

A CONCISE AND FAITHFUL  
NARRATIVE  
OF THE  
VARIOUS STEPS  
WHICH LED TO THE  
UNHAPPY DIVISION,  
WHICH HATH TAKEN PLACE  
AMONG THE MEMBERS  
OF THE  
Associate Body in the United States;  
WITH  
A BRIEF CONFUTATION  
OF THE  
High Pretensions, unjust Claims and ill-founded Principles  
OF THOSE WHO CALL THEMSELVES  
The Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania.

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HE THAT IS FIRST IN HIS OWN CAUSE SEEMETH JUST; BUT HIS NEIGH-  
BOUR COMETH AND SEARCHETH HIM. *Proverbs, xviii. 17.*

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By a RULING ELDER in the Communion of the ASSOCIATE  
REFORMED SYNOD.

*[Robert Amos]*

PHILADELPHIA:

PRINTED BY ZACHARIAH POULSON, JUN. IN FOURTH-STREET,  
BETWEEN MARKET-STREET, AND ARCH-STREET.

M DCC LXXXIX.

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INTRODUCTION.

**W**HETHER I shall be able to justify myself to that synod with which I am connected, and to which I owe subordination and respect, for offering to make any reply to the pieces published against the truth and them, by those who call themselves members of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, is more than I can at present determine. I know it was the fixed resolution of the synod to answer them with silence; and that was long my own determination; and their pieces, I still confess, do not merit any reply. They are so replete with ignorance, false accusations, idle and captious criticisms, and pharisaical pride and ostentation, that one would think they carry their own confutation on their front, and really do not merit the mortifying labor and expence of a public reply. But, it seems, some weak, and well

well meaning people have been decoyed, and others are in danger of being decoyed by their high sounding and empty pretensions. I have therefore thought it might not be amiss to take some public notice of them, in order to prevent the Lord's people being entrained, and, if possible, to rescue the men themselves from the horrible temptations and delusions in which they are entangled, and in which they are zealously attempting to entangle others.

I have been the more induced to undertake this work, that as the schism formed in the Associate Body in this country, may probably continue to future generations; it becomes exceedingly proper, that posterity should know the steps which led to it. A plain and faithful narrative of these I shall give, so far as my own personal knowledge, and the information derived from the parties concerned, will extend; and it is the more necessary to give this now, that the facts are recent and fresh in our memories, and the agents still on the stage of action.

In the book of Nehemiah, we have a fine representation of the duty incumbent on the ministers of Christ, and all other Christians, in their respective stations and places, viz. "To set forward the work of the Lord, and build the house of the God of heaven, according to his word;" and in some chapters of the same book we have a just representation of the opposition, which the adversaries to the true interests of the kingdom of Christ have ever made, now make, and in future ages will make. Sanballat, Tobiah and Gashmu were famous men for pouring contempt and scorn on the servants of the Lord; but when they found that scorn and mockery would not succeed, they determined on using more forcible weapons. They conspired with the Arabians, the Ammonites, and Ashdodites, to come and fight against Jerusalem, and hinder the work. This reduced Nehemiah to the necessity of standing on self-defence; so that the builders were obliged to become also warriors. The labourers worked with one hand, and in the other held a weapon of war; and the builders, every one, had his sword girded on his side, and so builded. But Nehemiah and the people of God with him were not assailants in this disagreeable war; their weapons were not weapons of hostility, but merely of self-defence.

In like manner I can appeal to the public, that I am not an assailant in this warfare, which I am now obliged to undertake. The synod and all adhering to them have been mocked, scorned, unjustly accused, and reproached by three men, not a little resembling the three heroes above mentioned.

It may indeed be alleged, that the three men alluded to are too pious and zealous for religion, to oppose the good work of building up our New Testament Jerusalem, and that I must be certainly mistaken in the men. To this it may be replied, "It is not all gold that glitters." The Pharisees pretended much zeal for the law, a strong attachment to outward forms, and made a mighty noise about them. And we see, in the fourth chapter of Ezra, that the most determined adversaries to the welfare of Jerusalem pretended to be earnest to advance the building thereof; and whether this remark be misapplied to these men, I shall leave to the candid reader to determine, after he has perused the following sheets.

I am indeed willing to ascribe the commencement of their opposition to weakness more than to wickedness, to the want of capacity and understanding more than to an actual intention to injure religion: but even here they are not excusable; because a degree of humility proportional to the weakness of their understanding, would have taught them to pay some respect and deference to the understanding and judgment of their brethren; and this is peculiarly necessary on the Presbyterian plan of government; that plan is founded on these divine precepts—"Let each esteem another better than himself; and all of you be subject one to another." It requires a truly humble Christian spirit to constitute a true Presbyterian. These men cannot deny, that a clear majority of their brethren were opposed to their divisive measures; but pride and a weak understanding combined to hurry them on; and in the prosecution of their cause to this day, I am far mistaken if I do not make it appear, that a high degree of the same pride and shallow comprehension has actuated them through all the stages of it.

The spirit with which they have conducted their cause would be sufficient to make even a stranger to it suspect the goodness of it. Their low, uncandid criticisms, puerile suspicions, false accusations, perversion and misconstruction of the meaning of words; their insulting men who wished, and still wish for nothing in the church of Christ but truth and peace; their representing such men as guilty of intentional dishonesty and impetition in the matters of God, as being a class of base deligning hypocrites, apostates from, and betrayers of the cause of God; their blaming them not only for what they have done, but venturing to look into futurity and predict what they will, or will not do; their circulating lies and calumnies, in private circles, on the characters and conduct of the men whom they hate; their smuggling out  
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their abusive prints; all, all indicate a spirit in this business, which I am sure is not of God; for such proceedings carry the mark of the beast on their forehead. I say smuggling out their despicable wares; for it is a matter of fact, that their last performance, anonymous it is true, but fathering itself on Mr. Beveridge, was, I am assured, so carefully secreted in the city, that for a long time a copy of it could not be seen; and when application was made to some of the party for it, yea, even to M<sup>c</sup>C——h the printer, it was refused.

Another artifice of the same nature may be mentioned—a small, nonsensical pamphlet had been published in Scotland against the Associate Reformed Synod, by those called the Reformed Presbytery; this Presbytery are as odious to these men, as the Hebrew sacrifices were to the Egyptians; nevertheless it was reprinted in Philadelphia, applauded and smuggled out to Carolina and other places, not for its truth and honesty, but because it bespattered the synod. Other examples of the same low cunning, and base artifice, will be mentioned in the sequel.

