That notwithstanding of any act, sentence, or deed, done or past, to the prejudice of their *pastoral relation* to their several congregations, that the people of their respective congregations shall be held *bound* and *obliged*, according to the solemn engagements they came under, when the several brethren of this Presbytery were ordained to the holy ministry among them, still to own and acknowledge them, as their lawful and sent pastors.—As also, That they shall be bound and obliged to hold and account any, whether *ministers* or *probationers*, who, in consequence of any act, sentence, or deed, done or past against any of the members of this Presbytery, shall exercise any part of the ministerial work, in their respective congregations, as intruders upon their ministerial work and labours: And that in regard the members of this Presbytery have been, and are endeavouring, through the strength, conduct, and leading of divine grace, to display and prosecute the ends of a *Judicial Testimony*, for the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the church of Scotland; and against several steps of defection from the same, both in former and present times: to which Testimony, both ministers and people of all ranks in this covenanted land, are, by the solemn oath of God, bound to adhere.

THE particulars above-mentioned are some of the *grounds* and *reasons* that are of such weight and importance with this Presbytery, as that they cannot own the present judicatures of this national church, nor submit to their jurisdiction and authority. And it is matter of grief and concern unto them, that matters are come to this pass betwixt the said judicatures and them. Their consciences bear them witness, that they desire unity and harmony in the church; but the unity that they ought to desire is, the unity of the Spirit, even unity in the Lord: It is such an unity as may make for the glory of God, for the honour of truth, and for the real edification of the body of Christ; and therefore they do, with all sincerity, beseech the present judicatures of the church to *return to the Lord*, from whom we have every one of us deeply revolted; and to acknowledge and mourn over the sins of our fathers, and the defections of the judicatures, ministers, and people of the present age and generation; and to use proper means for the conviction and humiliation of such as have been intruded into the ministry, or who have been active in carrying on the course of defection: as also, they intreat them to display the banner of a *Judicial Testimony*, in asserting the crown rights of the Redeemer, and condemning the encroachments that have been made upon his crown and dignity of late, and in former times; and to assert judicially the truths of God that have been of late assaulted and opposed; and to condemn expressly the errors that have been vented, to the subverting and corrupting of the truths of God, and to the poisoning of the youth who are trained up for the holy ministry.—If these and the like duties were sincerely pointed at, then might this Presbytery hope for a beautiful unity, and a desirable harmony with the present judicatures; but they are

afraid, these their sincere and hearty desires shall be despised and contemned by the said judicatures: And therefore, they judge it their duty, with all humility, tenderness, and earnestness, in the bowels of our Lord Jesus Christ, to entreat and beseech their reverend, worthy, and dear brethren, both ministers and elders, who regard the covenanted testimony of the church of Scotland, and who desire to be found faithful to the Lord, that for the love they bear to the honour and glory of the Redeemer, and his despised truths; and for the sake of the weary, broken, and scattered heritage of God through the land; as also, that they may be in a capacity to transmit a faithful testimony to succeeding generations, to *come out* from the present judicatures, and from all *ministerial communion* with them, as they would not be partakers in their sins, in regard, they are constitute, as said is, of such corrupt and scandalous members; and are, in their judicative capacity, carrying on a course of defection and backsliding.—And, for the other reasons and grounds above-mentioned, they also do, in the same manner, intreat and beseech their said worthy and dear brethren, that they would make use of the keys of government and discipline committed unto them by the Head of the church, for the ends and purposes for which they are given them; that they would put to their hand to lift up the standard of a Judicial Testimony for the horn-down truths of God, and for purging and planting the house of God in Scotland, according to the word of God, and our Reformation-principles agreeable thereto, and after the example of our worthy progenitors in the year 1638; believing that the set time for favouring Zion, even the time that the Lord hath set, will come.

As for this Presbytery, whatever the conduct of the judicatures towards them may be; and however they may be born down, reproached, and despised, they are persuaded the cause is the Lord's: and however weak and unworthy they are whom he hath singled out in his adorable providence to put hand to a testimony for him; and whatever he may see meet to do with them, they desire to rest in faith and hope, that the Lord will build up his Jerusalem, in Scotland, and gather his dispersed Israel into one.

Extracted by me,

[Signed,] WILLIAM HUTTON, *Cls.*

THE Presbytery proceeded to consider after what *manner* their above act should be given in to the General Assembly, now met at Edinburgh: and being informed, that the said Assembly had this day determined to proceed upon a *Libel* formed against the ministers of this Presbytery; and that, in order to this, the said ministers should be called to their bar; therefore, the Presbytery unanimously resolved, that when the ministers of this Presbytery should be called in before the Assembly, they would go in before them as a *constitute* Presbytery, and that their *Moderator* should read their above Act in presence of the said Assembly; and in case their Moderator was hindered to read the said Act, or stopt in time of reading thereof, that

he should put it into the hands of the Moderator of the Assembly, or lay it down upon the table; and that thereafter the Presbytery should retire from the Assembly-house to their place of meeting: the Presbytery did then adjourn till to-morrow at ten of the clock; and concluded with prayer.

EDINBURGH, May 17th, 1739.

THE Presbytery being met; and considering, that, by their yesterday's Act, they had found and declared, that the present judicatures of the established church, are not lawful nor right constitute courts of Christ, they agreed to continue together in a constitute capacity; and that when called before the Assembly, to go in according to their resolution at yesterday's meeting: and the Presbytery having continued for some short time together, they were informed that the Assembly were calling the ministers of this Presbytery by their officer; upon which a brother was desired to pray for the Lord's presence and countenance in this weighty affair: Thereafter the Presbytery went to the Assembly-house, where the Moderator of the Assembly told them, "That though they were called to answer to a libel drawn up by the Commission of the late Assembly, yet he was warranted in the name of this Assembly to acquaint them, That notwithstanding of all that was past, the Assembly were willing to receive them with open arms, if they would return into the bosom of the church, and to let all bygones be bygones." Upon which Mr. THOMAS MAIR, Moderator of the Presbytery, delivered himself in the following manner: ' We come here as a PRESBYTERY, constitute in the name and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only Head and King of his church; and since I am at present the Moderator of the Presbytery, however insufficient for and unworthy of this trust, I am appointed as their mouth, to deliver their mind unto you, by reading an Act agreed upon by the Presbytery.'—But before the Assembly heard him further, they ordered the LIBEL, framed by the Commission of the late Assembly, to be read: After reading whereof, the Moderator of the Presbytery proceeded to read the Presbytery's ACT and DECLINATURE; and, after reading thereof, delivered the same, extracted by the clerk of the Presbytery, into the hands of the Moderator of the Assembly, who received it out of the hands of the Moderator of the Presbytery. Thereafter the Presbytery returned from the Assembly-house to their place of meeting; and having seriously considered the direction and assistance which they hope the Lord has been pleased to give them, in their essay at this time, of testifying in the above manner, the meeting of Presbytery was concluded with thanksgiving and prayer.

Extracted by

WILLIAM HUTTON, *Cls. Pres.*

ACT of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland,
concerning the Ministers who Seceded from the said
Church.

*At Edinburgh, the Nineteenth of May, One thousand seven hundred
and thirty-nine Years.*

THE General Assembly of the church of Scotland, having considered the Libel drawn up by the Commission of the last Assembly, and executed, in pursuance of an act of the Assembly, against Messrs. EBENEZER ERSKINE, at Stirling; WILLIAM WILSON, at Perth; ALEXANDER MONCRIEFF, at Abernethy; JAMES FISHER, at Kinclaven; RALPH ERSKINE, at Dunfermline; THOMAS MAIR, at Orwel; THOMAS NAIRN, at Abbotshall; and JAMES THOMSON, at Burntisland, ministers: together with the appearance of the said defenders before this Assembly; and that after the moderator, in name of the Assembly, had signified to them, 'That though they were called here to answer to a libel, the Assembly were very loth to be obliged to proceed upon it; and that, if the said defenders would now shew a disposition to return to the duty and obedience they owe to the church, the Assembly was ready to forgive all that was past, and to receive them with open arms.' The said defenders, instead of accepting, or being thankful for such lenity, produced, and offered to read as their answer, a Paper, intitled, *Act of the Associate Presbytery, finding, and declaring, that the present judicatures of this national church are not lawful nor right constitute courts of Christ; and declining all authority, power, and jurisdiction, that the said judicatures may claim to themselves over the said Presbytery, or any of the members thereof, or over any that are under their inspection; and particularly, declining the authority of a General Assembly now met at Edinburgh, the 10th of May 1739.* Upon which the Assembly caused the said libel to be read; and then permitted the said defenders, by the said Mr. Thomas Mair, who spoke as the mouth of them all, to read the said paper, and thereafter to give in the same; to which all the defenders declared their adherence: whereupon they were ordered to withdraw, after being directed by the moderator to attend when they should be again called upon by the Assembly; and they having been this day again called, and not comparing, the General Assembly found, and hereby find the said libel, *relevent to infer deposition*: and do find the same also proven, in its most material articles, by the said paper produced by them as aforesaid; and particularly finds it, by the said paper, proved, that the said defenders, have seceded and separated from this church, and have taken upon them to associate themselves into a Presbytery; and,

as such, have framed and published, and do adhere to the pretended *Act, Declaration, and Testimony*, libelled: wherein they endeavour to assign the grounds of their unreasonableness and irregular conduct, and take upon them to condemn this church, and the judicatures thereof, for their proceedings; and to cast many groundless and calumnious reflections upon her and them.—And further, find, that the said defenders, by the paper given in to this Assembly have had the unparalleled boldness to appear before the highest judicatures of this church, to which they have vowed obedience; and, instead of answering for themselves as panals, or defenders at the bar, pretended to appear as a separate, independent, and constitute judicature, and to read and pronounce an act of theirs, condemning this church, and the judicatures thereof, upon several groundless pretences, and to decline the authority of the same; and that they have further, in presence of the Assembly, by the said paper, taken upon them to speak in most injurious, disrespectful, and insolent terms, concerning the highest civil authority: THEREFORE, the General Assembly DO FIND AND DECLARE, that the said defenders, for the offences so found relevant and proven, do justly merit the highest censures of this church, and particularly, that of *Deposition*; BUT in respect, that in this Assembly, before they proceeded to call the said defenders, an inclination had been expressed by several members not to proceed to a final sentence against them at this time, but to forbear the same, yet another year, in order to give them a further time to return to their duty, and to render them still more inexcusable, if they should persist in their unwarrantable separation: and though from their behaviour at their appearance, and the paper given in by them, there is little hope left of their being reclaimed to their duty, but they seem determined to continue in their most unwarrantable and schismatical courses; and, as far as in them lies, to ruin and destroy the interest of religion in this church, this Assembly have thought fit to forbear inflicting the just censure upon them at this time, and to refer the same to the next General Assembly; to which this Assembly earnestly recommend to inflict the censure of *deposition*, without further delay, upon such of the said defenders as shall not, betwixt and that time, either in presence of the Commission to be named by this Assembly, or of the ensuing General Assembly, retract the same pretended Act and Declination, and return to their duty and submission to this church.—And the Assembly further recommend to all the members of this Assembly, and particularly such of them as shall be members of the next Assembly, there to urge and insist for their compliance with this recommendation, which this Assembly cannot allow themselves to doubt will be granted, as it will be then absolutely necessary for the interest and credit of this church, that the foresaid censure be pronounced and inflicted against such of the said defenders as shall then be persisting in their separation. And in respect, the said defenders have not appeared, though called this diet, the Assembly order their Commission to cause cite them again, to appear before the next Assembly, to abide the judgment thereof, upon the said libel, and the said paper given in by

the defenders instead of an answer: to which Assembly, the said libel and process is hereby continued and referred as above. And as one of the defenders, Mr. James Thomson, minister at Burntisland, who was not contained in the act of the last Assembly, the General Assembly without determining on the objection offered by his parish to the citation of him, did agree and resolve, that their Commission do cite him, *de novo*, to answer to the next Assembly, for the matters contained in the same libel and paper given in by him and the other defenders. And to the end the like schismatical and divisive courses, which have so much disturbed the peace and quiet of the church and of the country, and are so very contrary to serious religion and godliness, may be for ever hereafter effectually discouraged and prevented, the General Assembly ordains all Presbyteries and Synods strictly to observe the sixth Act of the Assembly 1708. intitled, *Act for suppressing schisms and disorders in the church*; by which, 'It is strictly enjoined, and peremptorily appointed, that all the Presbyteries and Synods take particular notice of all their members, preachers, or others, under their inspection; and if they find any ministers, or others to fall into irregularities, or schismatical courses, that they duly call them to an account, and censure them according to the merits of their fault, even to deposition of ministers and elders; and to apply to the Commission for their advice, as they shall see cause.' And, without derogating from the generality thereof, the Assembly ordains all Presbyteries, to whom any minister shall presume to give in a secession, or separation from this church, forthwith to give notice thereof to the Moderator of the Commission of Assembly for the time, and to instruct the members of their Presbytery, who shall be members of such Commission, to ask the opinion and direction of that Commission at their first diet after offering such secession, to the end that if such Presbyteries cannot in the mean time prevail with the brethren, who shall so presume to secede, to retract their secession, such brethren may be forthwith proceeded against, according to the above act of Assembly; and what opinions and directions of the Commission for the time, as Presbyteries shall receive, agreeable thereto, these Presbyteries are hereby strictly enjoined to follow the same: and in case any Presbytery, to whom such secession or separation shall be given in, shall fail in their duty in the premises, the Assembly ORDAINS the Synods, within whose bounds they may ly, without delay, to do therein as they shall think fit, agreeable to the above act of Assembly; and in case such Synods shall fail in their duty, the Assembly ORDAINS the Commission to be appointed by this Assembly, to take such matters into their own cognizance: and in all such cases, the Presbyteries, Synods, or Commission to be appointed by this Assembly, respectively, if they cannot quickly reclaim such seceding brethren, are hereby ordained to proceed against them, by way of Libel, to the sentence of deposition. And the Assembly APPOINTS, that a short state of the proceedings of the judicatures of this church, with relation to the foresaid mini-

sters, setting forth the gentle methods used for reclaiming them, and their undutiful behaviour to this church, be drawn up by a Committee, to be named for that effect, and printed, and copies thereof to be transmitted to each Presbytery; and that all the ministers of this church shall be careful to exhort the people, both publicly and privately, to guard against all divisive courses, *and to keep the unity of the spirit, in the bond of peace*, as they would consult the true interest of serious religion, and the quiet of their country.

OBSERVATIONS on the Preceding ACT.

BY the above act of Assembly, the *Presbyterial Association* of the seceding ministers is condemned; as also their *Judicial Act* and *Testimony*; and particularly their *Act* and *Declinature*, read in presence of the said Assembly: and the said ministers are, upon the grounds mentioned in the forefaid act, declared to merit the *highest censures* of this church, and particularly that of *Deposition*; whereby the present judicatures discover a persecuting spirit against such who are endeavouring to bear testimony against *their deeds, which are evil*, 1 John iii. 12. But though they load the seceding ministers in a very grievous manner, with '*unwarrantable and schismatical practices*;' and with doing what '*in them lies to ruin and destroy the interest of religion in this church*;' and though they have earnestly recommended it to the next General Assembly to inflict the censure of *deposition* without further delay: yet the said ministers may encourage themselves in this, that the treatment given them is not singular; it is what they are warned of, that men shall speak *all manner of evil* against such as shall endeavour to lift up a testimony for Christ and his truth; and that they shall be *persecuted and cast out of the synagogues*.

But it deserves to be particularly observed, that the Assembly, in their first act, 'find that the libel is relevant to *infer deposition*;' and 'also that they find the same proven in its most material articles, 'by the Presbytery's *Act* and *Declinature*, read in their presence.' Thus they find the libel relevant in bulk to infer a very heavy and weighty censure; yet they have not found any one article thereof to be contrary to the word of God, and our received and approved standards. It may be left to the unprejudiced world to judge, if this is agreeable to Presbyterian principles; or if it be not rather of a piece with the other *magisterial* and *arbitrary steps* which the present judicatures have taken, and which are particularly condescended upon by the Associate Presbytery in their *Testimony* * and *Declinature*.

The Assembly further adds, that the Seceding Ministers, in their *Act* and *Declinature*, read and pronounced in their presence, condemn the *judicatures* of this church upon several groundless pretences. It is very justly to be regretted, that the late Assembly do

* See some of these enumerated above, p. 45,—50.

Speak after this manner of the steps of defection mentioned in the Act and Declinature, when they reckon the said steps of defection that are mentioned therein to be nothing but *groundless pretences*: it is a very lamentable evidence that the Lord has left the present judicatures, in a very great measure; and that they make their *faces harder than a rock, and refuse to turn*, Jer. v. 3.

Likewise the Assembly, in their above act, charge the Seceding Ministers with speaking 'in most *injuriously, insolent, and disrespectful* terms concerning the highest civil authority.' But this charge is laid in most *general*, and therefore in most *injuriously* terms. If they had dealt fairly, and according to their character, as ministers and elders met in an Assembly, they ought to have condescended upon those terms, concerning the highest *civil* authority, which they reckon *most injuriously, disrespectful, and insolent*. As the above general charge is laid with an evident design to stir up the wrath of civil authority against the seceding ministers; so it breathes out the same persecuting spirit which prevailed in the late times of Prelacy, and which ordinarily discovers itself in *corrupt church-men*, who are carrying on a course of defection and backsliding from the Lord; and who always hate and oppose a testimony against their sinful courses and practices, and are tormented thereby.—But it is plain, that, by the foresaid general charge, nothing else can be meant than the testimony that the Presbytery judged it their duty to give against the encroachment made upon the rights and privileges of the spiritual kingdom of the Lord Jesus, in the late act of parliament, anent Capt. John Porteous, which was read in one shape or other by most part of the ministers of this church; and the sinfulness whereof was never testified against by any of the present judicatures: and therefore, according to the word of God, they are justly chargeable with *hating our rulers in their hearts*, when they have *suffered sin to ly upon them*, without testifying faithfully against the same, Lev. xix. 17.—And the seceding ministers cannot be reckoned guilty of speaking in *injuriously, insolent, and disrespectful* terms against the highest civil authority, more than Jeremiah and the other prophets were guilty of the same, when they reprov'd the sins of the civil rulers in their days. But the seceding ministers must here observe with regret, that the present judicatures are, by their procedure, involving themselves more and more in deep defection from the Lord; for, it is plain, that when the Assembly have condemned, in the above manner, the testimony that was given in their presence against the above encroachment on the kingdom of Christ, and the sinful compliance of the ministry of this church therewith, they have thereby condemned a testimony against the foresaid encroachment and compliance, as a speaking in most *injuriously, disrespectful, and insolent terms of the highest CIVIL* authority: and in like manner, when the seceding ministers are declared to deserve the highest censures of this church, and particularly *deposition*, on account of their testimony against the sinfulness of the foresaid act of parliament; it is also plain, that a silent submission under the above

encroachment unto the kingdom of Christ, without any suitable testimony against the same, is made a term of ministerial communion by the present judicatures. For, according to the above words of their act of Assembly, if any shall say that the act of parliament anent Capt. John Porteous, contained a sinful and craftian encroachment upon the kingdom of Christ, they speak in the most injurious, insolent, and disrespectful terms of the highest civil authority, and deserve the highest censures of the church, particularly that of *deposition*.

The Seceding Ministers may conclude from the whole, that the *present judicatures*, instead of shewing the least disposition to remove any of the *just and warrantable grounds of secession* from them, by confessing their iniquities and returning to the Lord, are going on resolutely in a course of *backsliding* from him: and though they have been called to *return to the Most High, yet they refuse to exalt him*; and therefore, the Associate Presbytery have good ground and reason to judge it more and more warrantable and necessary for them to *continue* to testify in a way of *secession* from the present judicatures for the received principles of this covenanted church and land, and against a course of defection and backsliding from the same. And they desire to pray, that the Spirit of the Lord may be poured out upon them as a Spirit of repentance and reformation, lest that awful threatening be accomplished upon them and the land, Jer. v. 3, 5, 6. — *They have refused to return; — they have altogether broken the yoke and burst the bonds: Wherefore a lion out of the forests shall slay them, and a wolf of the evenings shall spoil them; a leopard shall watch over their cities; every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces; because their transgressions are many, and their backslidings are increased.* And considering what a deep hand all of us have in the provocation, have we not reason to fear lest the Lord be saying, both by his word and providence at this day, as it is, verse 9. *Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?*





R E A S O N S

B Y

Mr. EBENEZER ERSKINE, Minister at Stirling ;
Mr. WILLIAM WILSON, Minister at Perth ;
Mr. ALEX. MONCRIEFF, Minister at Abernethy ; and
Mr. JAMES FISHER, Minister at Kinclaven,

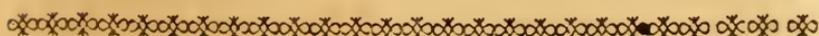
WHY THEY HAVE NOT

ACCEDED to the JUDICATORIES

O F T H E

E S T A B L I S H E D C H U R C H .

Published by the forefaid MINISTERS.



THE Commission of the General Assembly, which met in November 1733, by their Act *loosed the Seceding Ministers pastoral Relation to their respective Parishes*; and declared them to be *no longer ministers in this church*. Upon intimation of this sentence to them, they entered a PROTESTATION, bearing a SECESSION from the Judicatories of this Church; and declaring, that it should be lawful and warrantable for them to exercise both the keys of *Doctrine* and *Discipline*, in an agreeableness to the word of God, and the received standards of the Church of Scotland.—The majority of the Members of the Assembly 1734, seemed to be of opposite sentiments from some preceding Assemblies and Commissions, and to pursue other measures: And accordingly empowered the Synod of Perth and Stirling, under certain limitations, to restore the four ministers to their respective *ministerial charges*; and also pass an Act concerning *ministerial freedom*. This induced some then to think, that the protesting ministers should have presently *acceded* to the established church.—The four associated Brethren, after mature and serious deliberation upon the conduct of the Assembly 1734, did not then think, that the GROUNDS of their SECESSION were removed, by any thing that either the Assembly, or the Synod of Perth and Stirling, had done; and therefore assigned the following REASONS, why they could not *then acced* to the Judicatories of the *national Church*: Nor has the Judicatories, at any period ever since, taken such steps towards a Reformation of the *evils* justly complained of, as could induce them to return into the bosom of the church; but daily increasing the former warrantable Grounds of Secession, by a continued course of defection and backsliding.—As these Reasons are now but in the hands of a few, and in a great measure unknown to the present generation, it was judged proper here to insert them entire; though the proper place for doing so, fell to be after the *first Testimony*, had the Printer been timeously acquainted with the design of re-printing them.

REASONS by the Protesting Ministers, why they have not
ACCEDED to the Judicatories of the *established Church*.

THE late General Assembly having by their Act, May 14th, 1734. empowered the Synod of Perth and Stirling, under such limitations as are mentioned in the said Act, to *restore* Mr. EBENEZER ERSKINE, minister at Stirling; Mr. WILLIAM WILSON, minister at Perth; Mr. ALEXANDER MONCRIEFF, minister at Abernethy, and Mr. JAMES FISHER, minister at Kinclaven; to their respective ministerial charges: And the Synod, which met at Stirling, July 2d, clothed with this delegated power, having, in consequence of the Assembly's Act, taken off the sentences pronounced by the Commission of the General Assembly 1733, against the foresaid four brethren; it has therefore been the opinion of severals, both Ministers and private Christians, That the said four Brethren should have instantly acceded to the judicatories of the established church; in regard, it is judged, that the Grounds of their Secession were removed by the conduct of the last Assembly; and that a door was opened for their return to the judicatories, by the Act of the Synod of Perth and Stirling in their favours: And, since they have not taken the benefit of the said Act, there is no doubt but their conduct has been censured by many of their friends, as well as by these who have more keenly appeared against them.

In order therefore to satisfy such who have the same cause and interest with themselves at heart, and to remove the exceptions of others, who are either more easily imposed upon, by reason of their ignorance of the present situation of affairs, or who through prejudice may entertain harsh and unfavourable thoughts of their conduct, they thought it their duty to make public, at this juncture, the *Reasons* why they have not as yet had freedom to re-enter the judicatories of the established church, at the door which is opened by the Act of the last Assembly, and the proceedings of the Synod of Perth and Stirling thereupon.

That we may more distinctly and clearly lay open our present case, we are laid under a necessity of enquiring into the procedure of the last Assembly, who are supposed to have made some considerable steps towards a Reformation of the evils formerly complained of, and for removing of the grounds upon which our *Secession* from the judicatories was laid: And as that Assembly was composed of a body of reverend and honourable members, many of them of a considerable standing in the ministry, and whom we regard as faithful labourers in the Lord's vineyard; so it was matter of joy and refreshment, not only to us, but to many others through the land, that a stop was put to the unwarrantable and violent proceedings of some former Assemblies and their Commissions; and if the difficulties that

ly in the way of our accession to the judicatories of the church are not removed, we do not impute it to the intentions and inclinations of many of the worthy members of the last Assembly, but to the opposition they met with from some who had an active hand in carrying on, or concurring with, the former course of defection. But in regard, it is not the *intentions* and *inclinations* of men that will be the evidences of the reformation of a church, but their *public deeds* and *records*, these being the only authentic documents that can be transmitted to posterity of her fidelity and loyalty to the Lord Christ, her only Head and Lawgiver, particularly in a day of trouble, backsliding and treading down; therefore, it is with regret, that we must observe the clois *connection* that there is betwixt the acts of the last Assembly, and some acts and proceedings of the Assembly 1733, and their Commission, upon which our *Secession* was principally laid, and which appear to us to be destructive of the rights and privileges of the members of this church, and to reflect dishonour upon her glorious Head and King. We do not hereby intend to weaken the hands of our Brethren, who are endeavouring a Reformation, but to lay open before them the *difficulties* that yet remain with us, or the *reasons* of our declining hitherto to join in ministerial communion with the judicatories of the established church: and this we shall do, after we have briefly narrated the manner how we came into that situation wherein adorable providence has placed us.

It is beyond all dispute, that Mr. Erskine was censured first by the Synod, and then by the General Assembly, for impugning some acts of Assembly and proceedings of church-judicatories, in his sermon at the opening of the Synod of Perth and Stirling, as the act and sentence of the Assembly 1733, in that matter expressly bears: and we have likewise made it evident, in some former Prints which we have emitted, that the censure past against Mr. Erskine was founded on his testifying against the act of Assembly 1732, and the violent intrusions that were made upon Christian congregations by the church-judicatories at that time; and therefore, we judged it our duty to enter a *Protestation* against that decision of the Assembly 1733, as a manifest restraint of our ministerial freedom and faithfulness, and plainly inhibiting, not only Mr. Erskine, but also all other ministers of this church, to testify against the arbitrary proceedings of church-judicatories, and the growing defections of the day. This Protestation was so highly resented by that Assembly, that they ordered their Commission to *suspend*, and to proceed to higher censure against us, in case we should not profess our sorrow for offering the said protestation to the Assembly, and retract the same; which sentences were rigidly execute by the Commission, who first suspended, and then loosed our relation to our respective parishes, and declared us no longer ministers of this church, &c. as their sentence itself, formerly printed, more fully bears †. When therefore matters were come to such a pass, that we are excluded from keeping up a proper testimony against the defections and backslidings of the then

† See the sentence itself inserted above, p. 30, 31.

prevailing party, in a way of ministerial communion with them; we judged it our necessary duty, for this and other reasons, published in our [*first*] *Testimony*, to make a *Secession* from the judicatories of the established church. And since the Lord, in his adorable providence, permitted the judicatories to thrust us out, at a time when a course of defection was carried on with a high hand, it will be therefore necessary for the vindication of our present conduct, to enquire if the Assembly 1734, have at least so far removed the Grounds of our *Secession*, that we may, in a consistency with the *Testimony* we have emitted, *accede* unto the judicatories of the church, and join in ministerial communion with them.

The Grounds of our *seceding* from the then prevailing party, as published and enlarged upon in our *Testimony*, were chiefly these*:

1. 'That the prevailing party at that time in the Judicatories of the church, did *break down* the fences and guards which former General Assemblies had wisely *set up*, against innovations in the doctrine, worship, government, and discipline of this church.
2. 'That they exercised a *legislative power* and authority over the house of God, in opposition to the laws and ordinances of the great Lord and Master of the house; and, in consequence thereof, usurped a lordly and magisterial dominion over the flock and heritage of God.
3. 'That they pursued such measures as did actually *corrupt*, or, at least had a direct tendency to corrupt the doctrine contained in our excellent *Confession of Faith*.
4. 'That they *restrained ministerial freedom* and faithfulness in testifying against the defections and backslidings of the times; and therefore, being excluded from keeping up a standing testimony, in a way of ministerial communion, against these sinful and church-ruining evils, we found it our necessary duty to make a *secession* from the prevailing party at that time; and consequently from the judicatories of the church, till they should see the sins they are guilty of, and the mistakes they are under, and reform and amend the same.'

These were the general Grounds upon which we did make a *Secession* from the judicatories, by the *Protestation* we entered against the Commission that met in November 1733, who did thrust us out from ministerial communion with them; and, as we have enlarged these reasons of our *secession* in our *Testimony*, so we shall not make any further repetition of what we have there said, but what we judge necessary for clearing and illustrating the subject we are upon: neither shall we now stay to prove, that the above general heads, as they are more fully and more particularly insisted upon in our *Testimony*, were sufficient to warrant our *secession*; for this also we must refer the impartial reader to the same paper. Our present enquiry is, if the last General Assembly 1734, have so far removed the above-mentioned grounds, and reformed the evils we complain of in them, that we cannot warrantably, and in a consistency with our *Testimony*, continue in *Secession* from the judicatories of the establish-

* The reader may see these reasons illustrated at greater length, p. 40,—71.

ed church, but that we ought to have joined in ministerial communion with them? In order to our delivering the sincere sentiments of our minds the more clearly upon this important and weighty subject, we shall go through the above grounds of our *Secession*, and impartially enquire if the General Assembly 1734. have removed the same; or, if they have so far reformed and amended the evils we complain of in them, that it is now unlawful and unwarrantable for us to continue in secession from the judicatories of the church.

I. The first ground of our secession (as laid in our *Testimony*) was, 'That the prevailing party at that time in the judicatories of the church, did *break down* the fences and guards which former General Assemblies had wisely set up against innovations in the doctrine, worship, government, and discipline of this church.'

Upon this head we complain, That the act of Assembly 1730, discharging the recording of reasons of dissent in inferior judicatories, and the act of Assembly 1732, anent the method of planting vacant churches, were past contrary to the standing rules, regulating the manner of passing acts of general concern to the church, which require, that they be first transmitted to the consideration of Presbyteries, and their opinion and consent reported to the next General Assembly, who may pass the same into acts, if the more general opinion of the church agree thereto. But, in regard the General Assembly 1734, have rescinded the two foresaid acts, mainly upon the ground complained of; therefore we are far from charging that Assembly with breaking down the fences of our constitution, or doing any thing that had the least aspect towards tyranny in their administration: on the contrary, we desire to bless the Lord, that they shewed such dislike at these iniquitous statutes, that were so evidently everlive of the constitution of this church: And although the *manner* in which they stand repealed may be afterwards considered, yet we freely own, that, as this first ground of our secession is laid, it is removed by the last Assembly.—But here it must be remembered, that our secession was not founded upon the passing of the acts of Assembly 1730 and 1732, as some have imagined it was; for we continued in communion with the church, after these acts were ingrossed among the standing and binding rules thereof, and satisfied ourselves with joining in a protestation against the act 1732, though it was not recorded, resolving upon all proper occasions to testify against the same or like defections of this church; but no sooner was this essayed, than presently the *censures* of the church were denounced against us, by the judicatories at that time: And therefore we were laid under a necessity, either to make a *Secession* from them, or silently and sinfully to *quit the field*, and never open our mouths in pulpit, or by *protestation* in the supreme judicatories, against such courses as had an evident tendency to ruin our excellent constitution. And, for the more clear understanding of our case, it must be remembered, that this was the first and more immediate ground of our secession from the judicatories of the established church. We shall now go on to the

II. Ground of our secession from the prevailing party at that time, which was, 'That they screwed *church-authority* to an *exorbitant height*, by exercising a *legislative power* over the house of God, in opposition to the laws and ordinances of the great Lord and Master of the house; and, in consequence thereof, usurped a *lordly and magisterial dominion* over the flock and heritage of God.'

Under this head we mention in our *Testimony* several instances of *arbitrary authority* exercised by some former Assemblies and their Commissions, contrary to, and inconsistent with the word of God.— Here then the question will be, If the Assembly 1734. have condemned that usurped authority over the house of God; and if the heritage and flock of God are liberate and set free from that lordly and magisterial power, whereby unjust decrees were bound upon their consciences, and the censures of the church threatened, and actually inflicted upon them, in case they did not submit to the said unjust decrees?

The first instance we condescend upon of arbitrary authority is the act of Assembly 1732, which lodged the *decisive power* of electing ministers in a conjunct meeting of *elders* and *heritors*, being Protestants, however much disaffected to the government both in church and state. As this was a delivering of a very valuable trust and privilege into the hands of the avowed and declared enemies of the church, so it was evidently inconsistent with the *word of God*, and the *example of the apostles* recorded in the New Testament, and contrary to the practice of this church ever since the *Reformation*, till of late; as appears from her books of discipline, acts of Assembly, and manifold decisions in cases of this nature. It is true, the Assembly 1734, have declare that act to be no longer a binding rule in this church; but then they repealed it merely because the manner of enacting it was *not agreeable* to some excellent acts, which former Assemblies had wisely made as safe-guards to our constitution, and because it was *hurtful*, or bred some disturbance in the church: And indeed their reversing it, even upon this score, was in so far matter of thankfulness; but, since such *manifest dishonour* was done to our highest Lord, the only Lawgiver to his church, by taking the legislative power out of his hands, in making a statute for his subjects, which the authors thereof themselves acknowledge never came into his mind, we could therefore have wished, that the Assembly had not only rescinded that act upon the grounds above-mentioned, but also because of its *inconsistency* with, and *contrariety* to the *word of God*: This was the only suitable reparation could be made for the dishonour done to the glorious head of the church, by enacting a statute that did not bear the least stamp of his authority. And this still was the more necessary, because among all the ministers of the church of Scotland, since the Reformation, that wrote upon this subject, never any one impugned the *necessity of the consent of the congregation*, or at least of the *majority* of them, to fix the relation of a pastor to his flock, till some late prints appeared, which discover too much of a *prelatical spirit*, and a manifest design to *betray*

and give up the constitution of this church; and surely, when the members of a church adventure to write against her constitution, it is high time for the church to record her testimony against their tenets, that so posterity may have no reason to quote these authors as giving the opinion of the church at that time.

A second instance we have mentioned of a lordly and magisterial power exercised over the flock and heritage of God, is the violent *imposing* and *obtruding* of ministers upon *dissenting* and *reclaiming congregations* by some late Assemblies and their Commissions; not only upon the footing of the act 1732, but even of the *patronage-act* itself; whereby the great end and design of a gospel-ministry in the *edification* of souls was quite *marred* and *defeated*.

We are far from charging the Assembly 1734, with carrying on such arbitrary measures; yea, upon the other hand, they shewed a disposition to *redress grievances* of this nature that came regularly before them: As for instance, in the case of the parish of *Auchtermuchty*, they very justly reversed the settlement of the Presentee, and allowed that people a *free moderation*; and referred some other causes of this nature, which they could not overtake, to the next General Assembly: Yea further, they shewed such *dislike* at the arbitrary and unwarrantable proceedings of the Commission, particularly in their *invading* the rights of Presbyteries, by erecting *subcommissions* with a power to take trial of the gifts of young men, and ordain them, contrary to the declared mind both of the Presbyteries in which, and the parishes over which, they were to be settled; that they *reversed* one of their sentences, appointing the Presentee to *Auchtermuchty* to be settled in the above arbitrary manner; whereby at length the sentences of the Commission were found to be *reversible*, which is a considerable step towards reformation: especially considering, that the sentences of the Commission, however unjust and iniquitous, were supported, and in a manner held as *irreversible* by former Assemblies, without any other redress but a simple disapprobation of their conduct.—But, although the Assembly 1734, did not countenance any violent settlement themselves, yet we crave leave to say, that we have not as yet seen a sufficient testimony against the manifest *intrusions* that have been made in many congregations of this church. It is well known, that, by acceptance of presentations, a wide door has been opened for the entry of a *corrupt* and *lux ministry* into the bosom of church; which, however much contrary to our avowed principles, has been countenanced and encouraged by some former Assemblies and their Commissions, who all along owned *patronage* to be a *grievance*, and yet in the mean time embraced every opportunity to *favour the Presentee*, even although almost the whole congregation were dissenting and reclaiming.

It was the laudible practice of the reforming Assembly 1633, (even when patronages were in full force) That they *discharged any person to be intruded in any office of the kirk, contrary to the will of the congregation to which they are appointed*. If something of this nature were done, and if it were declared, that the acceptance of presentations is *contrary* to the word of God, and the principles of this church

founded thereon, and that the accepters are liable to *censure*, this would be the best mean to put an effectual stop to the oppression of Christian congregations for the future, by the scandalous acceptance of presentations.

It is true, the last Assembly have appointed their Commission to petition his Majesty and Parliament for relief from the yoke of patronage, and the Commission have accordingly nominate some worthy Brethren of their number for that purpose; but still there was nothing to hinder them to declare their principles upon this head, as former Assemblies have done, even when the patronage was in as great force as it is at this day. Nor would this have been a *flying in the face* of the civil law; for there is nothing in the law obliging the church to disclaim her principles, or to act contrary to them: And, in this particular case, the act of patronage doth not oblige the presentee to accept, contrary to the principles of the church; it only makes the acceptance a necessary condition of the validity of the presentation; the legislative thereby intending to *restrict* and *limit* the patronage-act in favours of the church of Scotland, whose avowed principles at that time would not permit any of her communion to accept of a presentation in opposition to the consent of the people: And so it was interpreted by the church herself for several years after the act was thus reviewed, *Anno 1719*; upon which account, the patrons very seldom made use of their right, till their accepted presentations got a favourable reception from the judicatories of the church, the prevailing party finding no other method so successful for getting men of loose principles into the ministry, who would therefore at any rate be attached to their interest. So that there was nothing to be feared from the civil magistrate, who was not imposing the act of patronage upon us, but allowed it to ly dormant even after it was received, till the prevailing party at that time *wreathed* it about the neck of this church, some by *accepting* presentations themselves, and all of them by *encouraging* these that did so.—From all which it is obvious, that the Assembly 1734, might have *safely declared* their principles upon this matter, even although they resolved to *address* the legislative ament it; and this beginning of a Reformation at *home*, would have given a surer ground to expect countenance to it from *abroad*.

A third instance of lordly and magisterial power exercised over the flock of God, which we complain of, is the act of Assembly 1733, concerning the Presbytery of Dunfermline, whereby the ministers of that Presbytery are *discharged*, under pain of the *highest censure*, to dispense sealing ordinances to any in the parish of Kinross, without consent or permission of the present intruded incumbent.

Now, from the tenor of this Act it is plain, that it contains a virtual *excommunication* of all the people in every congregation through the land, who cannot submit to the ministry of these who are violently imposed upon them by the judicatories of the church; and also lays down a precedent for *censuring*, or even *thrusting out* from ministerial communion with the church, all ministers who shall dispense sealing ordinances to such of the Lord's people as have not

freedom to receive them from the hands of intruders, providing there be a complaint tabled against them; as is obvious from the reason which the Commission which met in March 1734 gave, why they did not proceed to enquire into the conduct of any of the brethren in the Presbytery of Dunfermline, and censure them, as they were impowered by the Assembly, *viz.* *Because there was no complaint of their transgressing this Act*; from which it is manifest, that, if the incumbent, or any other, had tabled a complaint against them, the contraveeners had been *ensured*. If it is pled, That this act of Assembly, complained of, was only a decision in a particular case, namely, that of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, and Parish of Kinross: It is answered, That a decision of a General Assembly in a particular cause, being the public judgment of the *church-representative*, is reckoned to have the force of a *precedent* in all similar cases, both by subsequent Assemblies and inferior judicatories, and is the *rule* they commonly walk by in cases of the like nature. And that this is a *sinful* act, and contrary to the word of God, is as plain, as it is certain, that it is unlawful to intrude a minister upon a people willing to have the ordinances of Christ dispensed among them, and to submit to the ministry of these who are set over them, in the way the Lord Jesus has prescribed in his word.

Now, the foresaid act of Assembly, which appoints such severe censures to be inflicted upon their Christian Brethren, both ministers and people, who have not freedom to give countenance to the ministry of such as are intruded upon Christian congregations, appears to us to be an *unwarrantable* narrowing of the terms both of ministerial and Christian communion, a *lording over the heritage of God*, and contrary to one great end and design of church-government and discipline, *viz.* the *edification of the body of Christ*; yet it stands untouched by the Assembly 1734, the force of it is nowise abated by any thing which that Assembly have done; nor is there the least remedy provided for many thousands in Scotland, who are thereby excommunicated from sealing ordinances, for no other reason but because they cannot take the benefit of them from the hands of *intruders*.—Since therefore the Assembly 1734, have noway invalidate the force of this Act, nor given the least testimony against it, our *accession* to the judicatories may be justly constructed to be a *submitting* ourselves to their authority exercised according to the rules of this church presently in being; and consequently not only a *virtual approbation* of this Act, but also of all the *violent settlements* which it was designed to support. Yea, further, our Accession, while this Act stands in force, would be a plain *submitting* of the question to the established church, whether we may relieve the oppressed heritage of God, or not? when it has been already given as her opinion, that we must *not* do it, under the pain of the highest censure; and thus give our consent, that the oppressed congregations in Scotland shall be upon the matter *excommunicated* from the ordinances of Christ, and that they shall not be any way supported, but *suppressed* in contending for a covenanted work of Reformation in their own sphere; which would be *provoking* to God, *grieving* and *wounding*

of his people, and of *dangerous consequence* to the declining interest of Christ in the land. We proceed now to consider the

III. Ground of our Secession, which was, 'That the prevailing party pursued such measures, as did actually *corrupt*, or at least had a *direct tendency* to corrupt, the *doctrine* contained in our excellent *Confession of Faith*.'

When gross errors are vented in a church, and no suitable Testimony emitted against them, this neglect has a direct tendency to corrupt the purity of doctrine professed in that church. It is too well known, to the sad regret of all who desire to believe in Jesus, that *blasphemy* against the Son of God, with a train of other *gross* and *dangerous errors*, have been taught, and otherwise vented in this church: and yet the standard of a free and faithful testimony has not been lifted up against them, by any of our former General Assemblies, although frequently addressed by Presbyteries and Synods to hand down these valuable truths, which have been denied and impugned in our day, to the rising generation, with a peculiar and solemn *Testimony* unto them; which was still the more necessary, considering the abounding of *infidelity*, and the daring *impiety* of the profane *wits* of the age, who by their blasphemous mouths and pens have made no scruple to run down the sacred mysteries of christianity, which, upon the other hand, has been basely *betrayed* by many of the *modern* defenders thereof, who have at once given up with all the peculiar doctrines of it, and have left nothing behind but a refined *system of natural religion*.

Now, although such *damnable* and *pernicious errors* have been vented and taught by some members of this church, as have a direct tendency to lead all who imbibe them into *open infidelity*; yet we say, That no suitable Testimony has been given, either against these *tenets*, or the *authors* of them. It was found clearly proven by the Assemblies 1727, and 1728, That professor Simson denied the *necessary existence* and *supreme Deity* of the SON of GOD; yet all the resentment that the Assembly 1729, (which concluded that process) shewed against this *blasphemer*, for unHINGING the very foundation of the Christian religion, was only to suspend him from teaching and preaching, till another Assembly should think fit to relax him from that sentence. And although it was also found proven by a Committee for *purity of doctrine*, appointed by the Assembly 1727, 'That the said Mr. Simson had contravened the act of Assembly 1717, 'in venting some opinions, which tended to attribute too much to natural reason, and the power of corrupt nature, to the disparagement of revelation and efficacious free grace;' yet there was not the least notice taken of these gross errors: Which neglect had a direct tendency to *corrupt* the purity of doctrine professed in this church, and was an encouragement to men of *loose principles*, to vent their *false notions* and *inconsistent schemes*, without the least fear of censure; as may be seen from the *bold reflections* which Mr. Campbell at St. Andrews has made both upon natural and revealed religion, in some late papers emitted by him; and by what Mr.

Wallace, minister at Edinburgh, has advanced in his answer to a letter directed to him, concerning the *positive institutions of Christianity*; and also from the *method of preaching* practised by a great many who have lately entered into the ministry, who have so far discarded all the peculiar and supernatural doctrines of the gospel, that one would scarce know by their discourses, whether they were so much as *professed Christians*.

These are the *fatal* consequences of declining to give a suitable Testimony against the errors of the times; and particularly to assert the *necessary existence* and *independency* of the great God our Saviour, when so loudly called to it by the open *impugning* of his *supreme Deity*. And as this was one chief ground of our Secession from the prevailing party in the judicatories of the church, that they gave a *deaf ear* to all applications that were made for maintaining and preserving the purity of doctrine, which was in such imminent danger, by the *growing errors* of the day; so the question will be, If the Assembly 1734. have done any thing to supply that great defect? especially when the *sinful omission* of this necessary and important duty may be justly looked upon as the main spring of the Lord's *controversy* with the judicatories of the church, in leaving them to drive on to that height of defection which they lately arrived at. We do not incline to challenge the Assembly 1734. with a *designed* and *wilful neglect* of testifying against the above-mentioned errors; we know they met with considerable *interruptions* from a party that wanted by all means to retard their work: But yet, since it cannot be said, that this Ground of our Secession is in the least removed, therefore we will be the more easily excused, if we cannot with freedom (as we are situate in providence) accede unto the judicatories of a church, where *truth lies bleeding in her streets*, without any suitable Testimony unto it. We proceed now to consider the

IV. Ground of our Secession from the prevailing party at that time, which was, 'That they *restrained* ministerial freedom and *faithfulness*, in testifying against the defections and backslidings of the times.'

The *restraint* which the Assembly 1733, did put upon ministerial freedom and faithfulness in testifying against the evils and corruptions of our day, with the proceedings of the Commission thereupon, was that which gave the first rise to our present Secession, because we were thereby *precluded* from keeping up a proper Testimony against the *church-ruining courses* of the then prevailing party in a way of ministerial communion with them. There are but two ways whereby a minister can testify against the defections of a church; either by giving *faithful warning* of them from the pulpit, or by *protesting* against them in a judicatory as he has access, that thereby he may transmit to posterity a Testimony to the truths of Christ against the corruptions or defections that may prevail in a church. Now, we were excluded from keeping up a standing Testimony in either of these two methods: When Mr. Etikine upon a very proper occasion *testified* from the pulpit against the act of Assembly 1732,

and the violent proceedings of the church-judicatories at that time, he was for this *censured* by the Assembly: And when we *protested* against that *censure*, because we judged it a manifest *restraint* upon our freedom and faithfulness as ministers, we were presently threatened with *suspension* and *higher censures*, unless we retract the same; although protesting against a Protestant Council or Assembly was no new thing, as we have shown in some former Prints. Now, ecclesiastical tyranny did appear to us to rise to a very great height, when *first* the very foundation of our church-constitution was undermined, and *then* censures inflicted upon these who gave warning against the same, which had a manifest tendency to betray, by *silent treachery*, the City of God into the hands of our enemies, and bring on inevitable ruin and destruction upon this church, before ever she should have time to provide for her safety. That this is a warrantable Ground of Secession, the very nature of the thing bears: For, how can a man join in communion with a church, which obliges him to *silence* in the pulpit, and to acquiesce in the judgment of the supreme judicatory, however prejudicial to the established doctrine, government, and discipline of that church, without being allowed to give any *standing Testimony* against it? And because this *restraint of ministerial freedom* is the first and more immediate point upon which our Secession turned, therefore we will be obliged to enquire the more narrowly what the Assembly 1734, have done towards the *removal* of the same; in regard, it has been asserted, That they have at least *materially* rescinded the act of Assembly 1733, concerning the four Brethren, and that they have taken off the restraint laid upon ministerial freedom by the said act and sentence of the Assembly 1733.

That therefore we may deliver our thoughts the more distinctly upon this head, we shall enquire, (1.) If the Assembly 1734, have either *formally* or *materially* repealed the act and sentence of the Assembly 1733, concerning the four Brethren. (2.) We shall take a more particular view of the act of Assembly 1734 itself, appointing the Synod of Perth and Stirling, under the limitations therein specified, to *restore* the four brethren to ministerial communion with this church, together with the act and sentence of the Synod in consequence thereof. (3.) We shall consider the Act of Assembly 1734, concerning *ministerial freedom*, which is said to be explicatory of the act and sentence 1733. We think ourselves the more bound to make a *particular enquiry* into these things, both for a discovery of the present situation of affairs in this church, and also to represent unto our reverend Brethren the necessity there is of repealing the acts complained of, both for the sake of the *public cause*, and for their own *safety* in the faithful discharge of their ministry. We begin then with the

First of these, to enquire if the Assembly 1734, have either *formally* or *materially* repealed the act and sentence of the Assembly 1733, concerning the *four Brethren*, so that it cannot for the future militate

against them, or any other minister of this church in the faithful discharge of his duty.

That the above act and sentence of the Assembly 1733, was *formally* or *expressly* repealed by the Assembly 1734, none will readily assert: Yet, considering that this act and sentence of Assembly 1733, complained of, had an evident tendency to *bury* the reformation-principle of *private judgment*, in examining all church-decisions by the rule of the word; considering that they thereby endeavoured to render quite *ineffectual* the duty and liberty of ministers, as faithful watchmen, to give *warning* of approaching danger to the city of God, by appointing suspension and higher censures to pass upon so many of them for witnessing for the injured interest of Christ, and against them, and thereby excluding these ministers from any further access to contend, in a way of communion, against the defections that prevailed among them: We say, since the above act and sentence of the Assembly 1733, did so manifestly lift up an authority *merely human* above, and in opposition to, the authority of the King of Zion, whereby it bears such an open and explicit affront of the glorious Head of the church, it certainly deserved to have been as explicitly condemned by the Assembly 1734.

But we add further, That this *bold thrust* aimed by the said Act 1733, against the crown and dignity of the King of Zion, the only Lawgiver to his church, is not so much as *materially* condemned, or any way invalidated by the act of Assembly 1734, concerning the four Brethren, so as that it cannot afterwards affect them, or any other minister in this church, who shall testify against the defections of the times. But, before we enter upon this, it will be necessary to insert the Act itself, the tenor whereof follows.

At EDINBURGH, May 14th, 1734.

• **T**HE General Assembly considering the great hurt and pre-
 • judice that hath at all times arisen, and must yet arise to
 • the church, from divisions and animosities creeping in, and taking
 • root among the members thereof, notwithstanding of their unani-
 • mity in sentiments upon material and fundamental points, which
 • more nearly concern the promoting the interest of our blessed Lord
 • and Saviour, the establishing the peace of the church, and the
 • advancement of practical godliness and true religion within the
 • bounds of it; and particularly, the lamentable consequences that
 • have followed, and may yet follow upon the separation of Masters
 • Ebenezer Erskine, William Wilson, Alexander Moncrieff, and
 • James Fisher, from this church and judicatories thereof; and
 • judging it their duty to endeavour, by all just and proper means,
 • consistent with the honour and glory of God, and the maintaining
 • the peace and authority of this church, to restore harmony and
 • brotherly love among all the members of it: Therefore the Ge-
 • neral Assembly, without further enquiring into the occasions or
 • steps of proceeding, either on part of the said Brethren, or by

' the several judicatories under whose consideration their case hath
 ' been, which may have produced that unhappy separation; but
 ' resolving that all questions upon these heads shall for hereafter be
 ' comfortably removed, have impowered, and hereby do impower,
 ' the Synod of Perth and Stirling (before whom the exceptions to
 ' some part of the conduct of two of these four reverend Brethren
 ' were first taken and tried) upon such application made to them
 ' as they shall judge proper, to take the case of the said four Bre-
 ' thren, as it now stands, under their consideration, with full power
 ' to the said Synod to proceed and do therein as they shall find most
 ' justifiable and expedient, for restoring the peace, and preserving
 ' the authority of this church, and for promoting the edification of
 ' the members of the body of Christ; and particularly, for uniting
 ' the said four Brethren to the communion of this church, and re-
 ' storing them to their respective ministerial charges: But with this
 ' express direction, That the said Synod shall not take upon them
 ' to judge of the legality or formality of the former proceedings of
 ' the church-judicatories in relation to this affair, or either to ap-
 ' prove or censure the same; but shall only, in virtue of the power
 ' and authority now delegated to them by the Assembly, proceed
 ' to take such steps for attaining the above ends for the future, as
 ' they shall find just, and tending to edification. And the Assembly
 ' do hereby appoint the foresaid Synod to meet at Stirling, the first
 ' Tuesday of July next, and from time to time to name and appoint
 ' the place and diets of their after-meeting on the said affair as they
 ' shall see cause, until the matter shall be ripened for a final con-
 ' clusion; and recommend to them to use their utmost endeavours
 ' to bring the matter, as soon as reasonably can be, to a final and
 ' happy issue.'