It may be superfluous to declare, that this work is extremely disagreeable to me, and that it must be so to the ministers of the synod is sufficiently clear, because they have hitherto declined it. For the space of five or six years they have patiently endured the prating and chattering of these men, and with a noble dignity of mind disdained to reply to their groundless accusations. Conscious of the uprightness of their intentions, they have kept silence, being persuaded that few or none acquainted with them, or possessing any tolerable degree of knowledge of their cause, would be in the least moved by the yelpings of these men. And even after I had begun this reply, I have sometimes hesitated whether to proceed, or let them alone to the righteous judgment of him, whose judgment is always according to truth. But knowing that it pleases the Lord to work by means, that it is much easier to destroy the church and religion than to build up, that very insignificant creatures, foxes, and even little foxes may spoil the vines, because their labor falls in with the propensities of corrupt nature, and men will go much swifter with the tide than against it; that when the Lord has a mind to punish a people for their unfruitfulness under the means of grace, by sending among them a spirit of deep sleep, slumber and delusion, he permits some deceitful worker or other to introduce a scheme of delusion and promote it; and on the other hand, when he purposes to prevent or suppress such a judgment,

judgment, he raises up some person to detect and expose it; and considering that never was any great or good work accomplished in the church of Christ, without much opposition and contradictory like providences, for the trial of the faith and patience of the saints; after these reflections, and earnestly seeking direction from above, I came to a resolution to undergo the mortification of exposing the hollowness and naughtiness of these men's pretensions. Not that I expect to make favorable impressions, to any great degree, on them; no, I fear that is almost over. However, I thought that my attempt might perhaps be blessed to prevent some weak, but well meaning persons being entangled in the snare.

I shall first give an account of the steps which led to the scandalous schism which they have formed, and then animadvert on their various claims, pretensions and principles.

## C H A P T E R I,

*Containing a narrative of the steps which led to the breach.*

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

*Of the union between the ministers of the Anti-burgher and Burgher Communion.*

**T**HE occasion of any of the ministers of the association coming into America, I need not stay to mention. Suffice it to say, that it was in consequence of earnest and repeated calls, by numbers of reputable Christians. Those ministers who came first, belonged to the party called the Anti-burgher Synod. The division which had taken place in the Associate Body in Scotland, was not respecting any point of doctrine, worship, discipline, or government; but merely about the meaning of a few words in a religious clause of a certain burghers oath, used in three or four cities in Scotland, as a condition of admitting citizens to the peculiar privileges of these borroughs. After some years, the Reverend Doctor Thomas Clark, who had belonged to what is called the Burgher Communion in Ireland, came over to America, with a considerable number of his congregation, and settled on lands in the province of New York. Many private Christians belonging to that communion, had, previously to that time, come into America, and more or less of them, I believe, had

had been incorporated in all the associate congregations. As a minister of that body was now arrived, the ministers and others dreaded the idea of their societies being rent and divided. Doctor Clark was therefore invited to an amicable conference with the Presbytery. The affair was soon settled with him. They all agreed to have no controversy about the Burghers oath, as they were certain, it could affect no body's conscience here, where it did not exist. The Doctor, on this, was received into full communion. Mr. Marshall freely assented to this, joined in full communion with Mr. Clark, and the last mentioned gentleman has been in full communion, both ministerial and Christian, ever since.

Some time after this, Mr. Telfair and Mr. Kinloch, who also belonged to the Burgher Communion, arrived in this country. The Presbytery held an amicable conference with them likewise, and they too joined in full communion with the Presbytery, on materially the same conditions as Doctor Clark. Mr. Marshall freely assented to this also, and joined in ministerial and Christian communion with these gentlemen.

But the Anti-burgher Synod in Scotland, were not all pleased with this movement. Some of the elder ministers, who had taken an active part in the burghers controversy, who had entered into all the labyrinths and windings of it, and fiercely disputed about this and the other act of the Scottish parliament (for thither the dispute immediately led them) felt their pride hurt by our treating it so lightly; and on a fresh application to the synod in Scotland, for further assistance, they sent over Mr. Smith and Mr. Rogers, but with instructions to demand, that the coalition with the Burgher ministers should be erased from the minutes of the Presbytery here; and if the Presbytery would not consent to this, that they, Mr. Smith and Mr. Rogers, should form a Presbytery in opposition to the union, taking in such members of the Presbytery here, if any, as would join them. These instructions they laid before the Presbytery, when Dr. Mason, Mr. Marshall and others were present. The Presbytery viewed this as a very bold and rash step in that synod; but imputed it to their ignorance of the state of the church here; and from this moment, the Presbytery began to see clearly the danger of acknowledging any practical subordination to a synod at such a distance, where they were not, and could not be represented. The two gentlemen behaved prudently; they did not insist on their instructions, and the Presbytery, without a dissenting voice, declared against obeying them. Mr. Marshall joined freely in this declaration with his brethren.

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Some considerable time after this, Mr. Clarkson arrived in this country, with much the same instructions; and they were also treated in much the same manner; Mr. Marshall freely joining with his brethren therein.

It may not be improper to remark, that the ministers who composed the Burgher and Anti-burgher Synods, immediately after the breach about the Burghers oath, appeared to the day of their deaths to be equally zealous friends to the whole doctrine of the reformation; and the two divided bodies appear still to be so to this day. If the party opposed to the disputed clause in the oath, could have convinced their brethren of the other side, that the oath militated against, or was inconsistent with, a strict adherence to the reformation, the advocates for it would have given it up. Could the party asserting the lawfulness of the disputed clause have convinced their brethren of the other side, that the oath was consistent with, and obliged to a strict adherence to the cause of the reformation, these last would no longer have quarreled, but approved it. The difference then was not about the main cause, but only about the means of promoting it; and the whole dispute was, Whether is the meaning which you put on the words, or the meaning which we put on them, just. And after a decision was given by a majority against the oath, the breach took place on another question, viz. whether said decision should be made a term of communion or not, before the minds of Presbyteries and sessions were known on the subject. At any rate, however important this controversy may appear to be in Scotland, it would look like folly in the extreme to make it a cause of division, or term of communion here. But to go on with our narrative,

Mr. Telfair and Mr. Kinloch, after staying some time in this country, and all that time in perfect unity and peace with the Presbytery, returned to Scotland. The Presbytery's union with them having embroiled the Presbytery somewhat with the Anti-burgher Synod, from whom they were wont to obtain missionaries, as has been said, that synod was not now so forward to send them. Mr. Telfair's going back to Scotland, and leaving the Presbytery in this embarrassed situation, without any pressing call, as they thought; his going off without leave, and without even asking a certificate, gave offence; and his returning again to America without any proper call or appointment, increased the offence; so that for some years he stood alone, and was not admitted to communion with the body. But Doctor Clark continued all along in communion. Perhaps it may be proper to remark, that it

was after Mr. Telfair's and Mr. Kinloch's return to Scotland, that Mr. Smith and Mr. Rogers came from the Anti-burgher Synod with instructions as before mentioned.