Now, from the tenor of the above Act, it will plainly appear, that the act and sentence of the Assembly 1733, concerning the four Brethren, is not so much as upon the matter rescinded, if the following consideration be duly weighed.

1. The Assembly 1734, in the above Act refuse to enquire into the *steps* of proceeding taken by the several judicatories, under whose consideration the case of the four Brethren hath been; that is, they plainly declare, that they will not so much as enter upon the consideration of the Act of Assembly 1733, or the conduct of their Commission in consequence thereof. Can it then be said, that they have in any shape whatsoever repealed the said Act? But this will appear further, if it is considered,

2. That the Assembly 1734, peremptorily discharge the synod of Perth and Stirling to judge of the *legality* or *formality* of the proceedings of the church-judicatures in relation to this affair, or either to approve or censure the same: From whence it is plain, that the act of Assembly 1733, and the proceedings of the judicatories thereupon, are no way affected by the act of Assembly 1734, either as to their legality or formality. For, though it might be alledged, that a synod cannot regularly judge of, approve, or condemn an act of

Assembly, such as the act 1733 certainly is; yet no reasonable objection can be made, why the Assembly 1734, could not have judged of the legality and formality of the act of the former Assembly, and of the proceedings of the judicatories thereupon; and then in that case there would have been a clear ground for the synod to have judged and declared, That the act 1733, and the proceedings of the judicatories in consequence of it, had been found *illegal* and *informal* by the Assembly 1734. But, since the synod is *bound up*, by the Assembly 1734, from judging the said proceedings of the judicatories to be either illegal or informal, it is certain that the Assembly have thereby declared, That, notwithstanding of what they have enacted with respect to that affair, the proceedings of the church-judicatories thereant, may still in themselves be both *legal* and *formal*: For it cannot be well understood, if we should suppose that the Assembly 1734, should have any way *affected* the legality of these sentences by their own act, and yet have discharged the synod, their own delegates in this matter, to tell the world that they have *done so*; especially when this was an affair committed in a special manner to their management.

3. The synod are ordered to proceed in the case of the four brethren, as they shall find most *justifiable* and *expedient* for preserving the authority of this church: Now, it is certain that the authority of this church was no further concerned in this matter, but as it is supposed to be *weakened* by the four brethren their *refusing* to pay a due regard to the act 1733, and the proceedings of the church judicatories thereupon, which is the main thing in the present question; and they contend, that *no respect* ought to be paid to ecclesiastical authority, when lifted up *in opposition to the unerring rule of the word*, as it was evidently done by the Assembly 1733. But however, since the Assembly 1734, have so strictly recommended it to the synod, that they take care to *preserve* the authority of the church, with respect to the act 1733, and the proceedings of the judicatories thereupon, it is plain that they have not annulled and made void these proceedings.

4. The Assembly 1734, expressly declare, That the ground and reason they proceeded upon, in empowering the synod of Perth, as above, was the consideration of the lamentable consequences that have followed, and may yet follow upon the *separation* (as they are pleased to term it) of the four brethren: From which it is obvious, That, for any thing the Assembly 1734, have acted in this matter, the act of Assembly 1733, may be a rule in a way of precedent, for prosecuting the members of the church before her judicatories, unless the judicatories may reasonably apprehend, that the same lamentable consequences may again follow upon the said prosecution, *i. e.* unless there shall be four brethren reputed *socii criminis*, who may happen at the same time, and by the same judicatories, to be *suspended*, and declared *no more ministers of this church*; and who may, upon grounds they think just, make a *Secession* from the prevailing corrupt party of the established church, and upon that footing constitute themselves into a *Presbytery*, for the relief of the oppressed heritage

of God through the land, as well as for the regular exercise of discipline in their own congregations, and who shall proceed as above, at such a time and season, when there is as much zeal remaining for our constitution among ruling elders and the people of God in the land, as makes it probable that a secession of that kind may be of some use to support a constitution otherwise keenly run down and almost subverted: We say, it is plain that it was upon the consideration of the (supposed) *lamentable consequences* that followed, or might follow upon the sentences of the judicatories, that the Assembly 1734. impowered the synod in the manner they did, and not upon the consideration of the *sinfulness* and *injustice* of the acts and sentences past by them. From which it certainly follows, that the acts and sentences themselves are not condemned, but must, in the nature of the thing be constructed to be *legal, formal, and valid* still, and of *sufficient force and authority*, when imitated as *lawful precedents* by other judicatories, to lay open all the ministers of this church to be prosecuted, if they shall use their ministerial freedom, as the four brethren have done, in testifying against the defections of this church; whereby a wide door is as yet open to the corrupt party, who are still abundantly numerous in this church, to intimidate others into a *sinful silence* in the public cause, and to give them an opportunity to *bury* a covenanted work of reformation, and to *suppress* effectually all who testify for it. So that, upon the whole, it plainly appears, That the above act of the Assembly 1734, has not repealed nor annulled the act of Assembly 1733, concerning the four brethren; and therefore it remains an *act and rule* of this church still, so far as an *act* in a particular case is a *rule* in a way of precedent in cases of the like nature. In a word, How can it be reasonably alledged, that the sinfulness of the act 1733 is removed, when it is not so much as once acknowledged, to the glory of God, that there is one wrong thing in it? And how can it be said to be in any shape repealed, when the Assembly 1734, expressly declare that they will not so much as enter upon the consideration of it, and also discharge the synod to judge it either informal or illegal? It is true, the Assembly 1734. have impowered the synod, under such and such restrictions, to unite the four brethren to communion with this church, and to their respective charges; and the synod have accordingly restored them in terms of the Assembly's act: But then it must be observed, that, according to this act of the Assembly 1734, the brethren are to be united to the communion of the church, without any judgment passed by the Assembly themselves, or the synod their delegates, as to the legality and formality of the acts and sentences past against them. Now, since the sentences of any judicatory, especially the supreme, are to be esteemed *legal and formal*, till they are *reviewed* by a court that has power and authority for that effect; it follows, that the brethren, when restored to the communion of this church, must be in a very strange and unheard-of situation, namely, They are *de facto*, or some way or other, ministers of this church, and at the same time *de jure* they are *not* ministers of this church, nor have any relation to their ministerial charges, be-

cause the acts and sentences past against them are both *legal* and *formal*, and must remain so till another Assembly (who are the only proper judges in this affair) shall think fit to reverse and annul them. We proceed now,

II. To make some further observes upon the act of Assembly 1734, concerning the four brethren, and the act and sentence of the synod of Perth and Stirling, which is founded thereon; and it is not our design hereby to reflect upon the Assembly 1734, but to shew the necessity of reviewing the acts of Assembly 1733, both concerning some ministers in the Presbytery of Dunfermline, and also concerning the four brethren, since there is as yet no standing Testimony against the *dishonour* we apprehend is done to the only Lord and Lawgiver of the church by these acts. If then the act of Assembly 1734, concerning the four brethren be narrowly viewed, the following *Conclusions* will appear to be abundantly obvious:

1. The act of Assembly 1734, as it is laid, plainly asserts, 'That there is an *unanimity* in sentiments among the members of this church, upon *material* and *fundamental* points, which more nearly concern the promoting the interest of our blessed Lord and Saviour.' This gives a very favourable, but at the same time not such a fair view to posterity, of the present situation of affairs in this church: For, upon the reading of these words, one would be ready to imagine, that the differences that were at this time among the members of the church, were only about *trifling* and *smaller* matters, and consequently the authors of them justly to be reputed *schismatics*; whereas it is well known, that the subject, not only of our present *Testimony*, but also of many *petitions* and *representations* from several Synod's and Presbyteries (quite disregarded by former Assemblies) was—against *oppressing* the heritage of God, by *obtruding* hirelings upon it, and then excommunicating such from sealing ordinances, as had not freedom to submit to the ministry of these *intruders*;—against *lukewarmness* in the cause of truth, and *defect of zeal* for the glory and honour of the Son of God, boldly attacked by a *blasphemer*;—against *invading* the rights of radical judicatories, by appointing Committees to *lord* it over Presbyteries and the people of God through the land;—and *lastly*, against *assuming* a *legislative power* over the house of God, by enacting laws that did not bear the least stamp of the authority of the great Lord and Lawgiver of the house, and *lifting up* their human decisions so far above the examination of the word, that whoever should witness against them, was presently to become obnoxious to their *censures*; whereby there was a manifest restraint laid upon ministerial freedom and faithfulness in in testifying against the defections of the times.—Now, these are the points which are the subject of our present differences; and we leave it to the impartial world to judge, whether they are not *material*, and such points as affect the very *foundation* of our church-government and constitution, and consequently very nearly concern the interest of our blessed Lord and Saviour.

2. Since the act of Assembly supposes that there is an unanimity

in sentences among the members of this church, upon *material* and *fundamental* points which more nearly concern the establishing the peace of the church, then it plainly follows, That the *divisions* and *animosities* (which, the act says, have crept in and taken place among the members thereof) must certainly be owing to the four brethren, and some other ministers who have given open and public Testimony against the defections of the times : This is very obvious ; for, if the generality of the members of this church are unite in their sentiments about these points which they say more nearly concern the promoting the interest of the Redeemer, and the establishing the peace of the church, then surely the four brethren, about whom this act is made, must be the *disturbers* of that peace, and the *authors* of these divisions-complained of in the Narrative of the said act : Whereas the disturbances that are presently in the church, ought to be landed upon the *corrupt prevailing party* in the judicatories thereof, who have carried on a course of defection with an high hand, and not upon these who have given testimony against the said backsliding course.

3. When the Assembly 1734. declare, That they are not further to enquire into the *occasions*, or *steps of proceeding*, either on the part of the four brethren, or by the several judicatories under whose consideration their case hath been, but resolve that all questions upon these heads shall for hereafter be comfortably removed ; it follows, that they have dropt every branch of the Testimony which the four brethren have given : For, when they resolve that they will not further enquire into the occasions which may have produced (what they call) that *unhappy separation* upon the part of the four brethren, it is plain that they have dropt all the grounds of their secession at once, for these occasioned their separation ; and this renders the accession of the brethren the more difficult, because in this case they would be supposed to *accede* to a church who at least by this act seem to have *dropt* the testimony which they hold : For it is impossible to accede to a church, but in the situation she is in when the accession is made ; and an accession to her in that situation, so far approves of the same, as to subject it to her authority, and submit it to her direction, what may be accounted *defections*, and what not ; and what is a regular way of testifying, and what a disorderly course of that nature. And, if she maintains not the same testimony with these who are supposed to accede, it follows that the minority must be concluded by the major part ; and therefore, by their accession, their testimony is fallen from, and no more to be maintained, at least in a way of church-communion, till the majority have light to take up the same of their own accord.

4. When the Assembly impower the Synod to take the case of the four Brethren under their consideration, providing there be *such application* made to them as they shall *judge proper*, it follows, that that uncommon and *arbitrary* procedure, in *suspending* and otherwise *censuring* these Brethren, for no other reason but for testifying against the defections of the times, was to ly disregarded, unless such application should be made, as the Synod should judge proper ; whereas the manifest incroachment made upon the privileges of the members

of this church, by the Assembly 1733, and their Commission, deserved to have been noticed, even without the ceremony of an *application* to be made in favours of the four Brethren. Besides, when the Assembly require such application as the Synod shall judge proper, it plainly supposes, that, in the eye of this act of Assembly, the Brethren were guilty of some *heinous crime*, in protesting before the Assembly 1733, for their *just right and privilege to testify against the defections of the day*; for this was the sole ground of the censures that pass upon them: Only the Assembly 1734, for peace sake, so far connive at their guilt in this matter, that they are willing these sentences be taken off, providing they so far take with their offence, as to make application themselves for that effect, or others do it in their favours, that so the *authority* of the church, interposed in the passing of these sentences, may be some way kept up. And this is another difficulty in the way of our accession, when the judicatories of the church still look upon us as criminals, although they can charge us with nothing but standing up in defence of our Reformation-principles, at a time when they were most likely to be run down, and buried in oblivion.

5. When the Assembly order the Synod to take care to *preserve* the *authority* of the church, and discharge them to judge of the legality or formality of the proceedings of church-judicatories in relation to this affair, it is plain, as has been before observed, that the sentences pass by the Assembly 1733, and their Commission, stand in *full force* as to their legality and formality; only, for the sake of peace, the rigour of them may be relaxed as to the four Brethren for this time, upon the conditions and limitations expressed in the Act itself.

6. In regard, the Synod of Perth and Stirling were clothed with the Assembly's power in this matter, it will not be amiss to insert *what* they have done, in this place, that the reader may have a full view of this whole affair. The tenor of their Act is as follows:

At STIRLING, July 2d, 1734.

‘ THE Synod of Perth and Stirling, having, in obedience to
 ‘ the act and appointment of the General Assembly, dated
 ‘ at Edinburgh, the 14th day of May last, met and convened at
 ‘ Stirling this day, and taking the case of the four Brethren, Masters
 ‘ EBENEZER ERSKINE, WILLIAM WILSON, ALEXANDER MON-
 ‘ CRIEFF, and JAMES FISHER, under their consideration, with the
 ‘ power and authority delegated to them by the said General Assem-
 ‘ bly to do therein as they should find most justifiable and expedient
 ‘ for attaining the ends mentioned in the said act, and tending most
 ‘ for edification for the future; and also considering the applications
 ‘ that have been made, and Petitions and Addresses to this Synod
 ‘ from Towns and Parishes concerned, in behalf of these Brethren;
 ‘ and remembering how warmly the Elders in many Parishes of this

Province did address their respective Presbyteries in their favours, before the last Assembly; and, after long and serious deliberation, and reasoning upon the whole case of the said four Brethren, as it now stands; they are of opinion, that restoring and uniting them to ministerial communion with this church, to their respective charges, and to the judicatories to which they belong, and the free exercise of their ministerial function therein, by a solemn act and judicial deed of the General Assembly of this church, whose power and authority, as to this matter, is by the fore-mentioned act delegated to this Synod, will very much tend to restore the peace, and preserve the just authority of this church, in the exercise of all its righteous privileges and ministerial functions, and to promote the edification of the members of the body of Christ: Therefore this Synod, by virtue of the foresaid delegate power and authority, and in Name of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, did, and hereby do, with one voice and consent, take off the sentences pronounced by the Commission of the General Assembly 1733, against the foresaid four Brethren, Masters Ebenezer Erskine, William Wilton, Alexander Moncrieff, and James Fisher, declaring the same of no force or effect for the future; unite and restore them to ministerial communion with this church, to their several charges, and to the exercise of all parts of the ministerial function therein, as fully and freely as there never had been act, sentence, obstacle, or impediment whatsoever in the way thereof in time past; all which are hereby declared soppite, and set aside for the future: And the Synod do recommend to these four reverend Brethren, to carry towards the Lord's servants their Brethren, ministers of this church, and their respective flocks and charges, as ministers of Christ and his gospel ought to do, in all time coming; and they do in the like manner, recommend it to the respective Presbyteries of Perth, Stirling, and Dunkeld, to receive them as members of their respective Presbyteries, and behave towards them as ministers of Christ in this church; and do enjoin, not only the ministers of the said Presbyteries, but also of all other Presbyteries in their bounds, and the said four Brethren, so to demean themselves toward each other, as may answer the obligations they came under by their ordination-vows in the Lord: And the Synod take this opportunity to warn all the people in this Province to beware of every thing that may have a tendency to obstruct the good ends of this Act, and what the late General Assembly had so much at heart, *viz.* the peace and union of this church, by doing what may encourage division, or weaken the hands of the Lord's servants set over them: And further, the Synod appoint the names of the said four brethren to be immediately inrolled in the rolls of this Synod, and that Mr. Hamilton read this Act from the pulpit of Stirling, Mr. Black from the pulpit of Perth, Mr. Meek from the pulpit of Abernethy, and Mr. Gow from the pulpit of Kinclaven, on some Lord's day betwixt and the first of August; and the said Synod recommend it to Mr. Hamilton to acquaint Mr. Erskine,

‘ Mr. M’Intosh to acquaint Mr. Wilson, Mr. Pilmar to acquaint Mr. Moncrieff, and Mr. Gow to acquaint Mr. Fisher, of this act and sentence with their first convenience. And finally, they appoint this Act to be insert in all the Presbytery-books within this Province; and they live it to every minister to nominate the same to their congregations as they see cause. Extracted, &c.’

Now, since the above Act is supposed to conclude the affair concerning the four Brethren, we crave leave, with all due deference to our reverend Brethren who met at that time, to remark, That as their Act is framed upon the model of the above Act of Assembly 1734, as indeed it could not well otherwise be; so they lay the four Brethren under a greater restraint, than the Assembly 1734, their constituents by their Act obliged them to, when they recommend it to the four Brethren, ‘ To carry towards the Lord’s servants their Brethren, ministers of this church, and their respective flocks and charges, as ministers of Christ and his gospel ought to do, in all time coming;’ *i. e.* That they refrain from administering sealing ordinances to any of the Lord’s people, who even happen to reside in congregations who have had hirelings obtruded upon them. For, although the words of the Act be general, respecting all such as are reputed ministers of this church; yet, since our Testimony is mainly levelled against the corrupt party in the judicatories of the church who are carrying on a course of defection, and particularly against such as have intruded themselves upon dissenting and reclaiming congregations, several whereof are within the bounds of this Synod; therefore this special recommendation given to the four Brethren, must have an aspect chiefly to those: Otherwise it was to no purpose, to recommend it so particularly to them to carry in a brotherly manner towards the Lord’s faithful and sent servants, when they have so publicly declared, that they have not made a Secession from them, but are willing to maintain ministerial communion with them. And that this is the true meaning, will appear further, from the solemn warning that they give unto all the people in this Province, even to the people of Muckhart, &c. ‘ To beware of every thing that may encourage division from, or weaken the hands of the Lord’s servants set over them;’ that is, That they submit to the ministry even of such intruders, and take sealing ordinances from their hands. So that the Synod have proceeded a step further than the Assembly 1734 have done; and if this Act of theirs shall come to be inserted among the records of the Assembly 1735, it will be interpreted as corroborative of the act of Assembly 1733, concerning some ministers in the Presbytery of Dunfermline, which virtually excommunicates all the Lord’s people through the land, who cannot submit to the ministry of intruders.—We do not say that our reverend Brethren, who were the framers of this act, had any such design; but it is plain, that the act is so laid, as that the corrupt party, if ever they have opportunity, may make a handle of it to censure those who administer sealing ordinances to the Lord’s oppressed people in this church.

III. We proceed now to consider the Act of Assembly 1734, concerning ministerial freedom, which is said to be explicatory of the act and sentence 1733. The tenor of this Act, is as follows :

At EDINBURGH, May 14th, 1734.

‘ THE General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, considering, That some are under apprehensions, that by the Act of Assembly 1733, anent Mr. Erskine, &c. ministers of this church, are laid under greater restraints as to ministerial freedom, than they were by the rules of this church before the said Act was past ; therefore they do, for the satisfaction of all, hereby declare, That due and regular ministerial freedom is still left entire to all ministers ; and that the same *was not*, nor shall be held or understood to be anywise impaired or restrained by the late Assembly’s decision in that particular process.’

What the Assembly means by *due and regular ministerial freedom*, they have not told us ; but if we compare this, and the other act of the same date, with the act and sentence of Assembly 1733, we will easily find, that the freedom used by Mr. Erskine in the pulpit of Perth, in testifying against the act of Assembly 1732, and the violent proceedings of the church-judicatories at that time ; and the freedom which the four Brethren used in protesting for the faithful exercise of their ministry, and against all restraints upon the same, was not *due and regular* ministerial freedom. This is far from a strained consequence, the words of the Act itself expressly bear so much ; for it says, That due and regular ministerial freedom *was not* anywise impaired or restrained by the decision of the Assembly 1733, in this particular process. Now, upon the first reading of the said act and sentence 1733, these two facts will be obvious ; *First*, That Mr. Erskine was rebuked at the bar of that Assembly, for testifying against some acts of Assembly and proceedings of church-judicatories ; and *then*, that the Commission was appointed to suspend and inflict higher censures upon all the four Brethren, for protesting against the above decision of the Assembly, unless they should retract the same. From whence it is plain, that the faithfulness which Mr. Erskine used in preaching against the defections of the times, was *de facto* impaired ; for he was rebuked : And it is as plain, that the liberty we all four used, in protesting against a bad decision of an Assembly, was also restrained ; for the sentences which were afterwards inflicted by the Commission, were presently threatened by the Assembly ; there being no other reason condescended upon for these severe censures, but simply our offering to protest against the Assembly. And therefore, since, according to the words of this Act, due and regular ministerial freedom was not restrained by the sentence of Assembly 1733, it plainly follows, that the above-mentioned freedom which we have used, is *not* due and regular ministerial freedom ; for it was manifestly restrained, as we have just

now made appear: So that this act seems to be such an explication of the act 1733, as is a plain *vindication* of it.

The meaning then of the above act of Assembly appears to us to be shortly this; That ministers of this church are allowed ministerial freedom, providing they do not from the pulpit testify against the unwarrantableness of any act of Assembly, or proceedings of church-judicatories, and providing they do not protest against an Assembly, even though they should proceed to inflict censures on their Brethren for such a testimony. This is the amount of what some call the *explicatory Act*; and however others may think there is something satisfying in it, yet it cannot (as it is framed) give satisfaction to the four Brethren, or any who are of the same sentiments with them, anent the duty of ministers, from the word of God, their ordination-vows, and our covenants national and solemn league, to *oppose* with zeal and resolution, all *innovations* and *exorbitant heights of church-power* which tend to *subvert* and *overturn* our valuable church-constitution.

From what we have said concerning these two acts of Assembly 1734, it evidently appears, that there is a manifest connection between them and the act and sentence of the Assembly 1733, concerning the four Brethren: and if the act of the Synod of Perth and Stirling should happen to be insert among the records of Assembly 1735, then there will be the acts of three several Assemblies running, all *restraining* the freedom and liberty of ministers in testifying against acts of Assembly however iniquitous, and the proceedings of church-judicatories, however arbitrary and tyrannical; and also condemning their right to protest against an Assembly upon any occasion whatsoever, even when inflicting their censures for no other reason but testifying against their defections.—From all which it appears, how necessary it is, that the church, by a judicial deed, give a *standing testimony* against the manifest incroachment made upon ministerial freedom by the Assembly 1733, and nowise disapproved by the Assembly 1734; in regard, that nothing less than an *explicit* and *formal* repeal of an iniquitous statute is necessary for the reparation of the dishonour done to the glorious Head of the church by enacting of it.

Thus we have considered the Grounds of our *Secession* from that party in the church, who appeared to us to have a very active hand in pursuing such measures as must, in the issue, have landed in the *subversion* and *ruin* of the whole of our covenanted Reformation; as also what the last General Assembly have done for removing the Grounds upon which our *Secession* was laid. And, from what is above represented, every one may easily see what are the *Reasons* why we have not as yet acceded to the judicatories of the church: And as we can sincerely say, That there is nothing we more desire than union in the Lord with our Brethren; so it will be matter of joy unto us, and many of the Lord's people through the land, if our sins and backslidings from the Lord were particularly acknowledged and forsaken, and if a work of Reformation were seriously set about: that is, if this church were returning back to the Lord

and to the rule prescribed in his word, for directing the church how they ought to behave themselves *in the house of the living God, which is the pillar and ground of the truth.* This is the true notion of Reformation in a backsliding church, and agreeable to the scripture-account of it: For as, in the erection of the Jewish church, every thing, whether as to worship or government, was to be done by God's own appointment, and *according to the pattern shewed in the Mount*; so, in all the Reformations, they returned back to this unerring rule, from which they had deviated and turned aside. Thus, in the Reformation under the Reign of Hezekiah, a decree was established, *That all Israel should keep the passover to the Lord at Jerusalem; for they had not done it for a long time in such sort as it was written. The Levites taught the good knowledge of the Lord, and made confession to the Lord God of their fathers: And the Priests and the Levites stood in their place after their manner, according to the law of Moses the man of God,* 2 Chron. chap. xxx.—And in the Reformation, that took place in the time of Josiah, *all the words of the Book of the Covenant, which was found in the house of the Lord, were read in the ears of all the people; and the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant, which were written in the book of the law. And he commanded the Priests to kill the passover, and to sanctify themselves, and prepare their brethren, that they might do according to the word of the Lord, by the hand of Moses. And the Priests roasted the passover with fire, according to the ordinance of God,* 2 Chron. chap. xxix, and xxxv.—And the same pattern of Reformation is also given us by Ezra and Nehemiah after the captivity.

But we must needs regret, That whatever is yet done, there is but little progress in reformation, according to the scriptural account of it. Is there a *confession* made unto the Lord God of our father? Is there a particular *enumeration* made of the *steps of defection* both of ministers and people, and an *acknowledgment* of them before the Lord, according to the above scripture-patterns and examples, and the laudable practice of our fathers in the reforming periods of this church? And when we consider the grounds of that reasonable duty of *national fasting*, emitted by the Commission at the appointment of the last Assembly; they appear to us to be conceived in such general terms, that they may be applicable to any period of the church, bearing no particular acknowledgment of the *causes of the Lord's wrath* gone forth against us at this day. As for instance, the sinful *breach* and *violation* of our *covenants*, national and solemn League, is not acknowledged; yea, these covenants are not so much as mentioned, unless it be in general and dubious terms. Neither is the least notice taken of the alarming mark of God's anger against this church, in permitting one of her seminaries, for educating candidates for the holy ministry, to be poisoned with *Arminian, Socinian, and Arian* errors; and the guilt that is lying upon the judicatories of the church, in the not inflicting an adequate censure upon

the *broacher* of these *heresies*. There is no confession made of the great sin of the judicatories in *licensing* so many to preach the gospel, who seem to be ashamed of Christ and him crucified, and then imposing and violently *obtruding* them on God's heritage through the land; by which means, the flock of Christ is scattered, wounded, and grievously oppressed. And there is no acknowledgment of the sin and guilt of judicatories in *invading* the rights of Christian congregations, and conferring them upon the *open enemies* of our constitution; and of *excommunicating*, upon the matter, all the *serious* and *tender* Christians through the land, that have not freedom to submit to the ministry of these that have been intruded upon them: Nor is there a confession made of the sin of lifting up these and other such arbitrary decisions above the *examination of the word*, and suppressing ministerial freedom and faithfulness, and inflicting high censures upon such as endeavoured to testify against these and other like defection.—Now, these great steps of backsliding, and the signs of the Lord's anger and controversy with us at this day, have not so much as been mentioned: and as long as a church, in the grounds of their fasting and humiliation before the Lord, make only a general acknowledgment of the grosser sins that prevail among churches at all times, without condescending upon the particular evils of the day, however it may pass for prudence among the men of this world, yet it can be no sign of an advance towards a true and thorough reformation.

Upon the whole, since the principal Grounds upon which our *Secession* is laid, still remain, in regard many of the Lord's people, who cannot submit to the ministry of intruders, are virtually excommunicated, and ministers who shall adventure to dispense sealing ordinances to them are obnoxious to the highest censures of the church, according to act of Assembly 1733, concerning some ministers in the Presbytery of Dunfermline, which act stands yet unrepealed:—And in regard the acceptance of presentations is not declared to be contrary to the principles of this church; nor is there an effectual stop put to the intrusion of any into the office of the ministry, contrary to the will of the congregation to which they are appointed:—And since no warning is yet emitted against the errors and blasphemous heresies vented among us:—And since the act restraining ministerial freedom stands unrepealed; and, for any thing that is yet done, may be looked upon as legal and formal still:—And, finally, since these and the like evils are never yet particularly acknowledged, as the just grounds and causes of the Lord's controversy against us; We cannot but be under very great straits and difficulties, as matters thus stand, to accede to the judicatories of this church, in a consistency with the the Testimony we have given.—And, as these are the reasons of our continuing still in Secession from the judicatories of the church; so, if the following things were done, our difficulties would be removed out of the way, *viz.*

1^{mo}, That a *seasonable* warning be emitted against the infidelity and gross errors prevailing among us at this day; and particularly, that the *true*, and *supreme deity* of the Son of God our Saviour, his

*independency, and necessary existence be expressly asserted, in opposition to these terms in which Mr. Simson attempted to subvert that important and fundamental doctrine, as has been found proven against him upon the first libel, for which he deserved the highest censure of the church; and likewise, that the gross and dangerous errors found proven against him by the Committee in the second libel, be in plain and express terms condemned.—And, in regard it has been found proven against William Nimmo, that he has made a bold and daring attack upon the whole of divine revelation, that the highest censure of the church be inflicted upon him.—And also, since Mr. Campbell at St. Andrews has vented some propositions reflecting both upon natural and revealed religion, and a Committee of the Commission having entered upon the consideration of them, the said affair be proceeded in, and brought to an issue.—And likewise, that an enquiry be made into the errors vented by Mr. Wallace, in disparagement of the principles of revealed religion; and if these gross errors are found proven against the said Mr. Campbell, and Mr. Wallace, that the same *high censure* be inflicted upon them.*

2do, That the act of Assembly 1733, censuring Mr. Erskine for impugning the act 1732. and the arbitrary proceedings of church-judicatories, and appointing high censures to be inflicted on the four brethren for protesting against the said decision, as suppressing ministerial freedom and faithfulness, be *rescinded*, and all that has followed thereupon be declared *null and void* in itself; and that all ministers of this church be enjoined to give faithful warning and testimony against the prevailing corruptions of the times, according to act of Assembly, August 3d, 1648. intitled, *Act for censuring of ministers for their silence, and not speaking to the corruptions of the times.*

3tio, That the act of the same Assembly 1733, concerning some brethren in the Presbytery of Dunfermline, be also *rescinded*; and that it be *declared*, that ministers shall be allowed to dispense sealing ordinances to all such as have had ministers intruded upon them contrary to the word of God, and the rules of this church founded thereupon, and who have not freedom to submit to the ministry of such, or to receive the ordinances of Christ from their hands, providing they be sufficiently attested as to their Christian life and conversation.

4to, In case the patronage-act shall not be *rescinded*, that it be *declared* that the acceptance of presentations is contrary to the principles of this church; and that preachers, who accept of the same, be censured, by taking their license from them; and that ministers for such a transgression be suspended; and, if they tenaciously adhere to it, that they be deposed.—And farther, that it be *declared and enacted*, That, in all time coming, no minister shall be settled in any vacant congregation, without the call and consent of the majority of that congregation, who are admitted to full communion with the church, in all her sealing ordinances; and that there be no preference of voices in this matter, upon the account of any worldly consideration.

510, That, in licensing and ordaining men to the holy ministry, all Presbyteries be strictly enjoined, not only to enquire into their literature, but also their acquaintance with the power of godliness, and the work of the Spirit upon their own souls; and that they admit none to trials, in order to preaching, but such as are known to be of sound principles, of a good report, of a sober, grave, prudent, and pious behaviour; and who have the other qualifications required in the scriptures, and in the acts of the Assemblies of this church, particularly act December 17. and 18. Assembly 1638, and act 10. Assembly 1694. and many others.—And farther, That an act be framed against the present dangerous innovation both in the strain and method of preaching, practised by many ministers and preachers, lately entered into this church; and that the contraveeners of the said act be condignly censured.

610, In regard the just grounds and causes of the Lord's controversy with this land, have not been particularly acknowledged for many years past, and the lamentable steps of defection and backsliding, which have lately come to a great height, have not been confessed, to the glory of God, by the Commission of the last Assembly, in their grounds of fasting: That therefore, in the grounds of a national fast, for which there seems to be as weighty reasons as ever, there be an acknowledgment of the great guilt of this land, in having gone on into such a course of backsliding contrary to the word of God, and the obligations these lands are under to promote reformation, by our covenants national and solemn league; and that they make a full and particular enumeration of the *steps of defection* that have been made in our day, according to the pattern of reformation in the word, and the example of our ancestors, in reforming periods of this church; particularly in the years 1638, 1646, and 1648.

If the above things were done, we might have the comfortable prospect of a pleasant and desirable unity and harmony with our brethren, in concurring with them, according to our weak measure, in all other necessary steps towards a further reformation. And may the Lord himself, with whom is the residue of the Spirit, pour out his Spirit from on high upon us every one: May he turn us again, and cause his face to shine upon us: May he heal all our backslidings and breaches, that glory may dwell in our land!



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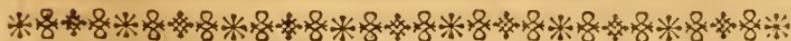
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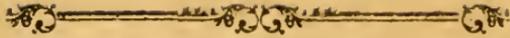
Met at STIRLING, October 29th, 1747.

D E C L A R I N G T H E

N U L L I T Y of the *Pretended Synod,*

That first met in Mr. GIB's house in *Bristo*, near
Edinburgh, April 10th, 1747.





THE following INTRODUCTION did not appear either with the first or second Edition of the ACT, to which it is now prefixed : Nor is it the production of the Associate Synod, who framed the ACT ; but the compilation of a single individual, who thought it might be useful to some readers, not thoroughly acquainted with the unhappy rupture, and the disagreeable effects that followed it, which laid a foundation for passing the ACT : And therefore, any improprieties, or inaccuracies that may be found in it, are not to be imputed to the Associate Synod, but to the person who presumed to prefix it.





I N T R O D U C T I O N.

AS the arbitrary and unconstitutional procedure of the established judicatories of this national church, in the years 1732 and 1733, were very remarkable for giving birth to that memorable event, the SECESSION, which brought relief, in the providence of God, to so many of the Lord's oppressed and aggrieved heritage, so deeply injured in their spiritual rights and privileges, by the tyrannical acts and decisions, which had been framed and passed by the supreme judicature: So, no less remarkable was the irregular conduct of some of the members of the Associate Synod, in the years 1746 and 1747, in obstructing that beautiful harmony which had subsisted among the members of that body, from the commencement of the Secession, then upwards of a dozen years standing.

Before inserting the above Act, which was occasioned by the unhappy rupture that took place in the associate body, it will not be improper, by way of INTRODUCTION, to give a short account of the grounds and causes of it, the means by which it was brought about, and the direful effects that issued from it; in regard, the present Collection may fall into the hands of many, who did not exist when that mournful breach took place, and who are not fully acquainted with the various papers wrote on the subject.

The Secession-interest, for a number of years after its first commencement, had made very great progress in the different corners of the kingdom; the glorious truths of the blessed gospel met with the most kindly reception; and the most amiable and agreeable understanding took place among both ministers and people, till about the year 1745, when it was moved in the Synod, to make an enquiry into the lawfulness of some oaths, not imposed by the legislature, but used in different parts of the kingdom. Among others, the oath imposed in some Burghs came under review, and occasioned a very warm debate in the Synod. It was the *religious clause* principally in that oath that gave rise to the warm contention that ensued about the meaning of it. The clause itself runs thus; 'Here I profess, before God and your Lordships, That I profess and allow with my heart, the true *Protestant* religion, presently professed within this realm, and authorized by the laws thereof; I shall abide thereat, and defend the same to my life's end, renouncing the *Roman* religion called PAPISTRY.'

The members of court entertained different sentiments relative to the meaning of the above clause: some of them viewed it as sinful, while others affirmed the swearing of it was lawful. That party in

the Synod, who viewed the clause as *sinful*, and accordingly argued for *condemning* the swearing of it, (among whom were Messrs. Mair, Moncrieff, Gib, and others,) endeavoured to put various glosses on the words, and strangely to torture and squeeze them in order to support these glosses.—The other party in the Synod, who considered the clause as *lawful*, and consequently *defended* the taking it, (among whom were Messrs. Ebenezer and Ralph Erskines, Fisher, and others,) contended, that in regard it was the *true*, the *divine* religion ITSELF, professed and authorised in Scotland, that was sworn to in the oath, and not the *faulty manner* of professing and settling IT; and consequently lawful and consistent for Seceders to swear the oath; because, though they had stated a quarrel with the *manner*, in which the true religion is presently professed and settled, and had testified against the *corruptions* in both church and state; yet they were so far from stating any quarrel with *the true religion itself*, professed and authorised in the realm, that they had but lately declared judicially, ‘The religion presently authorised to be
‘ their own, solemnly thanking God, that OUR RELIGION has such
‘ SECURITY by the PRESENT civil government, as no nation on earth
‘ enjoys the like.’*

The CONDEMNERS of the clause, as *sinful*, no less warmly contended, That this oath being administered by these of the established church, ought to be understood in the sense of the magistrates, for whose security it is given; and the true religion mentioned in it to be understood, as reduplicating upon every act of parliament or assembly inconsistent with the law of God; and as including all the corruptions of both church and state: and so natively inferred, That the swearing of the disputed clause, imported a solemn renunciation and dropping of the whole of their Testimony.—They contended, that the words *true religion, presently professed and authorised*, in a time of reformation, would reduplicate only upon good Acts of Parliament and Assembly; but in a time of defection, reduplicated upon all the bad.—And moreover alledged, That this clause homologated the *omissions* and *defects* of the *Revolution settlement* of religion, and was a conniving at, and acquiescing in the corruptions of the *present judicatories*: and, in order to support their assertion, laboured to confound the TRUE RELIGION *professed* and *settled*, with the *profession* and *settlement* thereof, making not the *true religion ITSELF*, but the PROFESSION and SETTLEMENT the thing sworn to; as if there were no difference between a *good profession* and a *bad practice*.

The DEFENDERS of this clause, as *lawful*, rejected the allegation, and affirmed, That whatever *omissions* the revolution church or state were justly charged with, yet the *true religion* was really settled at the revolution, by the revolution parliament; in regard, the Westminster Confession of Faith, which contains the very quintessence of true religion, was ratified thereby, as agreeable to the word of God, and embodied in their fifth act: and all bad acts, contrary thereto, and inconsistent therewith, rescinded and annulled; and all good

* See Answers to Mr. Nain's reasons of protest.

laws, in favours thereof, ratified and confirmed; and the National Covenant, as renewed in the year 1638. and the Solemn League and Covenant, freed from the indignities of the preceding reigns of Charles II. and James VII.—They farther affirmed, That the true religion, authorized and established by the Revolution parliament, is the same true religion that *hath been*, and now *is*, professed by SECEDERS in their *Act* and *Testimony*; and that the *present profession* of religion ought not to be confounded with the *ancient settlement* thereof: for, no deviation or defection, either in principle or practice, in *professing* the true religion, could be couched in the bosom of that religious clause, seeing it only respected the *true religion ITSELF*, formerly ratified on its ancient basis.—And further, it was affirmed, That our *Testimony* was never lifted up against the true religion *professed* and *authorized* by the laws of the land, or against the Revolution settlement thereof, but against their *omissions*; and therefore gave it the epithets of *happy* and *glorious* Revolution, and our *beautiful*, *valuable*, and *excellent* Presbyterian constitution: nor against the *profession of religion*, or the *sound practice* of the present judicatories; but against their *defections* and *corruptions*, and abuse of their *professed principles*, by a course of *backsliding*.

After no small warm disputing, the Defenders of the clause as lawful, for the sake of peace, offered to condescend to an act discharging Seceders to swear this clause of the oath, as *inexpedient* for them in the present circumstances, *viz.* of strife and contention. This pacific proposal the Antiburghers entirely rejected. Nothing would please them, but an act, declaring the present swearing of it, by Seceders, to be sinful, and inconsistent with their testimony and covenant-bond.—In a meeting of synod, April 9th 1746, they carried a *decision* to their mind. A number of the Burgher ministers and elders protested against it; and soon after gave in their reasons, importing, that it was sinful in itself, contrary to Christian forbearance, tending to rent the church, enacted contrary to the order prescribed in the barrier acts, and carried by a catch when many members were absent.—The Antiburghers, contrary to order, neglected to have their answers to these reasons ready against next meeting of synod; and some of them, in the mean time, publicly debarred from the Lord's table, such as maintained the lawfulness of the *burgher-oath*.

Though the *sinfulness* of the *religious clause* was condemned by a small majority of a thin meeting, at the conclusion of the Synod in April 1746.; yet the full Synod which met in April 1747. proposed, 'Whether the decision concerning the *religious clause* in some burghs oaths, in April 1746. should now or afterwards, be made a term of ministerial and Christian communion, ay and until the making the same to be so, shall be referred, by way of overture, unto Presbyteries and Kirk-sessions, in order to their giving their opinion thereanent, &c. or not?' This vote being carried in the *negative*, 32 against 22, the party condemning the religious clause as sinful, immediately withdrew themselves from the synod, lawfully constituted, leaving behind them the moderator and clerk; and next day constitute

themselves upon a new foundation, suddenly calling themselves the *Synod*, and the *only* Synod; and enacted, 'That all Presbyteries, Kirk-sessions, and Communities in the Association, were subject to them; and that all Courts, whether Presbyteries or Sessions, that were not subordinate to them, were *unlawful Courts*; and that all Ministers and Elders, who were not subject to them, had *lost the keys of the kingdom of heaven*;' and thus materially *suspending* and *exauthorating* all Ministers and Elders from their sacred offices, who could not yield subjection to their authority.

But this was not all; they were even farther most unjustly accused: and accordingly, in what they called their *Acts* and *Proceedings*, they found and declared, in the absence of their Brethren, 'That they had dropt and turned their backs on the *whole of the Lord's cause*, and renounced and abjured the *whole of the testimony*; and that all courts, that were not subordinate to them, were *unlawful courts*; and that all ministers and elders have fallen from *all right and title* to any present actual exercise of the *keys of the kingdom of heaven*, committed by the Lord Jesus, to the office-bearers of his house; and consequently, are not to be acknowledged, as *ministers of Christ*, by any that are cleaving to the Lord's cause and testimony.'—All this, not only in the absence of their Brethren, but before they were libelled, or so much as called before them.

It was this singularly-extravagant, irregular, and unprecedented conduct of the separating Brethren, and the direful consequences that soon attended it, which gave rise to the following Act, unhinging the FOUNDATION of their *new and unwarrantable constitution*, and declaring the NULLITY of all their *pretended* judicial procedure.

This unhappy rupture was, however, followed with a train of the most mournful effects.—Professors, who used to take sweet counsel together in going to the house of God, were much stumbled and divided in their sentiments; and 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 to pieces; the hearts of the godly were grieved; the generation hardened; and the mouths of the irreligious and profane opened.

The Associate Synod conducted themselves with a degree of moderation that did them much honour. They once and again solicited their separating brethren to an extra-judicial meeting, for prayer and conference, in order to adjust their unhappy differences, and regain harmony in the cause of truth: but this necessary duty and reasonable proposal was never complied with.—They never proceeded to inflict any *censure* upon their separating Brethren, for their irregular conduct; judging it would answer no valuable end, nor tend to general edification.

As the separating Brethren did not satisfy themselves with simply withdrawing from the regular constituted court, of which they were

members, and throwing out such a number of the most *cruel invectives*, that an over-heated imagination could invent; but even proceeded, in process of time, to the most extravagant heights, in prostituting the *cenfures* of the church, by pretending to depose and excommunicate their Brethren with the highest censures: So, any who incline to be more fully informed, with relation to this unhappy controversy, may consult the different Tracts which have been wrote on the subject.*

Scarce did ever a spirit of calumny and reproach more prevail than upon this occasion: if we consult their Acts and Proceedings, and other performances, we will find, that *apostates and backsliders from the Lord's ways; fallen stars; departers from, betrayers and buriers of the whole testimony of the day; opposers of the cause of Christ; lest their Bibles behind them; begun to go back to Egypt*, with such like appellations, were the usual epithets given to their Brethren at this time: and for no other reason, but because they affirmed the lawfulness of swearing the religious clause of the burges's oath, which binds to maintain that *divine thing and precious treasure*, the TRUE RELIGION, presently professed and authorised by the laws of the land, and which our standing laws term the *true religion, God's true religion, Christ's true religion, God's eternal truth*, contained in the *word of God*, expressed in such and such *Confessions of Faith*, and sworn also to in our *National Covenant*.

UPON the whole; this was, however, a very fruitless dispute, did much injury to the interests of real religion, by alienating the affections of professors from one another; and could, by no means, support the huge fabric the Antiburgher party reared upon it: a parallel to which, in all its circumstances, cannot be found in all the annals and records of the church.

* See a Review of a Pamphlet, intituled, A serious inquiry into the Burges's oaths, of Edinburgh, Perth, and Glasgow.—The Lawfulness of the religious clause of some Burges's oaths asserted.—The true State of the Question, upon which a breach followed in the Associate Synod, at Edinburgh, Thursday April 9th, 1747.—A Narrative of the separation of the majority of the Members of the Associate Presbytery of Dunfermline, at Perth, May 5th 1747.—Fancy no Faith; or, a seasonable admonition and warning to Seceders, against the sinful constitution of some Brethren into a pretended judicatory, with remarks on their Acts and Proceedings, &c.—The New Constitution of the pretended Synod which first met in Mr. Gib's house, April 10th 1747, Unmasked.—Answers to the Six Queries, proposed on a Lord's day before the Associate congregation of Mearns, by Mr. Andrew Thomson, as unanswerable.—Observations upon the conduct of the separating Brethren, in two parts; with Fancy still no Faith.—The third Proof of Fancy no Faith. In three parts; with the Animadversions attained, being the fourth proof of Fancy no Faith.—The religious Clause of the Burges's oath vindicated; and the Constitution of some Brethren, and their censures considered.—An impartial Survey of the Controversy respecting the Burges's oath, and the conduct of the separating Brethren.

Gib's house. One of the reasons, given by that famous Assembly 1638, for the nullity of the pretended Assembly holden at Linlithgow 1606, was 'from the *indiction* of it, that it was indicted the third of December, to be kept the tenth of December; and so there was no time given to the Presbyteries for the election of Commissioners,' &c.—It is also given as one of the reasons for the nullity of the pretended Assembly at Aberdeen 1616, that 'the *indiction* of that pretended Assembly was but twenty days before the holding of it; so that the Presbyteries and Burghs could not be prepared for sending their Commissioners.'—The same is likewise given as the first reason of their annulling the pretended Assembly holden at Perth 1618, that 'the Assembly was indicted but *twenty* days before the holding of it; and all parties requisite received not advertisement.'—How much more does this reason prove the nullity of the pretended Synod, that first met in Mr. Gib's house? seeing it was indicted but a few *hours* before the holding of it; inasmuch, that all parties requisite could not possibly receive advertisement; that is, neither Presbyteries, as to their absent members, nor Kirk-sessions could be advertised before hand, of any such Synod or constitution thereof, in order to see whether they could choose members for it: which, if it had been done, agreeably to the above reasons given by that reforming Assembly, it is more than probable no such Synod had ever been constituted.

III. Because the Synod was already *lawfully* constituted, before these brethren withdrew; and neither the moderator nor clerk of Synod, regularly chosen, by the vote of the Synod, were present in that foresaid meeting. The Synod was before-hand lawfully met and constituted, by opening with a sermon preached before the synod; by prayer of the moderator of the former meeting of synod; by the choice of a new moderator, Mr. James Mair, and of a new clerk, *pro tempore*, Mr. William Hutton; by reading the minutes of last sederunt at Stirling, and actually proceeding upon business, reasoning and voting: All this was done before the brethren withdrew and constituted a-part from the synod, who continued still sitting, with their moderator and clerk. And, the moderator and clerk having thus continued with the synod, after these brethren had withdrawn themselves openly before their face, and constituted behind their back, there could therefore be no formal election of their new moderator or new clerk: the want of which formality, was one of the reasons given by the Assembly 1638, of the *nullity* of the pretended Assembly holden at Perth 1618.

IV. Because *elders* are elected by their several sessions, as Commissioners to the Synod; but these brethren separated themselves from the synod, and constituted, without the consent of the sessions whom they represented; and therefore could not represent them in a pretended constitution of synod, which the church knew nothing of when they were elected and commissioned.

The elders, with whom they constituted, had no power from their constituents, or the sessions that elected them, to become mem-

bers of another court, separated from the former, than delegated members of a Presbyterian synod have power from their constituents, to turn themselves into members of a Popish or Prelatick one. Ministers and elders, met in synod, have no absolute or illimited power, no lordly or magisterial power to make new courts and new laws to the church, but a ministerial and stewardly power to attend the courts already constituted in the church, and to execute the laws already made to the church, by the King and Lawgiver of Zion. All their acts and proceedings must run in a direct line of subordination to the word of God, otherwise they are, *ipso facto*, null and void.— But our separating brethren have taken upon them, in a lordly and magisterial way, to constitute a synod, unto which there was no delegation by the church diffusive; and not only so, but to usurp a *legislative authority*, both over their brethren, ministers and elders, and over the whole church of the association, by making laws, and instituting new terms of communion, for which they can produce no warrant or foundation in the word of God, and without the knowledge and consent of their constituents. They had a commission indeed, to meet in the ordinary synod, and to administer the laws of Zion's King, in conjunction with their brethren: but to separate from their brethren met in synod, and to constitute a separate court, and to enact laws never before heard of; and, *brevi manu*, without form or process of any kind, to overthrow the power of presbyteries and sessions, and tear the commissions of ministers and elders, which they hold only of the glorious Head, is such a piece of usurpation as was never practised or preceded in the church of Christ, unless among *Donatists* and *Brownists*, disowned by all sound churches.

How is it possible, that, amongst our separating brethren, elders could act, as the representatives of the church, in a court to which elders were never sent or delegated? For, at their delegation, that pretended court or synod had no being. It had none, till after these brethren had sat two days, as members of the regular synod, to which their commission from the church did only bear them. Such strangers were sessions to this new *upstart* synod, that, when our brethren went home to their several sessions, they had a strange question put to their eldership, namely, Whether they approved of their constitution, and would sit, in session, in a subordination thereto? By which preposterous management, they not only declared, that they had constituted a synod, and acted, without any commission from their constituents, but threw the whole associate body into confusion, and cut off both ministers and elders from their communion, who had, and have as good a commission from Christ, and as good a delegation from the church, as they could ever be supposed to have.

V. Because the person, who indicted that *nominal* synod to meet in Mr. Gib's house, as he only called a *part*, and not the whole of the constituent members of the associate synod; so he excluded ministers, and also elders, who were lawfully elected to attend. And, although he asserted, in his declaration, that the power of the synod

was devolved upon him and his party, yet he neither did, nor can show any warrant, for his so saying, or doing. Who gave him that authority? It cannot be said to have been given by our Lord Jesus: for he gives no authority or power to the destruction of his courts and work. And neither the word of God, Confession of Faith, the acts and constitutions of the Reformation, nor any good precedent, agreeable to these, has been pretended, as that upon which this his authority is founded.

VI. Because it is not the *Associate Synod*, to which accessions were made, for a considerable time bygone, by ministers and others. Not one person, before this time, ever made, or could make accession to this new pretended synod of the separating brethren, or to their new constitution. On which account, it may be said, that this is not the Jerusalem, to which the tribes have gone up, the tribes of the Lord to the testimony of Israel; but rather like mount Gerizim, where the Samaritans reared up their temple, in contempt of that at Jerusalem. Therefore, their meeting, as an associate synod, is in itself *null*.

VII. Because this meeting was called and indicted *irregularly*, in respect of the circumstances both of time and place; namely, at the time when, and in the place where the associate synod were sitting, regularly constituted in the name of the glorious Head of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ, whose presence was invoked by the moderator, as the mouth of the synod. And, before that meeting was concluded, that any member should attempt to call a *new* and *another* synod, in his own name, and in the name of others that should adhere to him; and thus, in another name, and authority, and that, wherein the synod (which had adjourned from Stirling to Edinburgh) was orderly constituted, is what could not be done, without injuring the name, and invading the authority of our glorious Emmanuel, the only Head of his body the church, and King of Zion.

VIII. Because, on the one hand, there was no *sinful* thing required of these brethren, no *new* or *unlawful* term of *communion* imposed on them; no imposition at all put, or so much as proposed to be put upon them by their brethren, differing from them in their judgment in this matter. There was no design laid, nor attempt made, far less any thing done, to straiten them as to their light, or to press their consciences; they were thus left free: no body was seeking to oblige them to think as they thought; nor was any *act* made, or sought, by any, to be made, to force them to think or do, in the matter, as they thought or did. No error, less or more gross, was vented or maintained by their brethren, by which it might be rendered unsafe for them to keep communion with them. And, seeing there was nothing of the foresaid evils, or the like, in the case, it was therefore most *undutiful*, *unwarrantable*, and *dangerous* to *separate*: and their *separating*, in such circumstances, from witnessing ministers and others, who are bearing, and willing to bear testimony for Christ, is therefore no other than a *schism*.