## S E C T I O N II.

*Containing an account of the union with the Reformed Presbytery.*

**T**HIS brings me to speak of the coalescence with the Reformed Presbytery. That denomination of Presbyterians in Scotland either are, or pretend to be, the successors and followers of the religious people who were persecuted so cruelly and unjustly, during the reigns of the two brothers, Charles the second, and James, Duke of York. They say, they are the followers of Cargill, Cameron and Renwick, three famous persecuted ministers of that period. They are an intelligent, religious and virtuous people, both in Scotland and in America: but they found fault with several things which they think great defects in the civil establishment of religion that took place at the revolution in Britain, by the instrumentality of the prince of Orange, anno 1688; and on that account will not acknowledge the present civil government in Britain to be rightly constituted, nor the rulers to possess legal authority. The establishment of their religion in the Bible, or by God's authority, will not satisfy them. They wish to see it also established in acts of parliament; and though this has really been done in North Britain, yet because they see great defects in it, (and defects must ever attend human transactions) they refuse to acknowledge the legality of the British constitution and government. This we viewed, and still view as a great mistake. But they are a peaceable and harmless people. They do no injury to the government, nor to any body else but themselves; and we cannot expect to find human nature without some whims. Some of these people have been long in America; they had a minister here, viz. Mr. Cuthbertson, before any of the Associate ministers came to this country. It was the British government only with which they found fault, and therefore when the thirteen Colonies in America began their opposition to the unjust claims of Britain, they freely joined in that opposition; and when the war commenced, and independency was declared by the colonies, now the United States, they freely acknowledged the legality of the new government, submitted to it, took an active part in the war, and some of them sat in conventions

to form the constitutions, and several of them have been members of the legislatures of the states; others have acted, and still act, as justices of the peace.

This is a convincing proof of one fact, that contending parties commonly drive the wedge of argument, on both sides, too hard, and too far. It has been generally alledged by the opponents of these people in Britain, that they were opposed to all civil government, that no government constructed by men would please them, and so they have gone under the appellation of Anti-government-people: but we see from the fact above stated, that this is not true. The truth which they maintain seems to be this, that a nation having attained to a certain degree of reformation, in the constitution both of church and state, ought not to fall back from it, and can have no moral power and authority so to do. This is a truth that all men must grant. But they have added to this truth another thing not so fair, and that both in theory and practice, I fear, viz. that when a nation have thus fallen back from former reformation, the rulers which they do set up have no legal authority; for the people had no right to constitute them in that defective manner. Here two distinct things are confounded, the fact, and the manner of the fact. The fact itself is good and lawful, viz. the constituting rulers, to which, people can never forfeit their right, any more than they can, to use means for the preservation of life, or to obey the sixth commandment. The manner may be defective in several things, and these defects are contrary to the law of God; but still the fact itself is agreeable to his law. The best of men sin in every thing they do, and come short of the glory of God. David's last ways of government and conduct were not like his first. The second temple fell far short of the magnificence and glory of the first. Here is a falling off in the manner, while the matter is good. On the other hand, these people, in their war of words on this subject, have pushed the argument too far against their opponents. They have alledged, that their opponents defend the defective manner, as well as the matter of the duty, or maintain that it is lawful for a nation to recede or fall back from the degree of reformation, to which it had attained in the constitution of church and state, and that the nation had a moral right and power thus to fall back. But it is clear, no person in his senses would maintain such an absurdity. To proceed,

When the desirable event above mentioned took place, viz. the independency of the states, sensible men on both sides began to think, that the difference between the two parties

was removed by the providence of God; and accordingly private conferences were held on the subject of a coalescence. The church of Christ in America is miserably divided. In some instances, different languages necessarily divide Christians; in many more, different systems. The bad consequences are many and great; all of which I shall not stay to point out. But these are manifest; an inability, with many of the parties, to support the ordinances of the Gospel, or even any appearance of a Christian church; a relaxation of discipline; a contempt of the ministry; and the rapid progress of ignorance, infidelity and vice. These are heart-piercing evils; and might, in part, be prevented, by the united exertions of the friends of religion and virtue. And what was there now to keep these two parties asunder? surely nothing. But there was a necessity to proceed with caution.

The first time that it was mentioned in the Associate Presbytery, so far as I recollect, was at a meeting at Marsh creek, about the year 1775, or 1776, where Mr. Marshall and Mr. Clarkson were present. These two gentlemen seemed then to favour the motion. Mr. Clarkson used this expression, "I will not cast cold water on it." Meetings were appointed, conferences were held on the subject, between the year 1775, and 1782. The people generally on both sides expressed great anxiety for the happy event, and urged the ministers on. Articles were drawn up, ascertaining the views of both parties, on some theoretical points; such as the origin of civil dominion, the qualifications necessary to civil rulers &c. about which there appeared to be no real difference; and in the principal thing, all were perfectly agreed, viz. a practical acknowledgement of the civil authority in the United States, and submission to it.

I should mention, that in the year 1776 the original Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania was divided by mutual consent, into two Presbyteries, for the sake of conveniency; the one retaining the name of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, the other assuming the title of the Associate Presbytery of New York. And though the members did not yet see it prudent to form a synod; yet in order to maintain the unity of the body, and act in concert as much as distance of place would allow, it was unanimously agreed, at the time of disjunction, that when any of the brethren of the one Presbytery happened to be in the bounds of the other at the time of its meeting, they should be entitled to a seat and a vote, as much as if no disjunction had taken place; and that general matters,

matters, which concerned the whole body, should be transacted as much as possible, with the consent of both Presbyteries.