On the other hand, their separating from their brethren of this Associate Synod is *unlawful*, because this separation was made, by

them, for this reason, among others, That they could not get their brethren to submit unto, not only a *new term of communion*, but *terms* which they, though willing to know truth and duty to follow them, and sin and error to refuse them, could not see to be reasonable and agreeable to our principles. And, such being the case, it is plain the language of these brethrens conduct is, That they would have others act merely on their authority or pleasure, and blindly to follow them.

IX. Because, at that meeting at which our brethren withdrew, April 9th, the Synod was as *lawfully constituted* as in any former meetings; particularly as lawfully as it was April 8th. Now, both sides agree, that the former meetings were lawful, and the separating brethren themselves owned the meeting, April 8th, to be lawful: for, (1.) Not one of them all objected, or spoke a word against it as *unlawfully constituted*. (2.) They all sat still, as members of the court, till the meeting was closed with prayer, without the least insinuation of its being *unlawful*. (3.) They proposed an opposite side of a *vote*, urged it; and all or most of them willingly voted on that side. (4.) After they were disappointed, by the other side of the *vote* carrying against them, still they pretended no *unlawfulness* in the meeting, or *constitution* thereof; but one of them entered a *dissent*, against the *vote* that carried, to which *only* other *two* adhered. (5.) On Thursday forenoon, April 9th, the *three* that *dissented* from the *vote* carried the preceding night, declared their adherence to their said *dissent*; and others of them joined with them; and all of them acted in a court as *lawfully constituted*. (6.) At the same *federunt*, Mr. Gib entered a *protestation*, in the face of the court as *lawfully constituted*; and all the ministers on their side, who were present, *adhered* to it. (7.) They joined in the concluding that *federunt* with prayer; agreeing, equally with the rest, to adjourn, till night, for the synod's business. (8.) The synod meeting at night, April 9th, our brethren met with us as a *lawfully constituted* court: and the synod never heard of the *pretended* undueness, or unlawfulness of the court, till they had sitted some time.--And it is not only probable, but there is moral evidence for it, that the lawfulness of the court had never been called in question, if our brethren had not seen, by the preceding night's business, that they had not numbers to carry things to their mind. So that the first mention of the synod's being *unlawfully constituted*, was made by Mr. Mouncrieff; and his account of it is very obscure, and seems self-inconsistent, as worded in his *protest*: He therein speaks of its being unlawful IN THIS STEP. By *this step* he either means the conduct of the synod, both in the first *vote*, the preceding night, and in the second *vote*, which was a-passing that day; or *only*, the conduct anent the second *vote*. But, whatever way, the charge is unreasonable. If he means it of both, he and his brethren are inconsistent with themselves, as is clear from what is above narrated. If it be of the second *vote* that he means it, the meeting of synod cannot be unlawful. For, (1.) Nothing was done anent the *second vote*, but what was agreeable to the *first*. But, in the *first*, the court was

lawful; and consequently, in the *second*. (2.) The matter of the *two votes* is not different, but the same; and it was as one deed, performed in its parts. The *second vote* is just the *first vote* fulfilled or executed. (3.) He does not shew at what time the synod changed, and became of *lawful, unlawful* in its *constitution*. (4.) He does not signify, whether it is his opinion, that any one, or every unlawful act or deed of a court, *lawfully constituted*, doth render that court *unlawful* in its *constitution*, so that it ceaseth to be a lawful court; and whether a court may be lawful in its *constitution*, while passing an unlawful *act*, and remain *lawful*. (5.) He seems not duly to distinguish betwixt the constitution of a court, and the acts and proceedings thereof; but to blend and confound them: whereas a court, intirely lawful and right in its constitution, may pass acts very unlawful, and yet the court remain lawful, and its constitution not touched.—By all which it is evident, that the brethren *separating* from this *synod*, as they *did*, and *constituting* a-part, is *groundless* and *unscriptural* in *itself*, and inconsistent with themselves.

X. Another reason of the *nullity* of the said *pretended synod*, is, their *constitution's* being founded upon many grievous calumnies and heavy charges, laid against the synod, without the least shadow of proof: such as, p. 11. of their *Acts*, 'That they were not asking understanding to discern judgment, and that there was no judgment in their goings, but that the Lord was provoked to leave them unto counsels of their own.' That they were 'awfully left of God, to behave in open contradiction to the name and nature of a court of Christ.' Page 5. That they had '*materially dropt the whole testimony* among their hands, allowing of, at least, for a time, a *material abjuration* thereof.' Page 4. That they 'set the names and pleasure of men, in the room of *truth and duty*.' Page 15. That they 'did run into an *awful inconsistency*, of giving *judicial allowance*, in the mean time, for a *practice*, which is, at the same time, *judicially* found to be a profanation of the Lord's name, and a *material abjuration* of his whole *cause and testimony* among the hands of the Associate Synod.' Page 20. That they were guilty of 'assuming to themselves an arbitrary power of their own, which cannot *possibly* be derived from Christ, seeing it is employed against Christ, the alone King and Head of his church; and for burying his truth, cause, and interest.' Page 21. That they were chargeable with subverting, and 'obstinately subverting of that order which Christ, as the God of order, hath commanded to be observed in his house.'

When these and the like *railing* expressions, uttered in such strong and solemn words, that amount to a taking the *name of the Lord our God in vain*, are so rashly applied and reproachfully imputed to the Synod; as it becomes not any, far less such a court of Christ as we are, to retaliate, by rendering railing for railing; so we could wish, that, seeing out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, the brethren would consider, that such words tend to discover what spirit they are of, and that the Spirit of God plainly declares, that where there is such *bitter envying, and strife, and lying*

against the truth, James iii. 15. *This wisdom descendeth not from above.* And how evidently null and void is a constitution erected upon such a foundation?

XI. Another reason of the nullity of the said pretended synod is, That it consisted of members who, upon their disorderly separating from the synod, and constituting apart from it, sustained themselves not only judges, but sole judges and condemners of the two votes, against which they read their protestations. While they unjustly complained of the protesters against the decision, April 1746. as parties in a question which was not the decision itself; yet, here they sustain themselves sole judges of the said two votes, though by their protestations against them, they made themselves directly and immediately parties. And this they did, without regularly giving in, or recording their reasons of protest, and waiting the Synod's answers, in defence of the lawfulness and expediency of the said two votes: all of them, though parties, practisers, or protesters, yet sustained themselves to be sole judges, in the matter of their own protestations; being not only protesters, but separately by themselves, approvers of their own protestations.—Likewise, they sustain themselves sole judges and approvers of their own answers to the protest taken against the decision, 1746; yea, and sole judges and condemners of their brethren's reasons of protest. And hence issued their harmonious concluding of their affairs, who were all justifiers of their own deed. Thus it may be said, being first in their own case, they seemed just, Prov. xviii. 17.; and, as it is said, Luke xvi. 15. they were they that justified themselves before men. But such practice appears to be so disorderly, and such abomination in the sight of God, who is the God of order, that, on this ground, the Synod find that pretended meeting and constitution to be void and null.

XII. There is just the same reason for nullifying this pretended synod, and the five acts they mention in the title of their book, that the foresaid famous Assembly give, for nullifying the foresaid pretended Assembly, and the articles that were concluded there, commonly called, *The five articles of Perth*. For, in that Act of Assembly 1638, Dec. 4. Sess. 12. Reason 9th, for annulling the pretended assembly holden at Perth, 1618. it is said, that, 'In all lawful assemblies the grounds of proceeding were, and used to be, the word of God, the Confession of Faith, and Acts of former General Assemblies. But, in this pretended assembly, the ground of their proceeding in voicing, was, the king's commandment only: for so the question was stated, *Whether the five articles, in respect of his Majesty's commandment, should pass in act, or not?* as the records of that pretended assembly bear.' Even so, in all lawful synods, the grounds of proceeding were, and used to be, the Word of God, the Confession of Faith, and Acts of former General Assemblies, especially the reforming Assemblies of this national church. But, in this pretended synod, the ground of their new constitution is a declaration and protestation, read by Mr. Thomas Mair, containing some positive dogmatical assertions, without the least proof, warrant, or foundation, either from the Word of God, the Confession of Faith, or Acts of

former *General Assemblies*. And, hence, in their *act* asserting their constitution, p. 6. it is observable, how they fit down upon this new foundation, and erect themselves into a *new pretended synod*, not according to any one precept of the word of God, nor according to any one article of the Confession of Faith, nor yet according to any one act of former Synods or General Assemblies; but, as they themselves express it, ‘*According to the foresaid declaration and protestation,*’ taken by Mr. Thomas Mair. And, in the same page it is said, That, ‘*in consequence of the foresaid declaration and protestation, the meeting was constituted as above.*’ Thus the deed, in consequence of which, and the rule, according to which, this *new constitution* did and does subsist, is *only* that declaration and protestation of a *private* brother. Which being *proposed*, afterwards, *by way of overture* among them, ‘*the question was put, Approve of the said overture, or not?* And it carried unanimously, *approve.*’ Whereupon, they ‘*find, according to the foresaid declaration and protestation, that the lawful authority and power of the Associate Synod, is lawfully and fully, devolved upon them, and lies among their hands;*’ and, ‘*That they are the only lawful and rightly constituted Associate Synod:*’ as the printed records of that pretended synod bear, p. 6. of their Acts and Proceedings.

Thereafter, page 7. in what they call their Act, *further asserting the constitution and rights of the Associate Synod*, they pretend to find a great many things, the like whereof were never found by any protestant churches, nor, for what we know, by any court of Christ that ever *professed* to meet, in his name; and all, as it is there said, ‘*In consequence of what has been found at last sederunt;*’ and, consequently, *according to the foresaid declaration and protestation*. Whence it needs not be thought strange, that it is not so much as *pretended* that the grounds of their *constitution* and *procedure*, are either the word of God, the Confession of Faith, or Acts of former General Assemblies. For, as the *protestation* foresaid was against *two votes* of synod, carried contrary to these brethrens mind, which they are pleased to call *two resolutions*; so, it is evident, the grounds of that foresaid *protestation*, upon which they found their *pretended* constitution, and also the *constitution* founded thereupon, are directly contrary to each of these.

First, As to the grounds of the said *protestation*, they consist especially of *three false* charges against the synod, for carrying the *two* foresaid *votes*; namely,

1. That, by transmitting the question before them, they subjected the ‘*decision of synod, upon a controversy of faith and case of conscience, unto the consultation of inferior judicatories, particularly kirk-sessions.*’ Page 4. of their *Acts and Proceedings*. Which, as it is a *false* charge, seeing it was not the *decision*, but the *question* concerning the decision, *its being a term of communion or not*, that was proposed to be transmitted: so, though it had been the *decision* itself, yet the transmission of it, in the form of an *overture*, having been *sinfully* neglected before the decision, this made it necessary duty, even after that *rash* decision, to transmit it to *inferior judica-*

toris, that in case solid arguments, from scripture and reason, against it, should have been offered to the synod by the church diffuse, that foresaid decision might have been reversed; which would never have been a shame, but an honour to the synod, to humble themselves, by owning *that they are not infallible*: this being no more than we have owned in our Confession of Faith, ‘That all synods and councils since the apostles time, whether general or particular, may err, and many have erred.’

Besides, though we allowed no final judgment to inferior judicatories in this point, yet what the brethren here alledge, supposes as if *kirk-sessions* were not judges in questions relating to terms of communion, nor were to be reckoned *courts of conscience*; which is to spoil them of their *scriptural* right, and *radical* power: for, as no question can come before a session, but what, *some way or other*, belongs to a controversy of faith, and case of conscience; it is scarce *conceivable* how these brethren could have, in this affair, so far contradicted the *word of God*, and the *approved custom* of this church, in her purest times of Reformation, and even the *former practice* and *determination* of the *Associate Synod*, who referred the whole affair of the *Mason oath* to *kirk-sessions*, to do in it as they saw cause.

Moreover, the foresaid *declaration* and *protestation* asserts, that the *ministers*, in that meeting of Synod when the breach took place, ‘are the *proper judges* in a controversy of faith and case of conscience;’ and that it is they ‘who *could be judges* in the present controversy.’ (See also page 17. of their Acts and Proceedings.) Which, as it *symbolizes* with *Papists* and *Prelatists*, and is a manifest *lording* it over their brethren the *elders*, and a *taking* that power from them, which the word of God gives them, Acts xv. 2.—*They determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders about this question.* Ver. 6. *And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.* Ver. 22. *Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch, &c.* Ver. 23. *And wrote letters by them after this manner, The apostles, and elders, and brethren, send greeting.* Chap. xvi. 4.—*They delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders:* So it is a *severe thrust* at the approved practice of this church in all the periods of the Reformation, and particularly in the year 1638, when that Assembly declared the *nullity* of the *pretended Assembly* at Glasgow 1610, at Aberdeen 1616, and at Perth 1616, for this, as well as for other reasons, *That there were no ruling elders there with commissions from Presbyteries.* But if they be not *judges*, and *proper judges* of controversies of faith and cases of conscience, it was no matter whether they were there or not; for he that is not properly a judge in any matter, in an ecclesiastical court, is not present there by any divine warrant, as we hold against the *Independents*.

Further, when synods and councils do, ministerially, determine controversies of faith, and cases of conscience, they consist as well of elders, or of other fit persons, upon the delegation of their

churches, as of ministers, *Confession of Faith*, chap. xxxi. sect. 2, 3. And although the key of *knowledge* or *doctrine*, which is commonly called the *dogmatic power*, is to be administrated *severally* by each minister of the gospel, in a way of public preaching and teaching; yet, *consistorially* and *synodically*, it belongs also to elders, in the determining of *controversies of faith* and *cases of conscience*. And since, according to our *Directory for church-government*, elders are governors to join with ministers in the government of the church, and that to them it belongs to enquire into the knowledge and spiritual state of the congregation; and that, according to our *first Book of Discipline*, they should take heed to the *doctrine* and *diligence* of ministers; and since, according to the *second Book of Discipline*, discipline standeth in the correction of these things that are contrary to God's law, and the elder's office is to *assist* the minister in *all great* and *weighty matters*: It must necessarily follow, according to the principles of this national church, laid down in her standards for doctrine and discipline, that *ELDERS are properly judges in controversies of faith, and cases of conscience*.

But it is less to be admired, that a *new constitution*, not warranted by the word of God, and the approven standards of this church, should embrace a *new principle*, not to the *edification* of the church of Christ, but to the *destruction* of an office-bearer in the house of God, when it is considered, that, as elders have been a mean, in the former periods of this church, to stop the career and impetuous torrent of defection, carried on mostly by ministers and others; and a considerable number of elders opposed the *driving* and *dividing measures*, taken by our brethren, in the synod: so this method of *robbing* them of their *spiritual right*, to judge in controversies of faith and cases of conscience, is a manifest attempt, by the brethren of the new constitution, to take all *bars* out of the way that would obstruct their *arbitrary measures*. And having pretended to assume all the power which the Lord gave their brethren that differ from them, and endeavoured to rob ruling elders of their power, they are now left to claim to themselves the *sole power* to judge of all controversies of faith and cases of conscience.

2. They charge the synod with *suppressing light*, that was to be had by reading the *reasons of protest* and their *answers*; which is also a *false charge*: For, in case it was for light and information to members, the synod was content all should be read. But the separating brethren evidently designed *victory* more than *light*: For, unless their brethren, that protested against that decision, should be held as *pannels* and *parties*, they themselves would not suffer them to be read: though yet the synod formerly at Stirling, November 1745. when some of these very brethren were protesters against a delay of this matter, and when a Committee of the Synod had answers in readiness to their protest, the approbation whereof would have decided the affair, these brethren, not willing to be held *parties* and *pannels*, strenuously urged that, for *peace sake*, they might not be read as the *Synod's answers*, but as the *speech* of any member; which indeed the synod then, for *peace sake*, went into. But now

when the table is turned, the separating brethren would not exercise the same *lenity*, for *peace sake*, as to suffer their answers to the protest against the forefaid decision to be read, only for *light*, without stating *parties*: No; They would rather dash in pieces the whole association, and attempt the dissolving the power and authority of the Synod, and cast all the seceding congregations into confusion, than lose the opportunity, they now reckoned was in their hand, of imposing their *new sentiments*, under the notion of light, upon their brethren, ministers and people, and of cramming down their decision as a *new term* of communion, which some of them had publicly done before ever that decision was passed.

It may likewise be here noticed, that our brethrens charge, anent suppressing light to be had from the reasons and answers, is the more *unreasonable*, that it was *themselves* only that occasioned their not being read at that meeting of synod immediately preceding at Stirling; at which time the brethren that protested, together with others, did insist earnestly for their being read.

3. They charge the synod with *allowing contradictory oaths*, and *a material renouncing and abjuring the whole of the testimony*: For obviating which *calumny*, it is necessary to observe,

(1.) That as to the decision of a *thin Synod*, which declared the *religious clause* of some *burgess oaths* to be sinful, though the synod might see ground to reverse that decision directly; yet seeing the decision itself, and the brethrens strenuous defence thereof, had raised so many *doubts* about the lawfulness of that clause in the minds of many persons; by which means it is indeed rendered unsafe for them that are filled with such *doubts* to meddle with it, in case they were called thereunto: And, seeing also that others, who never formerly questioned the lawfulness of it, did, or might think, for avoiding offence, and on such like accounts, that though it was lawful, yet it was not expedient, for Seceders, during such debates amongst them: These things made it only *fair dealing* in the synod, not so *rashly* to reverse what was so *rashly* decided; but also *tender dealing* with our people's consciences, which these methods had *blinded* at the time, however the synod be *falsely reproached* on this head. It was therefore the more necessary, when *scruples* were raised, even among some members of synod anent it, to transmit the question about its being a *term of communion or not*, to the consideration of inferior judicatories, according to the *barrier acts* of former General Assemblies, for preventing division.

(2.) Their charging the Synod with *allowing contradictory oaths*, and *a material renouncing and abjuring the whole of the testimony*, is not only a *begging the question* that was in debate, and a *mere assertion*, without *any proof*, but a *casting iniquity* upon the synod, and *reproaching* them, at the expence of reproaching both the *bond* and *testimony*, which they and we embraced: For, as the *religious clause* of the *burgess oath*, which was in debate, is a *swearing* to maintain the *true religion* presently professed and authorized by the laws of the land, renouncing *Popery*; so, if the swearing of this be a *contradicting* of the *bond*, and an *abjuring* of the *testimony*, then, ac-

ording to this view, the *bond and testimony* is a *contradicting, renouncing, and abjuring of the true religion professed and authorised to this day, by the laws of the land*; which is such a monstrous reproach cast upon our *bond and testimony*, as may fill people's minds with *horror and amazement*, while the quite contrary is the truth, that the *scope of the testimony and bond* is to maintain that *true religion* professed and authorised by the laws of the land, in *opposition* unto all former and late *steps of desertion* therefrom, as is evident, not only from the *title of the testimony itself*, but from many *declarations* in the *bosom* of it. Inasmuch that this, and the above *accusations*, contain both a *contradiction to the truth*, and a *heavy calumny* upon the *synod*. And thus the brethren have made themselves not only guilty of *putting darkness for light, and light for darkness*, but of a palpable breach of the *ninth command, Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour*; which, according to our Larger Catechism, 'forbiddeth all prejudicing the truth, and the good name of our neighbours, as well as our own, especially in public judicature; all out-facing and over-bearing the truth, passing unjust sentences, calling evil good, and good evil; perverting the truth to a wrong meaning, or in doubtful and equivocal expressions, to the prejudice of truth or justice; rash, harsh, and partial censuring, misconstruing intentions, words, and actions; raising false rumours; receiving and countenancing evil reports, and stopping our ears against just defence, &c.' together with many scriptures there cited for proof.—Thus the grounds of the brethrens *protestation*, upon which they founded their *pretended constitution*, are evidently contrary to the *word of God, the Confession of Faith, and all Acts of General Assemblies* relative to any such moral evils.

These three things above-mentioned, are the grounds upon which stands the forefaid Declaration and Protestation; and in which it is declared, that the *members of Synod*, therein distinguished from the rest of the members of it, 'ought—to take up and exercise the authority and power of the Associate Synod, lawfully and fully devolved upon them as above; and, for this end, to meet to-morrow at ten of the clock forenoon, in Mr. Gib's house, that they may regularly enter upon, and proceed in the business of the synod.' From which words it is proven, out of their own mouth, that the synod they pretend to constitute, is a *quite other Synod* than that which met, April 7th, in Bristo kirk, and from which they separated themselves; and that it is a meeting of some members of synod, *assuming to themselves, and presuming, as they word it, to take up, and exercise the authority and power of the Associate Synod*. By which they own there is *another Associate Synod*, which they have *robbed* of their power and authority, by a *mere alledging* that it is *fully and lawfully devolved* upon them: Thus declaring *lawful*, what God declares *hateful*, saying, *I the Lord love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt-offering*, Isa. lxi. 8. At this rate, and by the same reason, any *disobliged handful* of a court, *pretending* to be the majority of the legal members of it, may rise up, in the midst of the court, and declare and protest, that they ought to take up, and exercise the

power and authority of the court, as lawfully devolved upon them; and, for this end, meet elfewhere, and enter upon and proceed in the bufinefs of the court, and yet aver, that they do it *regularly*. Surely fuch a practice ftands fo *directly* oppofite to the word of God, and the light of nature, that it would *difolve* all courts, civil and ecclefiastical, upon the face of the earth, and *turn* the whole world into confufion and diforder, fuch as the God of peace cannot be the author of, 1 Cor. xiv. 33. *For God is not the author of confufion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the fainted.*

Secondly, As the grounds of the faid Declaration and Proteftation, upon which their *pretended* conftitution is founded, are contrary to the word of God, the Confeflion of Faith, and Acts of General Affembly; fo the *Conftitution* itfelf, and their Acts and Proceedings thereupon, are contrary to each of thefe. In which Acts and Proceedings, they pretend to *find*, upon the foresaid grounds, ‘ That they ought—to confider upon calling the fynod unto an account for their conduct—, according to the order and difcipline of the Lord’s houfe;’ yea, to *find* that the fynod is highly cenfurable, and hath fallen from all right and title to any prefent actual exercife of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, committed by the Lord Jefus to the office-bearers of his houfe.’ Which foresaid conftitution, acts, and procedure, are hereby declared to be,

1ft, Contrary to the *word of God*: and particularly,

1. Contrary to fuch fcriptures, wherein a *lordly power and dominion* over our brethren is condemned: fuch as, Matth. xx. 25, 26. ‘ Jefus called unto him, and faid, Ye know not that the princes of the Gentiles exercife dominion over them, and they that are great exercife authority upon them; but it fhall not be fo with you: but whofoever will be great among you let him be your minifter.’
 2 John ver. 9, 10. ‘ I wrote unto the church; but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not: Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doth, prating againft us with malicious words; and, not content therewith, neither doth he himfelf receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and cafteth them out of the church.’ Ezek. xxxiv. 4. ‘ The difeafed have ye not ftrengthened, neither have ye healed that which was fick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye fought that which was loft; but with force, and with cruelty have ye ruled them.’ 2 Cor. x. 8. where the authority which the Lord hath given to his fervants, is faid to be ‘ for edification and not for deftruction.’ And chap. xiii. 10.—‘ According to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification and not to deftruction.’ 2 Cor. i. 24. ‘ Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy.’ 1 Pet. v. 3. ‘ Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being enftamples of the flock.’ Ifa. lxvi. 5. ‘ Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word; your brethren that hated you, that caft you out for my name’s fake, faid, Let the Lord be glorified: But he fhall appear to your joy, and they fhall be afhamed.’

2. Contrary to such scriptures as condemn a *hasty* and *rash* judgment, whether publicly or privately: such as, John vii. 24. 'Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.' Verse 51. 'Doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doth?' Acts xxiii. 3.—'Sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?' Rom. xiv. 10. 'But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.—Verse 13. 'Let us not therefore judge one another any more; but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way.' James iv. 11, 12. 'Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?' Chap. ii. 4. 'Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?' Zech. viii. 16.—'Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour: execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates.' Prov. xix. 2.—'He that halseth with his feet, sinneth.'

3. Contrary to such scriptures as injoin *decency* and *good order* in the house of God: such as, 1 Cor. xiv. 40. 'Let all things be done decently, and in order.' Ver. 33. 'For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.' Psalm cxxii. 3, 4, 5. 'Jerusalem is builded as a city, that is compact together: whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord: For there are set thrones of judgment; the thrones of the house of David.' Isa. xxix. 16. 'Surely your turning of things upside down, shall be esteemed as the potter's clay.' 1 Chron. xv. 13.—'The Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we fought him not after the due order.'

4. Contrary to such scriptures as require *unity* amongst brethren, and *concord* in the Lord: such as, Prov. xxv. 8. 'Go not forth hastily to strive, lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof, when thy neighbour hath put thee to shame.' 1 Cor. i. 10. 'Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak this same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment.' Eph. iv. 3. 'Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.' Gal. v. 15. 'But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.' Chap. ii. 11, 12. 'But, when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For, before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: But when they were come, he withdrew, and separated himself.' Prov. vi. 16, 19. 'These six things doth the Lord hate,—him that soweth discord among brethren.' 1 Tim. vi. 4, 5.—'Doting about questions and strifes of words,

‘ whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmifings, perverse dif-
 ‘ putings of men of corrupt minds.’ Chap. i. 4, 6. ‘ Neither give
 ‘ heed to fables, and endless genealogies, which minister questions,
 ‘ rather than godly edifying, which is in faith: from which some
 ‘ having fwerved, have turned aside into vain jangling.’ 2 Tim. ii.
 14. ‘ Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them,
 ‘ before the Lord, that they strive not about words to no profit,
 ‘ but to the subverting of the hearers.’ Verse 23. ‘ But foolish and
 ‘ unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.’
 Titus iii. 9. ‘ But avoid foolish questions and genealogies, and con-
 ‘ tentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable
 ‘ and vain.’