Accordingly a general meeting of members from both these Presbyteries, and of the members of the Reformed Presbytery, took place at Pequea, in the spring of the year 1779. Articles, as the basis of union, were drawn up by a committee composed of members from each Presbytery. These articles were only ten in number. They shall be afterwards laid before the reader. Mean time I remark, that the committee were unanimous in them. They were introduced to the general meeting, were coolly considered, some considerable time spent in reasoning on them, and were finally agreed to, by all the members of the Reformed Presbytery, and by a clear majority of the two Associate Presbyteries; and on motion it was resolved, that both parties considered themselves as ripe for closing the union proposed, on the ground or basis of these articles, and deferred the matter until autumn, only in order, if possible, to remove the scruples of some brethren that seemed to hesitate, and finally all agreed to hold a general meeting again at Deeprun in the fall of the year, with a view to finish the business.

The Associate Presbytery of New York accordingly appointed Doctor John Mason and the reverend Robert Annan to attend said meeting, & each of them to take a ruling elder with him. When the time appointed drew near, Mr. Annan, who then lived at Walkill in the state of New York, set out with an elder to attend the meeting. Doctor Mason was then exiled from the city of New York, and the British troops in possession of it. He then resided with his family at a little town in New Jersey, called Plukemin. Mr. Annan and his elder called on Doctor Mason at his dwelling, to take him along. Conversing together in the evening on the subject of their mission, the Doctor remarked, that he was afraid it would be a blunt journey, for said he, "I received a letter from Mr. Marshall a day or two ago, in which he informs me, that he was just going to take horse to ride to Oxford, to attend a meeting of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, and that his chief design in going was to persuade the brethren not to attend at Deeprun; and added he, I am afraid he will be too successful in his endeavors, for you know the men, and therefore says he, I shall not go, for I am confident it would be in vain." He and Mr. Annan &c. were much displeas'd with such evasive, juggling measures: but there was no remedy except patience. Upon this Mr. Annan and his elder returned home again, after a journey of one hundred miles or more to

no purpose. It turned out just as Doctor Mason had foreseen; the members of the reformed Presbytery all attended from a great distance; none of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania attended, except Mr. Marshall himself, who had only about 30 miles to ride from the city of Philadelphia; and the members of the Reformed Presbytery have alledged that his business seemed to be only to tantalize them. Mr. Telfair had till this time stood alone, since his return from Scotland. The Reformed Presbytery being much grieved and offended at such ungenerous treatment, and apprehending that the affair of union with the Associate Presbyteries was all over, some of them, on their return home, called on the reverend Mr. Telfair in Philadelphia, and invited him to join them; which he accordingly did, on materialy the same basis or ground to which all had agreed at Pequea. In this manner came Mr. Telfair to be again connected with the Associate Body.

For, Mr. Annan on his return home, having communicated the whole of this procedure to the Presbytery of New York, of which he was a member, that Presbytery was not a little grieved and offended at such mismanagement; and unanimously determined not to drop the affair so dishonorably, and therefore resolved to act for themselves, and take up the business on the basis of the articles agreed to by all parties, at the general meeting at Pequea, in the year 1779: and accordingly did in the spring of the year 1780, at a meeting of Presbytery held at New Perth, now Salem, about 40 miles to the north east of Albany, in the state of New York, unanimously close the proposed union with the Reformed Presbytery, on the grounds agreed to by all the three Presbyteries at Pequea, about a twelvemonth before; and ordered a copy of their minute to this purpose; signed by the moderator and clerk, to be transmitted to the Reformed Presbytery, and intelligence of the same to be sent to the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania; which was done accordingly.

About six months after this, Mr. Annan attended a meeting of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania at Pequea, and represented the ill consequences of the Presbytery's conduct in disappointing the general meeting at Deeprun, and desired the members to resume the subject. This met with opposition from Mr. Marshall and Mr. Clarkson. On the third day towards the closing of the meeting, the reverend Mr. Smith called out Mr. Annan to advise with him respecting some affair in Mr. Smith's congregation, and while together, they were alarmed with the sound of the moderator's voice seemingly at prayer dismissing the Presbytery, they returned speedily into

room; and so it was—The Presbytery was dismissed; and several of the members could not help thinking, that this was another low artifice, or stolen march on them, in order meanly to evade the affair of the union coming under consideration. Mr. Marshall and Mr. Clarkson, in a few moments, mounted their horses, and returned home. So much trouble have these gentlemen given to their brethren and to themselves, so much distraction and division have they occasioned in the church. An opposition to the measure, if they were not clear in it, conducted in an open, manly and candid manner, would have done them honour: but such low evasive and double dealings, were unworthy of a good cause, and a good man.

The reverend Messrs. James Proudfit, John Murray, and John Smith, the remaining ministers of that Presbytery, and the reverend Robert Annan from the Presbytery of New York, then sat down, and, like Job and his friends, were for some time dumb, partly amazed at the conduct of the two gentlemen gone off, and partly musing and considering what to do. It was proposed that a member should be employed in prayer for counsel and direction, which was readily agreed to; and after prayer, and some little conference, they were all of the mind that they would act for themselves, and do what they were clear was their duty. Mr. Annan intreated them by no means to come into the union, if they were not clear in it, and if they were not fully determined, upon coming into it, to abide by it; and hinted that their former instability, their advancing and retreating on this subject had already done hurt, and encouraged its opposers. After mature consideration, they drew up three or four articles, materially the same as those formerly agreed to at Pequea, and unanimously declared for the union, on the ground of these articles; and in order to expedite the business as much as possible, they agreed to write circular letters to their brethren, Mr. Marshall and Mr. Clarkson, inviting them to an extrajudicial conference with the members of the Reformed Presbytery; which conference was appointed to be held at the house of Mr. James Paterfon in Donnegal, about two or three weeks after that; and Mr. Annan engaged to notify the members of the Reformed Presbytery. Circular letters were accordingly sent to Mr. Marshall and Mr. Clarkson; but they did not attend. Mr. Murray was then much indisposed in body; he, nevertheless, set out from home on the journey, and travelled one day, but next day, a violent snow storm coming on, he was thereby prevented from attending. Mr. Proudfit was, by some means or other, also prevented; but  
Mr.

Mr. Smith, Mr. Annan, and the members of the Reformed Presbytery attended; when the articles drawn up by the three ministers were produced, and were readily agreed to. This took place in the fall of the year 1781.

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

*Containing an account of the breach.*

THE meeting, above mentioned, was only an extrajudicial conference; but on the 14th of June, 1782, the affair was brought before the Presbytery, at a meeting held at Pequea, and by a fair decisive vote of the majority, the union was closed between the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, the Reformed Presbytery, and the Associate Presbytery of New York. Against this decision, Mr. Marshall and Mr. Clarkson protested, and appealed to the Associate Synod in Scotland. This appeal was an unprecedented step: the like step had never before been taken in the Associate Body; and not only so, but as it is impracticable to carry appeals to that bar, because impossible for the parties to appear there; so to admit such appeals would amount to a total surrender, or giving up of all judicial power in the Presbytery. Such a procedure, once admitted, would tie up the hands of the Presbytery for ever, prevent a decision of any important cause, and be a continual subterfuge and asylum for guilt; because the offending party would have no more to do, but to appeal from any sentence to the synod in Scotland, and then all further procedure behoved to stop. If these discontented brethren had satisfied themselves with a simple protestation, to be recorded in the minutes for their own exoneration, and continued in communion, they had acted regularly; but their appealing to a foreign synod, at such a distance, carries the air of no good design. But even here they did not stop: they suddenly and outrageously started from their seats, seized on the Presbytery's minutes and other public papers, retired to another apartment, formed themselves into a distinct Presbytery, and presumptuously and absurdly assumed to themselves the name and powers of the Presbytery which they had deserted. This exceeds all power of description for rashness, ignorance and folly. The Presbytery, amidst all this confusion, outrage and disorder, calmly sat still, and after some time spent in solemn and sad deliberation, they proceeded to lay them under censure; in which, however, they

they discovered much meekness and caution. Their decision runs in the following words; "The Presbytery cannot but look upon the conduct of these brethren, as highly schismatical, and tending to sow discord and division among Christians, and do therefore warn this congregation against countenancing their ministrations, ay and until they return unto their duty and due subjection to this Presbytery, in the Lord." It is evident that this decision, sentence, or warning, is couched in such terms, as adapt it to every congregation where it might be deemed proper and necessary to read it; and it appears from other minutes of the Presbytery, formed at the same time, that the design of it was to guard the vacancies under the Presbytery's care against the impositions of these men; and accordingly a minister was appointed and ordered to read it in Oxford congregation, as lying most open to their encroachments. To give it the more solemnity it was subscribed not only by the moderator and clerk, but also by the other ministers present. The force and efficacy of this sentence is defined by the censured ministers themselves, in their narrative, page 48, which narrative is, in page 6, declared to be an act of their new Presbytery, enacted at Philadelphia, October 25th 1784, and is subscribed by Mr. Marshall as moderator. Says that Presbytery "This was a deposing these brethren from the ministry of the Gospel, only not according to the form of the Christian process observed in most of the reformed churches." What follows, in some lines of the narrative, viz. that they owed no subordination or respect to the Presbytery, is a palpable falsity, enacted (I tremble when I mention it) and authorized by the name of the Lord; for the Presbytery which censured these brethren was the original Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, name and thing, the Presbytery which had ordained Mr. Marshall to office, which had admitted Mr. Clarkson to membership, on condition of due subjection, and to which they both had vowed subjection in the Lord, the peace of which they had engaged to maintain, and from which they had solemnly promised to follow a divisive course; and there was not a new member in it, that is, not one member of the Reformed Presbytery had yet joined it, nor did any of them sit in it for a long time after: for the convention of the three Presbyteries that formed the Associate Reformed Synod, did not meet for some months afterwards. The censure was past in June; the convention which formed the synod, and arranged the Presbyteries in a different form, did not meet until the latter end of October following. Is it not astonishing then to hear these men

saying in the name of the Lord, or in a judicial act of their pretended Presbytery? "As to returning to subjection to them, they must have a considerable portion of assurance to require it; seeing these brethren never promised subjection to them, any more than to the Roman pontiff. Do they find any such Presbytery as theirs mentioned in our ordination engagements?"

Will these men say that the Presbytery exceeded the limits of its authority and power, in taking up the question of the union? Are not Presbyteries as competent to judge of this question as any other? Most surely. The admission of new members to our communion, and settling the terms of it, are things that naturally fall under the management of ecclesiastical courts. If they have any power at all they must have this. Did they find any principles of Christianity, any truths of the gospel, respecting doctrine, worship, discipline, or government, subverted by the steps which the Presbytery had taken? No, they do not pretend it; and it is remarkable, that in all their publications they have never once attempted to prove any of the articles or propositions, on which the union was formed, to be erroneous, unsound, or in the least contrary to scripture or reason; and thus, by their own confession, they rent and divided the church, without any cause or reason. I do not suppose that ever such another step was taken by any men, pretending to be ministers of Christ! Schism is a most pernicious evil; it proceeds from, and tends to nourish and increase some of the worst passions of the human heart; it makes professors contentious, hateful and hating one another; they become full of envy, debate, deceit, malignity; and act the part of whisperers, backbiters, spiteful, haters of God, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful; and such, in a deplorable degree, have been the fruits of their schism: and instead of returning to the body from which they have violently torn themselves, on which return they might have expected all due lenity and compassion from their brethren, they have gone on, to this day, adding outrage to misrule, and misrule to outrage, so as truly to become an offence to Christians.

There is one thing I would notice here: it has been said that the sentence of the Presbytery was never executed. To this it may be replied, that ecclesiastical courts have no power of executing sentences, such as civil courts have; they have not the power of coercion, compulsion, or punishment; the passing of the sentence is with them its execution, and the only execution in their power, for their power is no more than ministerial

ministerial and declarative. They may publish or not publish the sentence, in one or more congregations, as to them may seem prudent; the passing of it in open Presbytery may, in some cases, be a sufficient publication of it; but the sentence itself is not affected by these circumstances; it remains the same; and men may regard or disregard it, as they see meet. If they disregard it, they are answerable to none but Jesus Christ, the judge of quick and dead; if they can defy his displeasure, they may contemn the sentence.