Whatever charity this Synod maintains towards their separating brethren, yet they judge that the above, and like scriptures, strike evidently against their *separation, constitution, acts, and proceedings.*

2dly, As the said constitution, acts, and proceedings, are *contrary to the word of God*; so, likewise, contrary to the *Confession of Faith*, founded upon the scriptures. As, particularly, contrary to Chap. xxxiii. *Of Synods and Councils*, par. 2. where it is said of ministers of Christ, that, ‘ they, with other fit persons, upon delegation from
 ‘ their churches, may meet together in such assemblies.’ Which shews, that, according to our Confession of Faith, ‘ the elders that met in that pretended synod had no right to sit there, having had no delegation from their churches. Parag. 3. where it is said, even of lawful synods and councils, that their ‘ decrees and determinations
 ‘ are to be received,’ only upon this condition, ‘ if consonant to
 ‘ the word of God.’ Hence it may be gathered, from our Confession, what entertainment should be given to them, when neither the *constitution* of the synod itself, nor their *decrees* are consonant to the word of God. Chap. xx. Parag. 2. ‘ God alone is Lord of the con-
 ‘ science, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments
 ‘ of men, which are, in any thing, contrary to his word; or, be-
 ‘ side it, in matters of faith, or worship: so that, to believe such
 ‘ doctrines, or to obey such commands, out of conscience, is to be-
 ‘ tray true liberty of conscience: and the requiring of an *implicit
 ‘ faith*, and an *absolute and blind obedience*, is to destroy liberty of
 ‘ conscience and reason also.’ Parag. 4.—‘ They who, upon
 ‘ pretence of Christian liberty, shall oppose any lawful power, or the
 ‘ lawful exercise of it, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, resist the
 ‘ ordinance of God. And, for their publishing of such opinions, or
 ‘ maintaining of such practices, as are contrary to the light of na-
 ‘ ture, or to the known principles of Christianity:—or such errone-
 ‘ ous opinions or practices, as either in their own nature, or in the
 ‘ manner of publishing or maintaining them, are *destructive to the
 ‘ external peace and order which Christ hath established in the church*,
 ‘ they may lawfully be called to account, and proceeded against by
 ‘ the censures of the church, and by the power of the civil magi-
 ‘ strate.’ Hence, according to our Confession, that *pretended synod’s*
 requiring an *implicit faith*, and *blind obedience* to their unscriptural

and unwarrantable *acts*, is to dishonour God, who alone is Lord of the conscience; and to *destroy* liberty of conscience, and reason also. Hence, likewise, their *invading* the authority of the Synod, *opposing* their lawful power, and the *lawful exercise* of it, and thereupon *presuming* to rob their brethren of ‘all right and title to any present actual exercise of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, committed by the Lord Jesus to the office-bearers of his house,’ renders them *chargeable*, according to our Confession of Faith, with the sin and guilt of *resisting the ordinance of God*. And, hence also, their *opinions* and *practices*, which, in their own *nature*, and in the *manner* wherein they have published them, are destructive to the external peace and order which Christ hath established in the church, (as well as contrary to the very light of nature, and to the known principles of Christianity,) are crimes of a very heinous nature.—Thus their *constitution, acts, and proceedings*, are *contrary to the Confession of Faith*.

3dly, They are *contrary to the Acts of former Synods and General Assemblies*. Not only contrary to our *own* former Acts; particularly, *that for renewing the covenant, and the bond*, wherein we solemnly engaged to strengthen one another’s hands: but also contrary to the acts of *former General Assemblies*; such as, the *twelfth Act* of that famous General Assembly 1638, above-mentioned, condemning the *six pretended assemblies*, there enumerated, with the reasons of annulling them. Contrary also, to the Acts of these *reforming Assemblies*, 1639, 1640, and 1641, anent *novations*; ordaining, ‘That no novation which may disturb the peace of the church, and make division, be suddenly proponed and enacted: but so as the motion be first communicated to the several Synods, Presbyteries, and Kirks, that the matter may be approved by all at home, and Commissioners may come well prepared, unanimously to conclude a solid deliberation upon these points in the General Assembly.’ The Act of *Assembly* 1641, ordains, according to that foresaid Act; ‘and that transgressors thereof be censured by Presbyteries and Synods.’ The violation of these excellent *barrier Acts* of our Reformation, was one of the special charges, justly laid against the prevailing party in the judicatories of the established church, by the *four brethren*, at their first stating of their *Secession*. See REASONS, by Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, Mr. William Wilson, Mr. Alexander Moncrieff, and Mr. James Fisher, *why they have not acceded to the judicatories of the established church*, p. 234.; where, when they are enumerating what were chiefly and specially the grounds of their seceding from the then prevailing party, as published and enlarged upon in their Testimony, the *first* ground of *Secession* which they mention is this, ‘That the prevailing party, at that time, in the judicatories of the church, did *break down* the fences and guards which former General Assemblies had wisely *set up* against innovations in the doctrine, worship, government, and discipline of this church.’ †

Likewise these *brethrens* conduct here, is directly contrary to the *unanimous judgment, and uniform practice* of the church of Scotland,

† See the whole of these Reasons printed above, p. 229,—256.

in her best reforming times; witness the Assembly 1641, in their *answers* to the English ministers letter anent the form of kirk-government, where they have these words, ‘ Our unanimous judgment, and uniform practice is, that, according to the order of the reformed kirks, and ordinance of God in his word, not only the solemn execution of ecclesiastical power and authority, but the whole acts and exercise thereof, do properly belong to the officers of the kirk; yet, so that, in matters of chiefest importance, the tacit consent of the congregation be had, before their decrees and sentences receive final execution.’ In conformity to this, we find it was the constant practice of the church, in these reforming times, before any act was passed of importance, relating either to the worship, government, or doctrine, they sought, not only the approbation of inferior judicatories, such as *Presbyteries* and *Kirk-sessions*, as above; but also the satisfaction of all the congregation. Hence, among the *unprinted Acts* of Assembly 1645, we read, *Sess.* 6. ‘ Invitation of all who had scruples concerning the *Directory* (for worship,) to address themselves to the Committee for resolution.’ *Sess.* 7. ‘ Invitation again of all that had scruples or doubts concerning the *Directory*, to address themselves to the Committee for resolution.’ *Sess.* 13. ‘ Reference of the *propositions* concerning government, to the Committee for the *Directory*.’ And *Sess.* 14. ‘ Invitation of any that had doubts concerning the *propositions* of government, &c. to come to the Committee for resolution.’—But especially this was practised with reference to *doctrine*. Hence, among the *unprinted Acts* of the Assembly 1647, before the Westminster Confession of Faith was received, we read, *Sess.* 4. ‘ Invitation of all that had objections against any thing in the Confession, to repair to the Committee.’ *Sess.* 19. ‘ Invitation of all to propone their doubts or objections, against any head or article in the Confession of Faith to the Committee.’ And *Sess.* 15. ‘ Invitation of all that had any scruples or objections concerning the article in the Confession of Faith, to propone the same to the Committee.’—The same practice, we find, is followed in the *Act* of Assembly approving the Larger Catechism; insomuch that nothing was ever more remote from the *Acts* and *Practices* of the former reforming *General Assemblies* of this church, than imposing any of their decrees, and sentences of importance upon the consciences, either of courts or congregations, without their approbation and consent first sought, in order to conclude a solid deliberation thereupon, agreeable to their own *Act* 1639, above-mentioned, anent *novations*.

Now, before a *new constitution*, with *new terms of communion*, and the like, which are remarkable *novations*, tending to disturb the peace of the church, and make division, surely these acts and practices ought to have been observed. But, as the separating Brethren opposed the motion of the Synod, for transmitting to Presbyteries and Kirk-sessions, the question about the decision anent the religious clause of some Burgefs Oaths, *whether it should be made a term of ministerial and Christian communion, or not*, according to the barrier *Acts*, and declared judgment and practice of reforming Assemblies:

fo it is no wonder that they were left also to take such a *divisive* course as that of a *new pretended constitution*, and an *assumed power* of enacting as they did, contrary to, and in open contempt of these *reformation Acts*, of which they were so frequently put in mind.

Their *constitution, acts, and procedure*, therefore, being contrary to the *Word of God*, the *Confession of Faith*, and the *Acts of reforming General Assemblies*, instead of being any way agreeable thereto, or founded thereon, this Synod *finds* that forefaid meeting in Mr. Gib's house, to be (as the *Assembly 1639*, exprefs themselves, concerning the *six corrupt Assemblies*, in their *Act*, Sess. 8. Aug. 17th, *containing the causes and remedies of the bygone evils of the kirk*) 'NULL and UNLAWFUL, as being called and constituted quite contrary to the order and constitutions of this kirk, received and practised ever since the reformation of religion; and withal labouring to introduce novations into this kirk, against the order and religion established: ' THEREFORE the SYNOD, now constituted in the name and authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, the only King and Head of his church, DID, and hereby DO, according to the laudible example of the forefaid reforming *Assembly 1638*, CONDEMN and ANNUL the forefaid *PRETENDED SYNOD* that first met in Mr. Gib's house at Bristo, near Edinburgh, April 10th, 1747.; and DO DECLARE each meeting of that *pretended Synod*, to have been *unfree, unlawful, null, and disorderly meetings*, and never to have had, nor hereafter to have, any *ecclesiastical authority*; and their *conclusions* to have been, and to be of *no force, vigour, or efficacy*; prohibiting all *defence and observance* of them, by any under the inspection of this SYNOD: and ordain the foregoing *Reasons* of the *Nullity* of the forefaid *pretended Constitution*, to be inserted in the *records* of this SYNOD, and published to the world.

Extracted by

DANIEL COCK, Syn. Cls.



A C T

O F T H E

A S S O C I A T E S Y N O D,

Met at STIRLING, November 8th, 1753.

C O N T A I N I N G

A N A R R A T I V E of the RISE, PROGRESS,
and GROUNDS of their SECESSION.

T O G E T H E R W I T H

A D E C L A R A T I O N of the true SCOPE
and D E S I G N thereof.

A S A L S O O F T H E I R

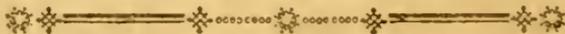
A C T, D E C L A R A T I O N, and T E S T I M O N Y for the Doctrin,
Worship, Discipline, and Government of the Church
of Scotland.

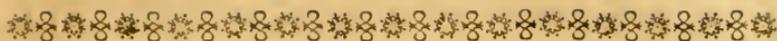
A N D O F T H E I R

B O N D for R E N E W I N G o u r S O L E M N C O V E N A N T S.



THE Synod, in the following NARRATIVE, made several Quotations from fundry Papers formerly published by them, in support of their Conduct, in withdrawing from the Judicatories of the established Church: As some of these Papers have got a place in the present COLLECTION, the Quotations from them are dropt in this Edition, to avoid an unnecessary Repetition; and a reference made to the place where they are to be found, by a note at the foot of the page.





A C T

OF THE

A S S O C I A T E S Y N O D,

Met at STIRLING, *November 8th*, 1753.

Containing a NARRATIVE of the RISE, PROGRESS, and GROUNDS of their SECESSION.

ALTHOUGH the RISE, PROGRESS, and GROUNDS of SECESSION have been formally laid open in the following Papers, published some years ago; namely, in the *True State of the Process*, &c.—the *Review of the Narrative*, &c.—in the *Representations of Mr. EBENEZER ERSKINE*, &c.—and, in the *first Testimony*, intitled, *A Testimony for the Doctrine, Worship, &c.*:—the two former being adhered to in the latter; and these again adhered to in the *Ass. Declaration*, and *Testimony*, p. 151, in these words, ‘They, [*viz.* the Associate Presbytery.] ‘hereby declare their adherence—to the ‘several Representations offered by the ministers of this Presbytery, ‘to the Commission of the General Assembly, that met at Edinburgh, ‘August 1733; and to the Paper that was afterwards emitted by ‘them, intitled, *A Testimony to the Doctrine, Worship, Government, ‘and Discipline of the Church of Scotland* †:—yet, in regard, these Papers are now among the hands of very few, and that the most part seem to have, in a great measure, lost sight of the Cause and Testimony, which the Associate Ministers have been, through grace, minding to contend for, against the backslidings and corruptions of the day: And, in regard, the rising generation are in danger of being ignorant of the works which the Lord’s right hand has done for us, Judg. ii. 7,—10. Psal. lxxviii. 1,—9. it is therefore proposed to give a short account of the Rise, Progress, and Grounds of the *Secession*, which may also contribute, in some degree, to clear the Associate Synod from the false aspersions thrown upon them, by their schismatical and separating Brethren on the one hand, and by the

† See this Testimony printed above, p. 19,—78.

corrupt judicatories on the other, who are, with a high hand, carrying on a course of defection, and will not be reclaimed, notwithstanding of many loud calls to turn again to the Lord their God.

This church having been in danger of being leavened by a scheme of *Arian*, *Socinian*, and *Arminian* doctrines, taught in one of her seminaries of learning by professor Simson; and of a corrupt, erroneous, and time-serving ministry, for whom a wide door had been opened, by several violent settlements on reclaiming congregations, from and after the year 1726; and by an act of Assembly, *Anno* 1732, concerning the settlement of vacant churches: at the same time, a standing Testimony, by way of protestation, against these and other courses, which would have been a habile mean of transmitting truth to the generations following, being impracticable; in regard, the 7th Act of Assembly, 1730, had discharged the recording of reasons of dissent against the determination of church-judicatories. Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, minister of the gospel at Stirling, one of the members of this court, thought it his duty, in a sermon at the opening of the Synod of Perth and Stirling, at Perth, October 1732, to testify plainly and freely against some of the prevailing evils and sins of the present times, and particularly against the foresaid act of Assembly 1732, and the proceedings of church-judicatories in the settlement of ministers over reclaiming and dissenting congregations, which so galled and tormented some of the ministers then present, that they pushed and obtained of the Synod the appointment of a Committee to consider the particulars vented in the sermon, which were said to have given offence, and which they were to lay before the Synod next diet. Mr. Erskine, who, with some difficulty obtained a sight of the quarrelled expressions in the clerk's hand, gave in answers to them to the Synod; and both are to be found in the *True State of the Process*, p. 15, &c.

The Synod, after spending three days on this affair, did find Mr. Erskine *cenfurable* for the said expressions alledged to have been emitted by him in his sermon before them: From which sentence several ministers and elders dissented, and against which they protested, and gave in their reasons of protest, which the Synod in compliance with the 7th act of Assembly, 1730, would not record. Mr. Erskine and Mr. Fisher protested, and appealed to the next General Assembly. The Synod by another vote resolved to *rebuke* Mr. Erskine at their bar, and to admonish him to behave orderly for the future, although he had not in the least departed from the standards of this church, as the Synod themselves were obliged materially to acknowledge; for, Mr. Ferguson at Killin, having accused Mr. Erskine, in the course of reasoning, of departing from the standards of this church, and Mr. Erskine having protested, That Mr. Ferguson should be obliged by the Synod to make good his charge, the Synod dismissed that affair, upon Mr. Ferguson his explaining himself. This sentence of Synod, appointing Mr. Erskine to be rebuked and admonished, Mr. Erskine could not in conscience submit to, as it would be a departure from the Testimony he had formerly given;

and therefore the matter came before the Assembly in May, 1733, who refused to hear Messrs. Wilson and Moncrieff, dissenters from the Synod's sentence on their reasons of dissent; and whose Committee of bills refused to transmit Mr. Fisher's appeal: And the Assembly, upon hearing parties at the bar, after some reasoning, passed an Act, on the 15th of May, 1733, approving of the proceedings of the Synod, and appointed him to be *rebuked* and *admonished* by the moderator at their own bar*.

When this sentence was intimate to Mr. ERSKINE, he declared, that he could not submit to a *rebuke* and *admonition*, in regard, he was neither conscious to himself, nor judicially convicted of transgressing the bounds of his ministerial calling, or of uttering any thing, in his sermon, contrary to the word of God, or the approved standards of this church; and then gave in a signed Protestation, dated May 14th, 1733. †

Mr. WILLIAM WILSON, minister at Perth; Mr. ALEXANDER MONCRIEFF, minister at Abernethy; and Mr. JAMES FISHER, minister at Kinclaven, adhere to the Protestation and Declaration; upon which, and their refusing to retract the same, the Assembly ordained, 'That the four Brethren foresaid, appear before the Commission in August next ‡.'

As this severe sentence was past, without hearing the four Brethren, in open Assembly, upon the relevancy of the crime alledged against them to infer such a high censure, they, not being allowed to read it, laid down upon the table, with an instrument, the following *short paper*, as their joint speech.

'In regard, the venerable Assembly have come to a positive sentence, without hearing our defences, and have appointed the Commission to execute their sentence in August, in case we do not retract what we have done, we cannot but complain of this uncommon procedure, and declare, that we are not at liberty to take this affair to an avifandum.'

The four Brethren appeared before the Commission in August 1733, in virtue of the citation given them by the sentence of the Assembly; and Mr. Erskine read the *Representation* signed by him and Mr. Fisher, containing the *Reasons*, why they could not retract their Protestation against the decision of the Assembly: As also, a plain confession of their principles, with a Protestation of the Nullity of any censure that should be inflicted on them, for the foresaid conduct.—Mr. Wilson and Mr. Moncrieff, gave in a Representation of the same import; but it was refused a reading. They were however allowed to deliver themselves, *viva voce*, which they did; declaring that they could not retract their Protestation, nor profess their sorrow for the same, for several reasons then offered, and others contained in their Representation, to which they adhered; and protested, that

* See the Act itself, inserted above, p. 21.

† See the Protestation printed above, p. 22.

‡ See the Assembly's injunction printed above, p. 23.

any *censure*, that should be inflicted upon them, should be held and repute *null* and *void* in itself: And that it should be lawful and warrantable for them to execute their ministry, as hitherto they have done, as if no such sentence had been inflicted upon them; in regard, they were not convicted of departing from any of the received principles of this church, or of counteracting their ordination vows and engagements: But, on the contrary, were sentenced to censure by the late General Assembly, for protesting against a decision, whereby injury was done to some truths of God, which they were obliged to own, and confess; and whereby they were brought under *new* and *unwarrantable* terms of communion, inconsistent with the word of God, and their ordination vows and engagements: to which *Profession*, Mr. Erskine and Mr. Fisher adhered*.

In the forefaid *Representations*, the Brethren declare their belief, that Christ is the alone King and Head of his church, by his Father's ordination and appointment:—That all ecclesiastical authority is lodged in, and derived from him:—That all ordinances, censures, rebukes, admonitions, suspensions, depositions, or relaxations from these censures, are to be dispensed in his name:—That his Kingdom is not of this world, but of a spiritual nature, extending to the soul and conscience:—That all the laws, ordinances, and officers of his appointment are designed for the good and edification of his subjects, as well as the whole plan of redemption; and that whatever laws may pass in ecclesiastical courts they must needs quadrate with this general design, otherwise they are to be rejected:—That it is the peculiar glory and privilege of his church, beyond all other societies in the world, to have received a complete system of laws from him, by which she is to be governed, to which nothing is at any time to be added, and from which nothing is to be taken away; that therefore ecclesiastical judicatories had need to be well versant in the statutes of his kingdom, and in their determinations to walk according to this rule:—That the majority in a church-society, agreeable to the above principles, are not always to give laws to the lesser number; for, if pluralities, in all cases, were to bear the sway, a Reformation in the church had never been brought about; and the contrary principle would infallibly lead us into passive obedience and non-resistance; a doctrine inconsistent with our *Confession of Faith*, chap. xx. §. 2. renounced by all sound Protestants; and, if it had prevailed, would have been an effectual bar in the way of our *late happy Revolution*, and the establishment of the Protestant succession in the illustrious family of HANOVER:—That the legislative power in all societies, and particularly in the church, is not to be extended beyond the fundamental laws, upon which the society is erected:—That the church, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone, is plainly limited as to these laws, that are to be the terms of communion among her

* Both these Representations were published in a Pamphlet, intitled, *Two Representations*, by Messrs. Ebenezer Erskine, James Fisher, William Wilson, and Alexander Moncrieff.

members, which are clearly laid down in the scriptures; the Holy Spirit speaking in the scriptures, being the supreme judge, by which all controversies in religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest: that church power is not lordly and magistratical, but lowly and ministerial; not absolute and boundless, but limited and circumscribed; and that therefore the officers of his house are not to beat their fellow-servants at pleasure, nor lord it over God's heritage, in an imperious manner, by subjecting them to the commandments of men: that church-decrees bind *only* in so far as they agree with the perfect and unerring law of Christ, and are calculate for the good of his church; for otherwise they degenerate unto tyranny, and usurpation upon his royal prerogative; and to yield an implicit faith and blind obedience to them, is to give up with liberty of conscience, and reason also.—That all the determinations of church-judicatures, which are made up of men, who know but in part, are fallible, and liable to error, as sad experience has oftentimes verified; and therefore it is the indispenfible duty of every church-member, by the judgment of discretion, to examine these determinations, whether they be agreeable, or disagreeable to the unerring rule:—That when church-authority is perverted from its original design, and exercised to the hurt of truth, the violating the rights and liberties of Christ's kingdom, and the oppressing, and bearing down of those whom it ought to protect, it is the indispenfible duty of all such as would be found faithful, to mourn over such evils before the Lord, and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints; and even to resist unto blood, striving against sin: that this is more especially the duty of watchmen set upon the walls of Jerusalem, who ought not to hold their peace, but *cry aloud and not spare, and lift up their voice like a trumpet*; and the rather that it has been the glory of this church, ever since the reformation, to contend for the royal prerogatives of Christ's kingdom, in opposition to the incroachments made thereupon; and particularly, in the late persecuting period:—That as this valuable trust, which is the word of Christ's patience, was transmitted to us in purity, at the expence of much blood, it could not but be affecting to them, to see these valuable privileges, in a great measure, given up, by the judicatures of this church, whose main care and concern it ought to be, to support and defend them; and that even when they enjoyed peace and tranquillity from the state.—And as this was the present case, they could do no less, in duty to God, and their consciences, than to enter a protest against such encroachments, this being one special mean, whereby the Lord's worthies in this land have maintained his cause, and transmitted his truths to us in purity; as they make appear from a paper given in by the Lord Warrinton to the Assembly 1651, after the *public resolutions*.

The said brethren then justify their conduct, in protesting against the foresaid act of the General Assembly concerning Mr. Erskine; in regard such a protestation is sometimes a mean of conviction upon

the consciences of such, who, in their acts, have any way inroad upon the truth;—as an example of faithfulness and zeal to others, both in the present and succeeding generations;—as they would otherwise be guilty of a confederacy in defection and apostacy from, and a conspiracy against the Lord;—as they would otherwise materially approve of the *Act of Assembly 1732*, concerning the planting of vacant churches, and the other actions of church-judicatures, which Mr. Erskine bore testimony against in his synodical sermon, as contrary unto the word of God, and our approved standards;—as the said decision relative to the said brethren, was a fixing a new term of ministerial communion amongst all the ministers of this church, restricting them that they should not open their mouths in public against any particular act of Assembly, however sinful in its nature, and prejudicial to the doctrine, worship, and government thereof, and a laying a plain inhibition upon them, that they should not testify against any of the proceedings of church-judicatures, however unlawful and unwarrantable, which would natively lead them to a blind and implicit obedience, one of the grand engines by which antichrist doth still maintain his seat, and plainly contrary to our reformation-principles:—as otherwise their conduct would be manifestly contrary to their ordination vows and engagements; wherein they engaged never to endeavour, directly or indirectly, the prejudice or subversion of Presbyterian church-government and discipline; and that, to the utmost of their power, in their station, they should assert, maintain, and defend the same:—as, by the said act, a door was further opened for the entry of a corrupt ministry into the church:—as by the said act an absolute irrefragable power and authority was set up in the supreme judicatory, to which all ought to submit, without gainsaying or counteracting, the very reverse of the principles contended for by all the reformed churches, since the dawning of reformation-light:—as by the said act, which appointed Mr. Erskine to be censured both for his expressions in his sermon remarked on by the Synod, and his answers to the Synod's remarks, several valuable and precious truths were condemned; such as, That it is the duty of every faithful minister, when dispensing the pure truths of God, to exhort his hearers to make application of what is said to themselves; and that ministers themselves, when hearers of the word of God, are not beyond such an exhortation: that carnal notions of the kingdom of Christ, which is not of this world, ly at the bottom of many of the evils and corruptions of the day: that the call of a minister ought not to be by heritors as such, in regard that no such titles or distinctions of men are known in the kingdom of Christ; the only heritors there, being they who are rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom; these are they who are precious in the sight of the Lord and Honourable: that in dispensing the privileges of Christ's kingdom, we ought to put honour and value upon men, not upon the account of their worldly heritages, but as they are valuable in the sight of God, and as his image is to be found upon them: that the election of ministers ought not to be by heritors as such, far less these not of our communion, nor by any other set of men, but by

the church: that one has good reason to refuse, that any minister has God's call, who has only a call from heritors, *renitente et contradicente ecclesia*: that there is a twofold call necessary for a man's meddling as a builder in the church of God; there is the call of God, and of his church: God's call consists in his qualifying a man for the work, and his inspiring him with an holy zeal, and desire to employ these qualifications for the glory of God, and the good of his church; the call of the church lies in the free call and election of the Christian people. The promise of conduct and counsel in the choice of men that are to build the church, is not made to patrons, heritors, or any particular set of men, but to the church, the body of Christ.

They do likewise justify their said protestation from the word of God, 1 Sam. viii. 9. Jer. xi. 7.; from the practice of the reformed churches; and particularly from the practice of our worthy ancestors in this land: and declare, that one great motive, which led them to take that step was, that in the year 1732, they had come to the bar of the Assembly with others of their brethren, with a *representation* and *petition*, when the act anent the settlement of churches was in the shape of an *overture*, against turning it into a standing act; and relative to many other grievances, which they had too just ground to complain of: some of which it was in the power of the church to apply effectual remedies unto, and to do more for the redress of others than they seemed to be disposed or inclined unto; but, as that Assembly paid no regard to the said representation and petition, they judged it their duty to declare, with the solemnity of a protestation, for their just right and privilege to testify publicly against that act, or the like defections, upon all proper occasions.

They do also, in the said representations confess and own, before the Commission, the whole principles of our holy religion, as they are contained in our *Westminster Confession of Faith*;—and adhere to their subscriptions thereunto, as the Confession of their Faith: and particularly assert the three persons of the glorious Trinity to be one substance, in number, equal in power and glory; and that Jesus Christ is the supreme, self-existent, and independent God, equal and co-essential with the Father, in opposition to the Arian heresies taught by professor Simson; and that he is the alone Head, King, and Lawgiver of his church, in opposition to all who have invaded his royal prerogative: they confess themselves to be of Presbyterian principles; and that they believe Presbytery to be the only government of divine institution: they embrace the worship and discipline practised in the church of Scotland, according to the word of God, Directory for worship, and acts of our approved General Assemblies since the Reformation; and profess the binding obligation of our covenants; and that the breach of them is none of the least of the causes of the Lord's controversy with this church and land at this day: and signify their desire to abhor and shun all divisive principles, or practices, contrary to the foresaid doctrine, worship, and government*.

* The principles of the Seceding Ministers on these, and other points, may be seen more fully laid open above, p. 63,—71. and 110,—133. and 143,—152.

Though several petitions and representations from the Presbyteries of Stirling, Dumblane, and Ellon; and from the magistrates, town-councils, and Kirk-sessions of Perth and Stirling, were likewise presented to the Commission, craving a delay of the Assembly's sentence, they were refused a hearing. But the Commission did vote to *suspend the four brethren*; and they being called in, this was intimate to them: and accordingly the moderator, not in the name and authority of CHRIST, the alone King and Head of the church; but in the name and authority of the *Assembly and Commission*, did suspend, *sine die*, the said four brethren; whereupon they gave in a signed protestation †.

The four brethren, being cited to the meeting of the Commission in November following, compeared, and offered to read a signed protestation; but being interrupted, it was laid down upon the table, under form of an instrument; the tenor whereof follows.

'Edinburgh, November 14th, 1733. We do hereby protest, that our present appearance before the Commission shall not be construed a falling from the declarations we emitted, and the protestations entered, both before and after the executing of the sentence of suspension against us, by the Commission, at their meeting in August last, to which protestations and representations, given in by us to the said Commission, we still adhere, and hereupon take instruments.'

Addreses, representations, and letters from several Synods and Presbyteries, relative to the Commission's proceedings in the affair before them, were read: the Synods of Dumfries, Murray, Ross, Angus and Mearns, Perth and Stirling, craved the Commission might not proceed to higher censure: the Synod of Galloway, Fife, and the Presbytery of Dornoch, craved lenity, tenderness, and forbearance towards the suspended ministers: and the Presbytery of Aberdeen represented, that they judged the sentence of suspension was too high, and a stretching of church-authority. But the Commission without paying any regard to these, passed a vote to proceed immediately to a higher censure, by the calling vote of Mr. John Goldie, their moderator.

Mr. Ralph Erskine, and Mr. Thomas Mair, gave in a *declaration and protestation*, setting forth the importance of this affair, and the vast consequence and concern thereof to all the ministers and members of this church: that they had, with some other brethren, openly and judicially adhered to the protestation and declaration, given in to the last Assembly, as containing a testimony against the act of Assembly 1732, anent planting vacant churches, and as asserting their privilege and duty, to testify publicly against the same or like defections, on all proper occasions: that they had offered their verbal adherence to the brethrens protestation before the Commission in August, against their suspension, whereby they intended their concurrence with, and adherence unto the several representations given in by them to the Commission, under the form of instrument: that though they desire, so far as they can with a safe conscience, to

† See the Protestation printed above, p. 26.

maintain communion with this church, and in that way, to plead with their mother; yet the conduct of the last Assembly and Commission, and what has followed thereon, does more and more open the melancholy scene, and give them special occasion to reflect with grief upon the deep defection, unto which this church has fallen, and is likely further to fall, if the Lord, in his sovereign mercy, prevent not: that they looked upon it as a sad evidence of the Lord's having, in a great measure, departed from this church, and a cause of his further departing from, and a contending against her, that her supreme Judicature and Commission had been left to act the part that they had done, which they particularly mention in reference to the four Brethren, and the Lord's heritage through the land; and declare their adherence to the Representations and Protestations of the four Brethren, given in to the Commission, protesting that it should be warrantable for them to hold communion with these Brethren, notwithstanding of any sentence or censure against them, upon this process, which they look upon as contrary to the word of God, and *null* and *void* in themselves; and that it should be warrantable for them, in the exercise of their ministry, to use their best endeavours, in all lawful ways, for the relief of the oppressed flock of Christ in this land, &c. *

The four Brethren having declared their resolution to continue of the same mind as formally, the Commission did on the 16th of November, 1733, loose their relation to their respective charges, and declared them to be no longer ministers of this church; and did prohibit all the ministers thereof to employ them, or any of them, in any ministerial function: And did declare their churches vacant from, and after the date of the said sentence. Whereupon seven ministers, *viz.* Messrs. Gabriel Wilson, at Maxton; Ralph Erskine, at Dunfermline; Thomas Mair, at Orwel; John M'Laren, at Edinburgh; John Currie, at Kinglassie; James Wardlaw, at Dunfermline; and Thomas Nairn, at Abbotshall; protested against this sentence, and that it should be lawful for them to complain thereof, and of the several acts of Assembly that had occasioned it, to any subsequent Assembly of the church of Scotland; and to bear testimony against the same, with all other defections and severities of this church in her sentences; and that they would hold ministerial communion with the said Brethren, as if no such sentence had been passed against them: upon all which they took instruments in the clerk's hands.

When the Commission's sentence was intimated to the four Brethren, they read a *Protestation*, and gave it into the clerk, with an instrument taken by each of them †.

THUS was the Secession *stated* at that time: and the Synod have given a short account of the most material circumstances relative to its *rise* and *progress*, till it was stated by the decision of the supreme judicatures of this church, and the protestations entered against

* See the Declaration itself, inserted above, p. 27, 28, 29.

† See this Protestation printed above, p. 32.

them. Since which time, they have been going on more and more in a course of defection from these Reformation-principles, whereby new Grounds of Secession are daily casting up, and the breach increased: For, though the Assembly 1734, did several things which had a tendency to remove some of the Grounds of Secession, and professed to open a door for the return of these Brethren in to the judicatories of this church; yet neither were the Grounds of Secession so removed, nor the door so opened, that the foresaid Brethren could, in a consistency with a faithful testimony for truth, return to these judicatories, as has been made appear in a published Paper, intitled, *Reasons by Messrs. Ebenezer Erskine, minister at Stirling; William Wilson, minister at Perth; Alexander Moncrieff, minister at Abernethy; and James Fisher, minister at Kinclaven; why they have not acceded to the judicatories of the established church.* †

But as the said four Brethren did promise to lay open the *Grounds* of their Secession more fully in due time; so they published them in the *first Testimony*, from p. 40,—70. *

These are the *Grounds* and *Reasons*, [viz. above referred to,] on which the SECESSION from the prevailing party in this church was stated, and on which it stands to this day: And the Synod cannot but here observe, how contrary a part their Brethren, who have unwarrantably separated from them, have acted to these Grounds, particularly to the *first Reason* of Secession; For the charge, as there laid against our General Assemblies and Commissions, is, that they are *breaking down our beautiful Presbyterian Constitution*; and the first instance for proof of the charge, is, that they had broken down the *necessary fence* and *guard* wisely contrived on the doctrine, worship, government, and discipline of this national church in her barrier Acts, viz. ‘That no novation, which might disturb the peace of the church, and make division, be suddenly proponed and enacted, but so as the motion be first communicate to the several Synods, Presbyteries, and Kirks, that the matter may be approved by all at home; and Commissioners may come well prepared to conclude a solid deliberation on these points in the General Assembly. And that, before any General Assembly of this church pass any Acts, which are to be binding rules and constitutions to the church, the same be first proposed as overtures to the Assembly; and being by them passed, as such, be remitted to the consideration of the several Presbyteries of this church, and their opinion and consent reported by their Commissioners to the next General Assembly, who may pass the same into Acts, if the more general opinion of the church, thus had, agreed thereto.’ But, as the act of the Associate Synod, April 1746, condemning the *religious clause* of some *Burgefs Oaths*, was carried without any regard to this so necessary a guard and fence, though it was earnestly intreated,

† See these Reasons printed above, p. 229,—257.

* Though the Associate Synod inserted those *Reasons*, from the First Testimony, into the body of their Act, as that Testimony was out of print, and in a great measure unknown to many; yet it is now judged quite unnecessary to repeat them here. See them above, p. 40,—70.

that the method therein proposed might be observed, before the passing of any such act; (for which, as well as for other weighty reasons, the Synod have condemned the said act;) so it was because the Synod enacted, April 9th, 1747, that ‘the said decision should not then, nor hereafter be made a term of ministerial and Christian communion, ay and until the making of the same to be so, should be referred by way of overture unto Presbyteries and Kirk-sessions, in order to their giving their judgment thereanent; that so there might, in the mean time, be a friendly dealing among the members of the Synod with one another, in a way of conference and prayer, in order to their coming, through the Lord’s pity, to see eye to eye, in the matter of the said religious clause.’—It was because this point carried in the Synod against them, according to these barrier acts, that these brethren *sinfully separated* from the Synod, and have proceeded to their new and unwarrantable constitution, and their antiscrptural and uncharitable sentences against the members of the Associate Synod, who, through grace, still adhere to these Reasons of Secession, while their opposers are not ashamed to aver, *Acts and Proceedings*, p. 15. ‘That the reference made of this affair unto inferior judicatures, particularly Kirk-sessions, under the *absurd pretence* of what were called *barrier acts*, was a *step manifestly subversive* of our *Confession of Faith*, and of Presbyterian order in the house of God, considering that the foresaid sentence is plainly in a controversy of faith, and case of conscience.’ Thus representing their own *first* Ground of Secession as *absurd*, and *manifestly subversive* of our *Confession of Faith*, and Presbyterian order; and so building again what they once destroyed.

A DECLARATION of the true *Scope and Design* of the *Secession*; as also, the *Act, Declaration, and Testimony* for the *Doctrine, Worship, Discipline, and Government* of the Church of Scotland, &c.

AS the Contendings and Testimony of the Associate Presbytery, which, through grace, the Synod desire to cleave unto, have of late been miserably perverted by their Brethren, who have separated from them, the scope of whose writings is to give it out, that it is a Testimony *against* the *true religion* presently *professed* and *authorized* in this land; and that, as it is express in the *Introduction to their new Acts and Proceedings*, p. 1. it is a stating the quarrel with the present *national profession* and *settlement of religion*: and, as indeed the whole strain of their said pamphlets is to state a quarrel with the true religion, professed and settled in this nation, both at, and since the Revolution, as *Erastian, defective, and sinful*; so they make the JUDICIAL TESTIMONY and BOND, to be a *renouncing* and *abjuring* of that true religion; and our Secession to be a Secession from the *Revolution Church*, in her very constitution*; and likewise

* Mr. Moncrieff’s *Animadversions on Fancy still no Faith*, p. 31.

from the *true religion*, at, and since that period: and accordingly they renew our covenants among their adherers in a sense quite different from, and opposite to the sense in which they were sworn by our covenanting fore-fathers; in which covenants, they solemnly engaged to the *true Religion* AUTHORIZED by the laws of this Realm, and to the *preservation* of the reformed religion in the church of Scotland, in doctrine, worship, government, and discipline against common enemies: and consequently in a sense quite different from that in which our Bond was sworn at Stirling.

The Synod do therefore judge it a duty incumbent upon them, to acquaint the world how grossly their said testimony, secession, and bond are abused; and that their former contendings, witnessings, testimonies, and solemn oaths, were never intended against the true religion presently professed and authorized by law, or the very constitution of this national church; but, on the contrary, were all along designed in favours of the true religion, and against the sinful acts, practices, errors, corruptions, and defections from the covenanted doctrine, worship, government, and discipline of this national church,—authorized by the laws of the land, at and since the Revolution, as well as before that time: and that their secession was by no means a secession from the *constitution* of this national church; but from the *present judicatories*, carrying on a course of defection and backsliding from our beautiful Presbyterian constitution; as the secession itself, and reasons thereof, evidently show; and, which will further appear by some passages of the papers published by the Associate Presbytery, which the Synod, omitting many others that might be mentioned, shall now take notice of.

The state of the process against Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, &c. p. 9. 'The act complained of invests heritors as such in a privilege purely ecclesiastical;—and gives a power to such as are not only declared enemies to our *excellent Presbyterian Constitution*, but disaffected to the Protestant succession in the illustrious house of Hanover.' *The representations of Messrs. Erskine and Fisher*, p. 6. (adhered to) by Messrs. William Wilson and Alexander Moncrieff. 'Our late *happy* revolution.' Ibid. p. 19. 'The decision of the late Assembly, concerning Mr. Erskine, was a fixing a new term of ministerial communion among all the ministers of this church,—and prejudicial to the government of this church, which our *ordination vovus* could not permit us to submit to with silence.' Page 23. 'We are heartily sorry, that a minister of this church, who professes to be of Presbyterian persuasion, should have been at so much pains and labour to invalidate and throw away these weapons, which have been managed so successfully in defence of our *Presbyterian Constitution*.' Page 27. 'We—confess and own—the whole principles of our holy religion, as they are contained in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, to be agreeable to, and founded on the word of God; adhered to in our *subscriptions* thereto as the confession of our faith.' Page 29, 30. 'We—protest against any censure that may be inflicted upon us,—in regard we are not convicted of departing from any of the received principles of *this church*, or

‘ counteracting our *ordination vows* and *engagements*,—we are laid
 ‘ under a new and unwarrantable term of ministerial communion,—
 ‘ which we look upon as inconsistent with the word of God and our
 ‘ *ordination vows*;—we were ordained to take the oversight of them
 ‘ (our congregations) with their own call and consent, and with the
 ‘ consent of the Presbytery into which we were received, and have
 ‘ not been convicted of receding in any point from our *ordination*
 ‘ *vows* and *engagements*.’

Representations of Messrs. Wilson and Moncrieff to the Commission,
 August 8th, 1733. p. 34. ‘ This valuable trust (of calling ministers)
 ‘ is committed to such heritors, as are not only openly declared e-
 ‘ nemies to our excellent Presbyterian constitution, but disaffected to
 ‘ the late *happy* and *glorious* Revolution, and to the Protestant suc-
 ‘ cession, in the illustrious family of HANOVER.—It was grievous to
 ‘ us, that by an act of Assembly, a power is put into the hands of
 ‘ such as are disaffected to our most valuable interests and privileges.’
 ‘ (We) judge the act complained of to be a dangerous thrust at our
 ‘ *Presbyterian constitution*, and of fatal tendency towards the *Revo-*
 ‘ *lution interest* in Scotland.’ P. 39. ‘ The sense and impresson we
 ‘ had of our *ordination vows* and *engagements*, moved us to take the
 ‘ step that is now so much condemned. We have engaged and
 ‘ promised never to endeavour, directly or indirectly, the prejudice or
 ‘ subversion of Presbyterian church government and discipline; and
 ‘ to the uttermost of our power, in our station, we shall assert, main-
 ‘ tain, and defend the same: and when we evidently saw that the
 ‘ act of Assembly 1732, gives a deep wound unto our *Presbyterian*
 ‘ *constitution*, and that it opens a door for the entry of a corrupt mi-
 ‘ nistry into the church,—we reckoned that we acted not according
 ‘ to our *solemn engagements*, and that we did not according to our
 ‘ power, in our stations, assert, maintain, and defend our Presbyte-
 ‘ rian church government and discipline, if we had not protested for
 ‘ our just privilege and duty to testify against the above-named or
 ‘ like defections, upon all proper occasions.’ P. 43. ‘ What trespass
 ‘ have we committed against any article of our *Confession of Faith*?
 ‘ Or, wherein have we transgressed against any of the received prin-
 ‘ ciples, or the approved rules of *this church*, that our mother’s sons
 ‘ are so very angry with us, as to threaten to cast us out of the Lord’s
 ‘ vineyard?’ P. 48. ‘ We are convinced—of the sinfulness of that
 ‘ act, (of Assembly 1732,) and of its dangerous tendency towards
 ‘ the church of Scotland;—and, we would be unfaithful unto our
 ‘ ministerial trust,—the charge and commission we have received
 ‘ from our Master, and also walk contrary to our *ordination engage-*
 ‘ *ments*, if we did not, upon some proper occasions, testify against
 ‘ the same.’ P. 54. ‘ We must—beg leave humbly to declare, that
 ‘ according to Reformation and Presbyterian principles, and accord-
 ‘ ing to the sense we have of the *solemn engagements* we came under
 ‘ at our ordination to the ministry, we cannot submit to such terms
 ‘ of ministerial communion.’ P. 58. ‘ Far less can we be deprived
 ‘ of our ministry, for walking according to the institutions laid down
 ‘ by our Lord and Master in his word, and for our *strict adherence*

‘ to our ordination vows and engagements.’ P. 59. ‘ We are not only warranted from the principles of this church, but obliged by our ordination vows and engagements, to take the step for which we are so much condemned.—These new terms of ministerial communion are—inconsistent with our ordination vows and engagements.’ P. 60. ‘ We are not convicted of departing from any of the received principles of this church, or of counteracting our ordination vows and engagements.’ P. 61. ‘ We have not been convicted of receding from our ordination vows and engagements.’

Review of the Narrative, p. 6. ‘ The several sentences past against the said protesting ministers, having no manner of foundation in our form of Process, or in the acts and constitutions of this church.’ P. 19. ‘ We judge it our duty to vindicate the principles of the church of Scotland.’ P. 27. ‘ Heritors—disaffected to our valuable civil liberties, as well as our Presbyterian church-government and discipline.’ P. 52. ‘ They, (the four Brethren,) judged it their duty to protest, that any such sentence should be held and reputed as null and void in itself; in regard, they were not convinced of any thing in doctrine or practice, contrary to the received principles of this church, or their ordination vows and engagements: They were—convicted of nothing contrary to the word of God, or the constitutions of this church.’ P. 53. ‘ The said protestation, (viz. that given in by Mr. Erskine to the General Assembly, and adhered to by the other three Brethren, Anno 1733;) owns a power and authority in our General Assemblies, limited according to the word of God, our received principles, and our ordination vows and engagements; and this is all the authority that any of our judicatures can justly claim.’ P. 55. ‘ We could not, in a consistency with our duty to God and his flock, and our ordination vows and engagements, refrain from the exercise of our ministry upon the arbitrary will and pleasure of men.’ P. 57. ‘ We appeal to the word of God, and to the received and approven acts and constitutions of the church of Scotland: Let us be tried by them; let us be tried by our Confession of Faith, by our Directory for Worship, and by our propositions concerning church-government, as received and approven by the General Assembly, Anno 1645. These, next to the word of God, are the standards by which we ought to be tried: These are the only terms of ministerial communion amongst us.’ P. 60. ‘ There is no evidence nor document brought against us, that we have counteracted any of the received or known principles of the church of Scotland.—We have always craved, that we might be judged and tried by the word of God, and our received and approven standards.’ P. 66. ‘ We have made it evident from our several Representations given in to the Commission, that our ordination vows and engagements oblige us to the several steps we have taken; and the charge of counteracting our ordination vows and engagements, may be more justly laid at their door who are imposing ministers upon dissenting congregations, and appointing Committees with a presbyterial power to try and ordain men for the office of the holy ministry, and thereby depriving Presbyteries

‘ of their inherent right and privilege, when they cannot concur
 ‘ with them in intruding ministers upon the congregations concerned.
 ‘ These, and the like measures pursued at present by our managers,
 ‘ have the most direct tendency to subvert *our* Presbyterian church-
 ‘ government and discipline.’ P. 67. ‘ Our submission to judicatures
 ‘ is in the Lord ; we mean, that it is according to the word of God,
 ‘ and our received and approved standards of doctrine, worship,
 ‘ government, and discipline : These are the *only terms* of ministerial
 ‘ communion *amongst us*, and we refuse that we have broken
 ‘ through any of them.’ P. 82. ‘ Our Secession is not from the
 ‘ *church of Scotland* : We own *her* doctrine contained in *her* Con-
 ‘ fession of Faith : We observe the received and approved uniformity
 ‘ in worship : We adhere unto *her* Presbyterian government
 ‘ and discipline, according to the word of God, and our solemn
 ‘ covenant-engagements. And we have not been convicted of any
 ‘ thing in our doctrine or practice contrary.’ They (the four brethren)
 ‘ were never convicted of any thing in doctrine or practice contrary
 ‘ to our approved standards, or *their ordination vows and engagements.*’

But this evidently appears likewise from the Secession itself, and
 the Reasons thereof laid down in the *first Testimony*, p. 40,—70 ; *
 particularly where it is declared, in order to clear our Secession from
 any ambiguity, that ‘ our Secession is not from the *church of Scot-*
 ‘ *land* : We own *her* doctrine contained in *her* Confession of Faith :
 ‘ We adhere to *her* covenanted Presbyterian church-government,
 ‘ discipline, and worship : Neither is our Secession from these who
 ‘ are *cleaving unto our covenanted principles*, and who are affected
 ‘ with the grievances we complain of, and are in their several spheres
 ‘ wrestling against the same ; but it is from a party who—are carry-
 ‘ ing on a course of defection from our reformed and covenanted
 ‘ principles, &c.—And all contrary to the *solemn engagements* they
 ‘ have come under at *their ordination* to the holy ministry.’ P. 42.
 ‘ It is not very pleasant unto us, that we are obliged to lay open the
 ‘ sinful and unwarrantable steps of such who profess to be of the
 ‘ *same Presbyterian denomination with ourselves*, and to own the
 ‘ *same Confession of Faith with us.* *Ibid.* ‘ The first thing that we
 ‘ have charged against the present prevailing party in our judicato-
 ‘ ries, particularly in our General Assemblies and Commissions, is,
 ‘ that they are breaking down *our beautiful Presbyterian constitution.*’
 And among other Acts which these judicatures were disregarding,
 and which are said to belong to this beautiful Presbyterian constitu-
 tion, are cited, Act of Assembly, August 30th, 1639 ; renewed 1695.
 And another Act, 1697, all to the same purpose, against novations.
 P. 46. ‘ This church has, by the foresaid Act of Assembly, (the Act
 ‘ 1732. concerning the planting of vacant churches,) taken into her
 ‘ bosom those that are openly *disaffected* unto *our Presbyterian con-*
 ‘ *stitution.*’ P. 48. ‘ They declare themselves bound by *their ordi-*
 ‘ *nation vows and engagements* to the Act of Assembly, 1648, intitled,

* The pages here cited, are agreeable to the pages of the Testimony in this Collection.

‘ *An Act for censuring of ministers for their silence, and not speaking*
 ‘ *to the corruptions of the times.*’ P. 52. ‘ Must not every sober and
 ‘ unprejudiced person judge that they, (the prevailing party in the
 ‘ present judicatures,) are subverting *our beautiful Presbyterian con-*
 ‘ *stitution.*’ P. 61. ‘ We reckon this silence enjoined us and other
 ‘ ministers, inconsistent with *our ordination vows and engagements,*
 ‘ by which we are bound to assert, maintain, and defend the doctrine,
 ‘ worship, Presbyterian government, and discipline of this church :
 ‘ For, how can we be faithful to *our ordination vows and engagements,*
 ‘ and yet be silent spectators of the deep wound that is given to *our*
 ‘ *Presbyterian constitution,* not only by the Act of Assembly 1732,
 ‘ but by all the other above-mentioned proceedings of the judicatures
 ‘ of this church.’ *Ibid.* ‘ All the ministers of this church when—
 ‘ ordained—do solemnly promise and engage, and subscribe it with
 ‘ their hands, that they shall, to the utmost of their power, in their
 ‘ station, assert, maintain, and defend the doctrine contained in our
 ‘ *Confession of Faith,* and our Presbyterian church-government and
 ‘ discipline; and that they shall never endeavour, directly or indirectly,
 ‘ the prejudice or subversion of the same. Can the prevailing party
 ‘ have the assurance to affirm, or will any—believe, that the above
 ‘ particular instances—have neither a direct nor indirect tendency to
 ‘ the prejudice and subversion of the doctrine contained in our *Con-*
 ‘ *fession of Faith,* or of our Presbyterian church-government and
 ‘ discipline?’ P. 63. ‘ The prevailing party in our church judica-
 ‘ tories, will not allow us to maintain a proper testimony in a way
 ‘ of ministerial communion with them against their present steps of
 ‘ defection and backsliding; and therefore—we are laid under a *ne-*
 ‘ *cessity* to lift up a Testimony, in a way of *Secession* from them a-
 ‘ gainst the present current of defection, whereby *our constitution* is
 ‘ subverted, our doctrine is corrupted, and the heritage and flock
 ‘ of Christ are wounded, scattered, and broken.’ And to the same
 purpose, p. 68. ‘ The prevailing party have *thrust us out* from
 ‘ among them; therefore the charge of schism cannot be justly laid
 ‘ at our door.’ *Ibid.* ‘ We own the Protestant reformed doctrine—
 ‘ publicly professed in the *church of Scotland,* summarily contained
 ‘ in our *Confession of Faith,* &c. P. 73. ‘ We are not convicted of
 ‘ counteraffecting *our ordination vows and engagements,* neither is this
 ‘ so much as alledged in the sentence passed against us: Yea, our
 ‘ conduct, for which we are condemned, is *most agreeable* to the *en-*
 ‘ *agements* we came under when we were ordained to the office of
 ‘ the ministry;—and when it was evident to us, that—a deep wound
 ‘ is given unto *our Presbyterian Constitution,*—we could not but
 ‘ reckon, that we were obliged, by *our ordination vows and engage-*
 ‘ *ments,* to protest for our just privilege, &c.’ P. 74. ‘ We are not
 ‘ convicted of any thing in doctrine or practice contrary to the *re-*
 ‘ *ceived* principles of *this church,* or *our ordination vows and engage-*
 ‘ *ments:*—this singular and uncommon censure, losing our relation
 ‘ to our particular congregations,—has no foundation in the word
 ‘ of God, or in the *constitutions* of the *church of Scotland,* agreeable
 ‘ thereto.’ P. 75. ‘ Can we from scripture, or from the *constitutions*

‘ and principles of this church; or can we be answerable to our ordination vows and engagements, if we should, in obedience to the arbitrary will and command of men, fly from our flocks and leave them to be dispersed, scattered, and broken?’ Page 77. ‘ It cannot but be affecting to all who have any regard to the constitution and principles of this church, that the present managers are pursuing such measures as are so opposite unto our received principles, and have such a manifest tendency to subvert our constitution, and to corrupt our doctrine.’—To all which, as has been noticed already, the Associate Presbytery declare their adherence in the Judicial Act and Testimony, p. 152.