#### S E C T I O N IV,

*Wherein some facts, posterior to the breach, are mentioned,*

**H**A V I N G brought this narrative forward to the time of the unhappy breach, it will be proper, before I close it, to subjoin a few facts which happened posterior to that event. The convention of the three Presbyteries which formed themselves into a synod, met in Philadelphia, in the latter end of October, 1782, as has been said. They sat in the house of Mr. William Richards, who had long been, and then was, a member of the session, in which Mr. Marshall presided. He, with his brother-elders, and other members of the congregation, applied to the convention for advice what to do in their present circumstances; as their minister appeared to them to be pursuing a wild, schismatical course. The convention appointed, once and again, committees of their number to wait on Mr. Marshall, inform him of their proceedings, and solicit his return to the body; they were indeed extremely sorry to see him persevere in his unreasonable & anti-scriptural schism, and wished not to proceed to extremities with him; but he spurned their condescension and goodness. The people of the congregation then made another application for advice, and Doctor Mason, with another brother, was permitted to go aside and converse with them; and I have it ascertained by authentic testimony, that these brethren advised the congregation to deal gently with Mr. Marshall, for they hoped he would see his error, and soon return to his brethren. And the scandal was of a peculiar nature; for the moment he returned to the body, the offence ceased, and the censure dependent thereon also ceased of course.

In this disagreeable situation the congregation continued for a very considerable time, still extremely loth to come to an open rupture with him; until, at last, after a considerable  
number

number of strangers from Scotland had arrived and joined the congregation, he, and his self-created Presbytery, presumed they might take bolder steps; and accordingly they resolved to bring the matter to an issue with the session, by citing them before their Presbytery, and putting this question to them—"Whether are you friends or foes?" I should remark that, previously to this, the corporation of the congregation had applied to the legislature of the state, to pass a law to repeal a clause in the deed of trust, which had subjected their church property to a foreign jurisdiction, viz. of the Associate Synod in Scotland. Several of the elders were members of the corporation; and, on the aforesaid question being put to them by the new Presbytery, the elders asked the moderator, Whether the Presbytery had any thing to object to their moral characters; the moderator, Mr. Beveridge, answered, "No; but it is a matter of notoriety that you have applied to the legislature of the state, to repeal, &c. and this is evasiveness, and for this you are called to answer." The Presbytery, without much more ado, unanimously agreed to suspend or depose from office and excommunicate the five elders, which were the whole session. This was accordingly, after prayer, done in the name of the L—. But, previously to the passing of this censure, one of the elders, in the name of his brethren, read a protestation and declination, utterly rejecting and declining their authority.

This was a bold and rash step in this self-made Presbytery, and appears the more shocking, that it looks too much like a prostitution of the spiritual ordinance of church censure, to gain carnal and worldly purposes: for as a clause in the deed of trust says, that none out of communion with the congregation can have an interest in the property of the church; so they expected, by this bold stroke, to divest the elders at once of all right to that lot and house, which their money had greatly contributed to purchase and build; and for the purchase and building of which, Mr. Marshall and his adherents, as I am assured, had not contributed a farthing. The session and corporation perceived the wicked design, and saw the necessity of speedy and decisive measures: accordingly the corporation agreed to shut up the meeting house, and that it should not be opened but by the consent of a majority of their body; and the session and congregation made application to the Associate Reformed Synod, or a Presbytery belonging to that body, to be acknowledged by them as under their inspection, from which they had never, with their revolting minister, withdrawn; nor had any intention to withdraw.

They were unanimously acknowledged; and notice given, by a committee, to Mr. Marshall, that if he had any thing to lay to the charge of the five elders, he would be heard at the bar of the Presbytery: but he never appeared to accuse them. The corporation, soon after this, opened the meeting-house to the ministers of the synod; and this was the occasion of, or gave birth to, the long and tedious law-suit, about the church property, before the Supreme Court of the state; Mr. Marshall plaintiff, and the corporation defendants; on which I shall say nothing. Nor on Mr. Marshall's conduct at this time, shall I make any animadversions, only that his going on Sabbath morning and demanding admission to the pulpit in the name of the adorable Trinity, while he was seeking it, and determined, if possible, to obtain it, in the name and by the authority of the state, was very shocking to pious people.

Soon after this, the session and other principal members of the congregation, sent a most pressing call to the Reverend Robert Annan, then at Boston, to come over to them & help them, by taking the pastoral charge of the congregation. This call or petition was subscribed first of all by the Reverend David Telfair, in his own hand writing, and then by several of the elders and other gentlemen, who had for some time attended Mr. Telfair's ministry; and by all the elders whom Mr Marshall had cast off. Mr. Annan yielded to their importunity; as he deemed the saving of the congregation to be an object of great importance. On the whole of this narrative we may say, What a pity! that our good wicked brethren in Britain having poisoned the waters of the sanctuary with their bitter contentions should continue to send forth these bitter waters, like streams of death, even to America.

## CHAPTER II.

*Concerning the principles on which the union was formed, and from which the Separatists revolted: with an examination of their claim to the name and powers of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania.*

**H**AVING in the foregoing pages given a brief and faithful account of the steps which led to the unhappy schism made by Mr. Marshall and Mr. Clarkson, and now supported by others, lately from Scotland, viz. Mr. Anderson, Mr. Beveridge, Mr. Goodwillie, Mr. White, and lately acceded to by Mr. Henderson, senior; I shall now proceed to examine,  
 First,

**First, The principles of the union from which they revolted, and, Secondly, Their claim to the name and powers of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania.**

## S E C T I O N I.

*Wherein the principles of the union, from which the separating brethren have revolted, are exhibited,*

**T**HE articles drawn up and approved as the basis of union, at the general meeting of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, of members from the Associate Presbytery of New York, and the Reformed Presbytery, holden at Pequea, in the spring of the year 1779, and on which, after the general meeting agreed to be held at Deeprun, in the fall of the aforesaid year, was, by Mr. Marshall's influence frustrated, the Presbytery of New York took up the business, and closed the union with the Reformed Presbytery, are the following: First, That Jesus Christ died for the elect only; Secondly, That there is an appropriation in the nature of faith; Thirdly, That the gospel is indiscriminately addressed to sinners of mankind; Fourthly, That the righteousness of Christ is the alone proper condition of the covenant of grace; Fifthly, That civil power originates from God the Creator, and not from Christ the Mediator; Sixthly, That the administration of the kingdom of Providence is committed to Jesus Christ the Mediator, and magistracy, the ordinance appointed by the moral Governor of the world, to be the pillar or prop of civil order among men, as well as other things, is rendered subservient by the Mediator, to the welfare of his spiritual kingdom, the church; and besides, the church has the sanctified use of that **and every common benefit, through the grace of our Lord Jesus; Seventhly, That the law of nature, and the moral law revealed in the scriptures, are substantially the same, although the latter expresses the will of God more evidently and clearly than the former; and therefore magistrates, among Christians, ought to be regulated by the general directions of the word, as to the execution of their office, in faithfulness and righteousness; Eighthly, That the qualifications of justice, veracity, &c. required in the law of nature for the being of a magistrate, are also more explicitly and clearly revealed as necessary in scripture: but a religious test, any farther than an oath of fidelity, can never be essentially necessary to the being of a magistrate, except where the people make it a condition of govern-**

government; then it may be among that people necessary by their own voluntary deed; Ninthly, That both parties, when united, shall adhere to the Westminster confession of faith, catechisms larger and shorter, directory for worship, and propositions concerning church government; Tenthly, That they shall claim the full exercise of church government and discipline, without dependance on foreign judicatories.

The articles formed by the reverend Messrs. James Proudfit, John Smith, and John Murray, agreed to at Donnegal, in a private conference, anno 1781, and on which the union was closed with the Reformed Presbytery, by the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, anno 1782, are materially the same with the above, and are as follows: "First, Election, redemption, and application are of equal extent, and for the elect only; Secondly, Magistracy is derived from God, as the Creator and Governor of the world, and the profession of the true religion is not essential to the being of civil magistrates; and whereas protection and allegiance are reciprocal, and as the United States of America, while they protect us in life and property, at the same time do not impose any thing sinful on us, we therefore judge it our duty to acknowledge the government of these states, in all lawful commands; that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives, in all Godliness and honesty; Fourthly, The above proposition is not to be understood to contradict that proposition relative to civil government, in which the Associate Presbytery of New York and the Reformed Presbytery have agreed, but only as a plain and undisguised explication of one point of truth, in which we have the best reason to suppose that the whole body is united; Fifthly, As no opposition in sentiment relative to the important duty of covenanting appears on either side, it is mutually agreed, that the consideration of it be referred to the counsels and deliberations of the whole body; Sixthly, Though no real or practical subordination of this Presbytery to the Associate Synod of Edinburgh, in a consistency with Presbyterian government, can be pleaded, yet from the most wise and important considerations, the former connections, whatever they have been, shall remain as before, notwithstanding this coalescence." I might also give a copy of articles formed as the basis of union, and drawn up or approved by Mr. Marshall and Mr. Clarkson, materially the same with the above: but it does not appear necessary.

These are the doctrines and principles on which the coalition was formed; and, I will be bold to say, that a church so formed is built on the doctrine of the apostles and prophets,  
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Jefus Chrift being the chief corner-ftone: the articles formed as the basis of union need no commentary; they are clear, plain, unevasive and fcriptural. It is indeed faid that a religious teft may become neceffary to the being of magiftrates among a people, by the people's own voluntary deed. Who can doubt this, who knows that the Britifh nation have made it a neceffary condition of admiffion to their throne, that the prince be a proteftant? Have they done wrong in this? What was to forbid them? Did the law of God or the law of nations forbid them? Surely not. And why might not the United States, in their federal conftitution, have done the fame? For my part I can fee no neceffity for, no propriety in the United States dropping their Chriftian character, nor even their Proteftant character. But the article on this fubject allows of no religious teft, except an oath, as essentially neceffary to the being of civil magiftrates. But will our opponents fay, that a man, who does not believe in a God, who does not believe in his providence, nor that he will reward the righteous, and fearfully punifh the wicked, if not in this life, at leaft in a future ftate, may be a lawful magiftrate? Such a creature might be a ruler among bears and wolves; but not among rational and moral agents. The Affociate Prefbytery of Pennsylvania have alfo, in their laft article, declared for maintaining their former connection with the Affociate Synod of Scotland; but that connection, as explained in the article, amounts to no more than a friendly correpondence, to which we fhould all heartily agree. But there is no neceffity for expatiating on this: Mr. Marifhall and his abettors have never, in any of their publications, attempted to overthrow the articles formed as the basis of union, or charged them with error. No, they were too hard for them to dafh againft. By their own confeffion then their feparation was groundlefs, for their feparation took place and ftands to this day on the ground of thefe articles. It is true, they dafh away againft the conftitution of the Affociate Reformed Synod: but that conftitution could be no reafon for their feparation, becaufe it had no exiftence at the time of their feparation; it was not formed until long after their feparation had taken place. Their feparation took place in June, 1782; the conftitution was not formed until October following. Let them think on this, and not amufe and deceive the world and their own fouls any longer. Their fchifm has no other foundation but thefe articles of truth and duty, which they have never attempted to condemn in any of their publications; and thus if groundlefs feparation from a church be a great evil, they ftand chargeable with it by their own confeffion, and are  
 felf-

self-condemned before God and man. If there be solid grounds of separation in the constitution of the Associate Reformed Synod; why did they not wait until they saw them; until they had an existence; and perhaps they, by their great abilities, might have helped to frame that constitution much better, and so have prevented any ground of separation. Their brethren would have been thankful for their advice and aid. But to ground their separation on the constitution, or any posterior acts and proceedings of the Associate Reformed Synod, is an instance of gross dishonesty, prevarication, and prepotterous folly. I shall have occasion to speak of the constitution, so much blamed, in a little, mean time I will proceed to consider their claim to the name and powers of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania.