This is still further evident from REASONS by Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, minister at Stirling; Mr. William Wilson, minister at Perth; Mr. Alexander Moncrieff, minister at Abernethy; Mr. James Fisher, minister at Kinclaven; why they have not acceded to the judicatures of the established church, p. 40. where they say, ‘ Upon the whole, since the principal grounds upon which our Secession is laid, still remain, &c.*

Introduction to the Judicial Act and Testimony, p. 86. ‘ They (the Associate Presbytery) reckoned themselves the more obliged unto this duty (of publishing a Judicial Testimony) from the special and particular engagements they came under at their ordination, &c.’ *Judicial Act and Testimony*, p. 139. ‘ They declare their opposition to such—as are disaffected to the government, both in church and state.’ Page 143. ‘ The ministers associate in Presbytery, do judge it a duty necessarily incumbent upon them, in the situation where—in adorable providence has placed them as a judicature,—judicially to acknowledge, declare, and assert, the doctrine, worship, government, and discipline of this church, in opposition to the several steps of defection and deviation therefrom.’ Page 152. ‘ Likewise they receive, acknowledge, and approve—all the acts of Assembly, from 1638 to 1650; and since that time, in so far as they were past for advancing and carrying on a covenanted reformation, agreeable to the word of God, and the received principles and constitutions of this church.’

Act concerning the admission of the reverend Mr. Ralph Erskine, and Mr. Thomas Mair, as members of Presbytery, published with the *Judicial Testimony*, p. 166. ‘ The four brethren being particularly stirred up to the work (*viz.* of transmitting a testimony for truth to the rising generation, in a day of the Lord’s anger; on account of the sins, errors, and backslidings of the church, and of bearing witness for the cause of Christ and his truths, against the defections of the church and land wherein we live) by a remarkable chain of providences, I think myself obliged to join with them in this matter, &c. †

After the reading of which paper, [*viz.* Mr. R. Erskine’s adherence to Mr. Mair’s declaration,] the Associate Presbytery, p. 166.

* See these Reasons above, p. 229,—256; and the quotation here made from them, in p. 255, 256.

† See the passage here quoted above, 165.

‘ Found, that the grounds upon which their Reverend Brethren had declared a *Secession* from the present judicatories of the church of Scotland, were the *same upon the matter*, with these upon which the ministers of this Presbytery had some time ago declared their *Secession* from the said judicatories.’

Acts and Proceedings of the Associate Presbytery, containing their Declinature, p. 209,—222.; where, after they did, in all sincerity, beseech the present judicatories of the church, to return to the Lord in a way of doing several duties, they say, p. 220. ‘ If these and the like duties were sincerely pointed at, then might this Presbytery hope for a beautiful unity, and desirable *harmony* with the present judicatories.’ And elsewhere, ‘ The seceding ministers have always owned, that they have *made a secession* from the *present judicatories* of this national church; but they refuse, that they ever *seceded* from the *communion* of the church of Scotland.—And they have published to the world the reasons and grounds of their secession, particularly in their Testimony emitted, *Anno 1734* †;—and made it evident that their *solemn engagements* at their ordination,—indispensibly *oblige* them to depart from communion with the present judicatories.’

In the foresaid papers, the ministers of the Association have frequently declared their adherence to their ordination vows and engagements, which they came under in this church; and that they were bound to take the several steps which they had taken, both in witnessing against, and seceding from the present judicatories by the said engagements: yet, now some of their brethren, who have unwarrantably separated from them, have renounced these vows*; therefore, it is judged proper to insert, in this place, a copy of these vows and engagements contained in the *formula*, appointed by the 10th act of our General Assembly 1711, to be subscribed by all such as shall pass trials for license, and that shall be ordained ministers, or admitted to parishes: the tenor whereof follows. ‘ I, A. B. do hereby declare, that I do sincerely own and believe the whole

† See this Testimony printed above, p. 19,—78.

* For, although Mr. Alexander Moncrieff, in his sermon at the renovation of our covenants, July 1744, has asserted, p. 124. ‘ That the word of God, our ordination vows, and our covenants, national and solemn league, are bonds which will not unty for us, by all human power and authority whatsoever;’ yet, in his *Animadversions upon Fancy still no Faith*, p. 34 he asserts, ‘ Nothing is more evident to me, than that having, in my judgment, agreed to the terms of communion in the Associate Presbytery, I can no more, after that, subscribe the foresaid formula, 1711, no more than I can renounce the profession I have made upon better information; and no more than I could be in accession to the established church, and in secession from her at the same time.’ And adds, p. 35. ‘ But if our Author (whom he writes against) be still adhering to his ordination vows, according to the formula, 1711, then he cannot be in a state of Secession from the established church; because, to subscribe to her terms of communion, and be in secession from her, are quite inconsistent.’ Page 34. ‘ I was not acquainted with the defects and corruptions of the revolution-settlement when I subscribed the formula, 1711, at my ordination, &c.’ Accordingly, as he now pretends to have got better information, he throws up with his ordination vows, and destroys what he once built up.

doctrines contained in the *Confession of Faith*, approved by the General Assemblies of this national church, and ratified by law, in the year 1690, and frequently confirmed by diverse acts of parliament since that time, to be the truths of God; and I do own the same as the confession of my faith: as likewise, I do own the purity of worship presently authorised and practised in this church; and also the Presbyterian government and discipline, now so happily established therein: which doctrine, worship, and church-government I am persuaded are founded upon the word of God, and agreeable thereto; and, I promise that through the grace of God, I shall firmly and constantly adhere to the same; and to the utmost of my power, shall, in my station, assert, maintain, and defend the said doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of this church, by Kirk-sessions, Presbyteries, provincial Synods, and General Assemblies; and that I shall, in my practice, conform myself to the said worship, and submit to the said discipline and government; and never endeavour, directly nor indirectly, the prejudice or subversion of the same: and I promise that I shall follow no divisive course from the present establishment in this church; renouncing all doctrines and opinions whatsoever, contrary to, or inconsistent with the said doctrine, worship, discipline, or government of this church.

By the foresaid act of the Assembly 1711, ministers are likewise appointed at their ordination, to give answers to the following questions. Q. 1. Do you believe the scriptures of the old and new Testaments to be the word of God, and the only rule of faith and manners? 2. Do you sincerely own and believe the whole doctrine contained in the *Confession of Faith*, approved by the General Assemblies of this church*, and ratified by law, in the year 1690, to be founded upon the word of God? And do you acknowledge the same as the confession of your faith, and will you firmly and constantly adhere thereto; and, to the utmost of your power assert, maintain, and defend the same, and the purity of worship, as presently practised in this national church, asserted in the 15th act of the General Assembly 1707; intitled, *Act against innovations in the worship of God*? 3. Do you disown all Popish, Arian, Socinian, Arminian, Bourignonian, and other doctrines, tenets, and opinions whatsoever, contrary to, and inconsistent with the foresaid *Confession of Faith*? 4. Are you persuaded that the Presbyterian government and discipline is

* The Assembly 1711, adopting the *Confession of Faith*, as approved by the General Assemblies of this national church, both in the formula, and in this question, do plainly avouch the profession of religion which was made by the Assembly 1647, which received the said *Confession of Faith*, and likewise by the Assembly 1649; as did also the first Assembly after the revolution, Anno 1690, who appointed that all probationers licensed to preach, all intrants into the ministry, and all other ministers and elders received into communion with them in church-government, be obliged to subscribe their approbation of the *Confession of Faith*, approved by former Assemblies of this church, and ratified in the second session of the then current parliament. But it was approved formerly only by these Assemblies in the last covenanting period.

founded on the word of God, and agreeable thereto*? 5. And do you promise to submit to the said government and discipline, and to concur with the same, and never to endeavour directly nor indirectly the prejudice or subversion thereof; but to the utmost of your power, in your station, to maintain, support, and defend the said discipline and Presbyterian government, by Kirk-sessions, Presbyteries, Provincial Synods, and General-Assemblies, during all the days of your life?

These are the vows and engagements which the ministers of the Associate Presbytery had come under in the Revolution-church, and which they so often pled, as laying them under obligations to take the method which they followed, in testifying against the prevailing course of defection in the present judicatures, contrary to these ordination vows and engagements.

From all which it manifestly and clearly appears, that our *secession* was not a *secession* from this *national church*, considered in her *excellent constitution*, and *standards* of doctrine, worship, government, and discipline, of which the Associate Presbytery, now erected into several Presbyteries, in subordination to one Associate Synod, have so often approved, and to which they have so frequently declared their adherence; but that it was, and is stated from *this church*, as she is now represented in *her present judicatures*: And that therefore we have not constituted a *distinct* church from the national church of Scotland; but only, as a *part* of that national church, are endeavouring, in the situation adorable providence has placed us, to cleave to Reformation-purity, against a course of defection from the same, carried on by the majority. For, when the greatest part of the representatives of a national church, are involved in a course of defection from the principles of that church, that part of the national church, though lesser, who desire to cleave to their constitution and principles, and who are, for this end, associate together, either in a presbyterial or synodical capacity, to make an open and public profession, are not a distinct church from the national, but a part of the same only, however distinct they may be from the majority of the present Representatives of that national church, who are carrying on a course of defection, in opposition to the received principles of that church, whom they represent. And this is the very case, with reference to the present judicatures, and the Associate Synod, and others in adherence to them at this day.

It is likewise evident by the foresaid quotations, that our Secession was never stated from the *true religion*, professed, settled, and authorized at, and since the glorious Revolution; but from the *present judicatures*, carrying on a course of backsliding, (contrary to their ordination vows,) from that true religion, which by law they are obliged to profess their adherence to; particularly, by Act 5th. Parl. 1st. Sess. 2d. William and Mary, intitled, *An Act ratifying the*

* It is evident, that this Assembly 1711, both here and in the formula, (in these words, 'which doctrine, worship, and church-government, I am persuaded are founded upon the word of God, and agreeable thereto,') do expressly and directly assert the divine right of Presbytery.

Confession of Faith, and Presbyterian church-government: and by Act 22d. Parl. 1st. Sess. 4th. William and Mary, intituled, *Act for settling the quiet and peace of the church.*

In like manner, it is very obvious, that the Judicial Testimony of the Associate Presbytery, which considers the evils of the times, not as *Grounds of Secession*, (except such as fell out in the present judicatures, after the *First Testimony* was composed,) but as *causes of the Lord's anger against this land* †, is not a Testimony against our beautiful and excellent Presbyterian Constitution, or the doctrine, worship, government, and discipline of this national church; but, as the very title thereof bears, a Testimony *for* the same, and *against* several steps of defection therefrom, both in former and present times.—It is not, nor can be a testimony against the true religion, presently professed and authorized in this realm, nor yet against any good and wholesom laws, authorizing the said true religion; but against the *national defection* from that true religion, and the sinful acts and deeds, whether civil or ecclesiastick, that are any way derogatory from, or contrary to that true religion, which is opposite unto, and excludes all errors in doctrine, worship, government, and discipline; and neither in the sense of the words, nor in the nature of things, includes *defections* and *corruptions*: and particularly, it is a Testimony against the corruptions and backslidings of the present *judicatures* from the authorized doctrine, worship, government, and discipline of the church of Scotland, for which the said Testimony was lifted up.—It is a Testimony for that same true religion secured to us by our present laws; for, as has been declared in answers to Mr. Nairn, &c. p. 50. ‘At, and since the wonderful Revolution, Anno 1688. the three kingdoms have been rescued, by the surprizing favour of God, from intolerable tyranny, popery, and slavery: and this Presbytery (*viz.* the Associate Presbytery) dare not, without ingratitude to God, and injustice to the subject, presently under consideration, dissemble or lightly esteem the Stigma then put upon the infamous government of the former period; the justice and honour done to the cloud of witnesses and sufferers through the same, by the Act rescinding fines and forfeitures: as also, what security is given by the present civil government unto our religion, lives, and liberties, such as no other people now on earth enjoys the like.’

It is likewise evident, that the *Bond* framed by the Associate Presbytery for renewing our covenants, is by no means an abjuring, renouncing, and rejecting of the true religion authorized by law, as some falsely gloss it; but a solemn swearing, as the Bond itself bears, p. 116. ‘To continue and abide in the profession, faith, and obedience of the—true reformed religion, in doctrine, worship, presbyterial church-government, and discipline;’ ‘Which (p. 115.) are said to be laid down in the Lord's word, contained in our standards, and sworn to in these solemn covenants.’ Concerning which standards it is said, Act of the Associate Presbytery concerning the Doc-

† Wilson's Continuation, p. 15, 16.

trine of Grace, p. II. 'That—it has been the privilege of this church, ever since the Reformation, to enjoy pure standards of doctrine agreeable to the holy scriptures; particularly the large Confession of Faith—ratified by them, (*viz.* by the estates of Parliament,) Anno 1660, and sworn to in the national covenant.—As also, the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, now of public authority for many years.'—And in the Act of the Associate Presbytery for renewing the said covenants, it is said, p. 97. That the Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms, the Form of presbyterial church-government, and of ordination of ministers, with the Directory for the public worship of God, all—received and approved by the General Assemblies of this church,—hold forth unto us, from the word of God, the same true reformed religion, in doctrine, worship, order, and government, which had been, from our Reformation from popery, believed and practised in this church and land, and sworn to in our national covenant.' And to endeavour the preservation whereof, we are sworn in the solemn league and covenant.

Therefore, and for all these reasons, the Synod do declare, That all assertions or insinuations, that our Secession was from the *constitution* of the Revolution-church; or that our Testimony is a stating of a quarrel with the *true religion* therein professed; or that the Bond for renewing our covenants is a swearing against the said true religion, professed and authorized by the laws of this Realm, are *injurious calumnies* laid against the same, in their true nature and design.—And further, the Synod declare, that all Secessions from the present judicatories of this national church, all adherences to the Judicial Act and Testimony, and imposing of the Bond for renewing our covenants, under these misrepresentations, are a manifest *perverting* of, and a real opposition to the said Secession, Testimony, and Bond, in their plain scope and tendency.—And therefore the Synod do earnestly intreat, and beseech all and every one to beware of entertaining, or being imposed on with any such glosses, relative to the Grounds and State of our Secession.

Extracted by

DANIEL COCK, *Syn. Clk.*



C O N C L U S I O N S,

Deducible from the foregoing TRACTS.

THE preceding Collection of papers contains a clear and connected view of the origin of the SECESSION from the *Judicatories* of this national church, and of those principles on which it was originally founded, and hath been hitherto maintained by the ASSOCIATE SYNOD. From a candid review of the whole, it is presumed the following *Conclusions* will appear with that degree of evidence, which the justice of impartial reasoning requires.

I. *That the GROUNDS upon which a Secession from the Judicatories of the established church was founded, did not originate from CAPRICE, or IMAGINARY Grievances which had no real existence, but from UNDENIABLE FACTS, appearing in repeated instances of mal-administration in the church; no less contrary to the word of God, than inconsistent with the radical principles of the constitution.* When the Seceding Ministers condescended on those facts, they always spoke of them as things of the most public notoriety, which their opponents never pretended to contradict; and upon every occasion they uniformly appealed to the word of God, the Confession of Faith, and the standing acts of this church, with a design to show, that the system of ecclesiastical polity, which was at that time adopted, and of which they so loudly complained, was in direct opposition to each of these; and therefore incompatible with the interest of the church. The conduct of the *Judicatories* since that time, and the present state of religion in *Scotland*, will show whether or not the Seceding Ministers were in the right, when they asserted, that the leading party in the church were pursuing such measures as directly tended to *corrupt* the doctrine of our excellent Confession of Faith, and to prevent the exercise of government and discipline, which, in all ages, have been found to be a necessary guard against the insidious attacks of *heretics* and *seducers*. The candid reader of the preceding papers, who refuseth to substitute prejudice in the place of his reason, will now be able to judge, whether or not the greater part of those evils, which were apprehended by the Seceding Ministers about forty years ago, have actually befallen this church, and operated with the most powerful influence on the temper of many of her ministers, the genius of many of her doctrines, and the principles upon which she hath proceeded in her supreme decisions.—These principles are best known by their moral influence.

II. *That the GROUNDS upon which the Secession stands, are such as the word of God will admit to be RELEVANT, in any similar case, and nowise repugnant to the constitution of this national church.* The reigning fashion of the times may dictate, and prejudice may pronounce sentence upon the conduct of individuals, placed in particular circumstances, *calling good evil, and evil good*; but if the oracles of infallibility are allowed to be the test of truth in any case, it must, with particular propriety, be in that of religious sentiments. It is not, therefore, what the Seceders themselves have said for the validity of the grounds of their Secession, nor what those of an opinion very different from theirs, have advanced on this subject, that ought to be admitted as decisive evidence on either side; but the precise question is, *What saith the Spirit of God unto the churches?* The assertions of any man, or society of men, are to be received as true, only in so far as they are supported by the supreme Judge of all controversies,—the SPIRIT OF GOD speaking in the scriptures. How far the Secession stands upon those grounds, that are supported by holy scripture; and whether the *doctrines, government, and discipline* of the church of Christ, under the New Testament, are maintained with greater purity, strictness, and impartiality, in the established church, than in the Secession, the unprejudiced world hath long been at liberty to judge. The Seceders will cheerfully submit to trial before this tribunal; and are no ways afraid of the consequences.

III. *That no NEW PRINCIPLES, or TERMS of COMMUNION, different from those of the church of Scotland, were ever adopted by the Seceding Ministers; and therefore it is as ungenerous, as it is unjust, to call the Secession a SCHISM in this church, or the Seceders SECTARIES.* If the Seceders had advanced any *new doctrines*, or adopted principles *unknown* in this church, it had been easy for their opponents to have adduced this as the ostensible reason, for proceeding against them with the highest censures. This, however, was never alledged to be any branch of their supposed crime. They were censured, because they refused submission to an ecclesiastical authority, with which, they were well persuaded, the church of Christ was never invested; and because they held sacred the obligation of their ordination vows, which solemnly bound them to a steadfast adherence to the principles and constitution of this church, in opposition to whatsoever hath a tendency to destroy either the one or the other. Actuated by a sense of the supreme authority of Jesus Christ, the only King and Lawgiver of his church, they durst not refuse to testify against the encroachments that were made upon his royal prerogative, when laws were enacted in his church to which he had never given his assent; and were calculated not to promote the edification of his disciples, but to accomplish the destruction of that system of government and discipline which he hath delivered to them in his word. When the Seceding Ministers were, by an arbitrary exertion of this assumed ecclesiastical authority, actually cast out of the established church, for no other reason but because they

would not counteract their ordination vows, and submit to those restraints which were then laid upon ministerial liberty and freedom, they found themselves obliged, by these very vows, to declare their Secession from the prevailing party; but they, at the same time, declared their stedfast adherence to the principles received by this church, as founded on the word of God, and exhibited in the Confession of Faith, Catechisms larger and shorter, Form of Presbyterial church government, and Directory for worship. Under the influence of these principles they declared their Secession; and agreeable to these, they have hitherto been helped of God, in some measure, amidst numerous weaknesses and infirmities, to dispense the ordinances of Christ, to all those under their inspection, who profess to contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints: and they will cheerfully hold church-fellowship with all those who profess a cordial attachment, and whose practice is correspondent to that system of doctrine, worship, government, and discipline, which is revealed to the church by Jesus Christ in his word; an open avowal of which, and adherence to it, was declared in the most solemn manner, in the National Covenant and Solemn League.

These are their terms of communion; and they are apt to think they are the very same with those held by the church of Scotland, in every period of the Reformation: and what is of unspeakable greater moment, they think they are perfectly agreeable to the word of God, and revealed will of Jesus Christ, who commands us, that *whereto we have already attained, we are to walk by the same rule, and mind the same thing*; and they believe it will be always true, that *as many as walk according to this rule, peace shall be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God*.—It will not, they apprehend, be an easy task to show from the holy scriptures, the impropriety, or absurdity of excluding from their communion, in sealing ordinances, all those who are either open enemies, or secretly disaffected to that system of revealed truth, just now mentioned; and will not submit to those ministrations, that are agreeable to, and consistent with it.—And they are further of opinion, and think they are able to prove it, that their terms of communion are as extensive as the word of God will admit.—Their Secession, therefore, is not a *Schism* in the church; for they never seceded from the principles and constitution professed and established at the *Reformation* and *Revolution*; but, upon every occasion, declare their stedfast adherence to these, in opposition to the prevailing party who have receded from them. Indeed, if the minor part of a church, adhering to her received and established principles, according to the word of God, in opposition to the major part, who are uniformly deviating from these principles, can with any truth or propriety of language, be called *Schismatics*, the Seceders undoubtedly deserve that name: but it is presumed, from the very nature of things, and according to every rule of fair reasoning, that the imputation of schism will never be fixed on those who are endeavouring to cleave to the received principles of the church; but on those who relinquish them in almost every instance.

It is as little true, that the Seceders are *Sectaries*, till the established meaning of words is overthrown. They hold no *new* opinions with regard to doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, different from those adopted by the church of Scotland in her excellent standards, which they believe to be agreeable to the word of God. They never thought, however, that the church of Scotland is confined within the walls of twelve hundred, or even twelve thousand houses legally endowed; and that all who do not worship God, and receive the seals of the covenant within those walls, are without the pale of the national church. They distinguish between the received principles, and the avowed practice of a church. They are clearly of opinion, that whoever they be that profess and endeavour to maintain the received principles of the church of Scotland, in regard to doctrine, worship, government, and discipline,—these are a branch of that church, be their name before the world what it will.

Although they do not enjoy the benefit of the present establishment, they detest and abhor every species of rebellion against their lawful Sovereign, under whatever mask it may appear. They will yield to none of their fellow-subjects in loyalty and attachment to his present Majesty, and the Protestant interest: and they will bear with Christian patience, the undeserved names of *Schismatics* and *Sectaries*, which are sometimes unjustly bestowed upon them, in the face of a General Assembly; while, at the same, they hold such language to be as illiberal, as it is uncandid.

IV. *That if the GROUNDS of Secession were RELEVANT in the year 1733, as appears from the preceding Tracts, they are considerably EXTENDED since that period; and therefore there is no reason to recede from them, but every reason in the world, to maintain the present Secession upon these grounds which are still enlarging.* They must have very little acquaintance with the present state of the established church in Scotland, who do not know that she hath undergone a very visible change within these forty or fifty years past. Those who were faithful servants of Jesus Christ, in the work of the gospel, are, in many places, succeeded by men whose character and religious sentiments are extremely different from those of their predecessors. Doctrines that are no less derogatory to the honour, glory, and Godhead of the Son of God, than dangerous to the souls of men, are openly preached and printed, in some places; the exercise of discipline is, by many, either omitted, or accommodated to the temper of the times; the oppressive and unscriptural law of patronage is executed with an inflexible rigour, in spite of repeated remonstrances from reclaiming congregations; the seals of the covenant are prostituted by a promiscuous admission of those who are, by the revealed will of Christ, totally unqualified to receive them, and are therefore inadmissible by his ministers; a disregard, if not a contempt of strictness in a profession or practice of religion, is become almost universal.—These are melancholly truths, the knowledge of which is within the reach of the meanest individual; and upon supposition that the Secession was groundless, at the period in which it

commenced, they afford the most undeniable grounds for it in the present age. And notwithstanding the current language of the times, it is not easy to conceive, how the purity and peace of conscience are consistent with submission to those ecclesiastical decisions which, in their very nature, deprive it of an opportunity to discharge its duty by an open and faithful testimony against them. It is submitted to the impartial world, if there be another method by which the conscience properly informed, and regulated by the divine law, can exoner itself so fully and consistently, in bearing testimony against the above and other evils, as in a state of *Secession* from the present judicatories of this church. If these last have refused members the liberty of giving a faithful testimony for the truths of God, it is the unquestionable duty of all, who wish to be faithful to God and posterity, to *come out from them*: and it may not be improper for them, in the mean time, seriously to consider, whether their *continuance* in these judicatories is not, in some measure, at the expence of *truth*, and a *good conscience*.

V. *That if Seceders are candid in their profession of religion, they are under the strongest obligations to HOLD FAST that profession without wavering.* The unstedfast conduct of many who belong to the Secession, is a plain contradiction of their profession. Having joined themselves to that body, it is to be hoped, in charity, that they have acted from a sense of duty, being persuaded that the declarative glory of Christ, and their own edification, will be more advanced in that communion, than in any other. If they have not acted under the influence of these motives, their conduct in joining the Secession is irrational and absurd: but being once firmly persuaded of the propriety of their choice, all unstedfastness in that profession of religion, which they have embraced, is no less irrational and improper. If there is nothing amiss in the established church, why have they forsaken her communion? If the grounds of Secession are valid, as their very profession supposeth, what can they plead in defence of their conduct while they join in ordinances dispensed in the established church? Pliability of sentiment, and a ductile conduct, are not the most likely means to promote Reformation. If we take our estimate of these from the success with which they have been attended in the established church, we shall be apt to conclude that they are better calculated to harden the prevailing party, than reclaim them from their present practice. Stedfastness in their profession, and unanimity of sentiment among Seceders, with gospel holiness shining in their conversation, would be the most unanswerable defence of their principles. This, by the divine blessing, might perhaps be a mean of bringing the judicatories of this church to a cool and impartial review of those *rigorous* and *oppressive administrations*, which have driven such a number of professed Christians from the bosom of the established church, and divided Presbyterians into so many different denominations. This again might pave the way for the Reformation of the church of Scotland, in such a manner as would entirely remove the present Grounds of Secession from her judicatories,

when Seeeders would with joy return into the arms of their mother, accounting it one of the most singular felicities of their time, to see her *looking forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.*—May the Lord hasten it in his time, by accomplishing, in all its extent, that precious declaration of his grace and love, Isa. xlv. 3, 4, 5. *For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine off-spring: And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses. One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.*

F I N I S.

ERRATA et CORRIGENDA.

Page 60. line 31. for *is*, read *as*.—page 91. l. 28. after *in*, add *their*.—p. 94. l. 21. r. *pretend*. l. 22. r. *judge*. l. last, r. *blood*.—p. 111. l. 12. r. *men*. p. 124. l. last. r. *apostles*. p. 132. l. 33. r. *knew*. p. 139. l. 6. r. *acts*. p. 154. l. 5. r. *him*. p. 160. l. 13. r. *are*. p. 179. l. 38. f. *a person*, r. *persons*. p. 194. l. 31. r. *generals*. p. 197. l. 30. r. *paramount*. p. 205. l. 26. r. *legitimum*. p. 230. l. 13. after *and*, add *inclinable*. l. 26. r. *have*. p. 235. l. 28. r. *declared*. p. 237. l. 17. and 35. r. *legislature*. p. 242. l. last, after *on*, add *the*. p. 243. l. 36. r. *considerations*. p. 250. l. 5. r. *leave*. p. 253. l. 33. r. *fathers*. p. 266. l. 2. from the foot, after *no*, add *more*. p. 268. l. 27. r. *than that*.