## S E C T I O N II.

*In which the claim of the dissenters to the name and powers of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania is examined and refuted.*

**T**HIS claim they boldly make: but how is it supported? They cannot deny that they were the minority at the division on the vote for union. It is true, they say, there was only the casting vote of the moderator to give the majority: but they know, that this is enough, and besides there were four ministers against two. Some of these four ministers had not their elders with them, which caused the majority to be smaller. But according to the Presbyterian mode of government, a majority by the casting vote of the moderator is just as valid as fifty against one. But they will say, they had the best cause, they adhered to the principles and constitution of the Presbytery. In reply, it may be remarked, that if a minority will not submit to the decision of the majority, because they, the minority, think they have the best cause; there is an end put to all union and government in collective bodies; and this is to make every man, and every party of men, decisive judges in their own cause. Endless division and the wildest anarchy will ensue. But why do they speak of the best cause? and of their adhering to the original principles and constitution of the Presbytery, seeing they do not pretend, and never pretended to say, that any of the articles of union were contrary to reason or the word of God? Why then do they, a dissenting, withdrawing, and separating minority, claim the name and powers of the Associate Presbytery of  
D Pennsylvania?

Pennsylvania? The claim is ridiculous and absurd in any view. And I will produce an authority on the subject, and entirely against them, which I am persuaded they will not contradict. It is the authority of the late reverend Mr. Adam Gib, a father in the Associate Synod, much, and on several accounts justly, respected by them. His testimony on this subject we will find in his book, entitled, "A display of the secession testimony," vol. 2, page 74. What he says, refers to a case which happened after the unhappy breach about the Burghefs oath, and is exactly similar to the case under consideration; says he, "When the Presbytery of Dunfermline, held their ordinary meeting at Perth, on the sixth day of May ensuing the breach, they refused to admit Mr. Ralph Erskine and Mr. James Johnston to a seat in the Presbytery; because each of them refused to make the confession above mentioned, viz. a confession of their sin in the affair of the Burghefs controversy. Soon after, these two brethren published a pamphlet bearing this title, "A narrative of the separation of the majority of members from the Associate Presbytery of Dunfermline." And this pamphlet bears, that, upon their being refused a seat, the reverend Ralph Erskine called the Presbytery by reading a paper; on which he protested, that the other brethren who refused them a seat cannot lawfully retain the power and authority of the Associate Presbytery of Dunfermline: but that this Presbyterial power remains only in the hands of those that remain subordinate to what he reckoned the Associate Synod. And therefore said he, I do hereby call all the members to attend the regular constitution of this Presbytery of Dunfermline; to meet in Mrs. Davidson's at seven o'clock this evening." Upon which he and his party withdrew. And it follows, "The Associate Presbytery of Dunfermline met according to the aforesaid warning," consisting only of the above two ministers with the elder from Dunfermline. And so these three members made themselves the Associate Presbytery of Dunfermline; instead of waiting till their pretended synod should have formed them into a shadow of that character.

Here, says Mr. Gib, was something like an imitation of the step taken at the breach, by those who contended against the two resolutions; but in reality, of a very different and inconsistent nature. When the majority of an ecclesiastical court turns into any such course, that the minority cannot honestly continue with them; this minority (who, having the cause of Christ, cannot but have his authority among them) may warrantably constitute themselves into another court, while

while they have no superior court to put them into the place of that majority. And had the contenders against these resolutions been really the minority, or had not their case been, as expressed in the declaration and protestation made at the breach; they would have taken this course: never imagining that the character and authority of the Associate Synod belonged to them; more than the Associate Presbytery, upon the secession, or in their declination, imagined, that they might assume the character and constitution of the general assembly.

It was beyond the line of their reason, to conceive, that the majority of a court, neither dissolving themselves, nor dissolved by a superior authority, could possibly be in a state of separation from that court; or in a state of separation from themselves. And they had not so learned Presbyterian order, or the common principles of society; as to imagine that, in any supposable case, the minority of a court could become that court, in opposition to the majority, without being so formed by a superior court: but only that, when the majority becomes a corrupt court, the minority may (in the case before mentioned) form themselves into another and better court; so that if the two resolutions had been really carried by the majority of the Associate Synod, the opposers must have still allowed them to be the Associate Synod, though in a very corrupt state, and must have formed themselves into another court, of a different denomination.

After all, when one considers the monstrous title of the aforesaid pamphlet, with the very singular conduct and claim of the two ministers therein set forth, in opposition to six of their brethren then present, besides two of them, on the same side, then absent. It may well be wondered, &c."

Thus far Mr. Gib. What follows is proper enough, and may justly be applied to demonstrate the folly of our claimants likewise: but what I have quoted, applies as properly to the claim of Mr. Marshall and Mr. Clarkson, as if Mr. Gib had been speaking purposely of them. And indeed their assuming the name and powers of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, in opposition to the majority, is just as absurd as Mr. Erskine's and Mr. Johnson's assumption of the name and powers of the Associate Presbytery of Dunfermline. It is futile, irrational and absurd, as Mr. Gib remarks, whether we suppose their cause to be good or bad.

### CHAPTER III.

## CHAPTER III.

*Containing a vindication of the constitution of the Associate Reformed Synod.*

**H**AVING made it evident in the preceding chapter, that by their own confession, their separation was entirely groundless; because the constitution of the Associate Reformed Synod and other things quarrelled had no existence until a long time after their separation: and that their claim to the name and powers of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania is futile and preposterous. I will now proceed to take some notice of their cavils at the constitution. The first who entered on this field was Mr. John Anderson, immediately on the back of his arrival in this country. To read his letters on this subject, must excite, at once, pity, surprise and contempt, in any candid mind. Another anonymous scribler, but supposed to be Mr. Beveridge, has displayed on the same subject and beaten the same path. There is nothing new in his miserable pamphlet, except a higher degree of pride, artifice, insolence and bitterness. The party have also, in the narrative prefixed to their testimony, summed up Anderson's objections and cavils.

This subject has been their hobby horse, and has been hackneyed by them at a great rate. Men, like them, determined on schism, resolved to pursue their course, were under a necessity of finding some plausible reasons for their conduct; and to find these reasons before or after the schism was all one. I know the constitution of the Synod has not been well received; and, candidly think, some things in it might be better expressed, imperfections attend all human affairs, and the Synod will see it to be their duty, to profit by the cavils even of their adversaries. But I am well convinced, that a small degree of that charity which thinketh no evil, and of that candour which becomes the honest man and sincere Christian, would have given a very different tincture or colouring to it. Who can stand before envy? Let these gentlemen only employ the same engine of captiousness, cavilling and idle criticism, on the Bible, or any other book; and they will soon disjoint and distort its features, and make it frightful.

They complain of the ambiguity of the Synod's adherence to the Holy Scriptures, confession and catechisms, &c. This charge of ambiguity, is founded on these words, "The synod resolve

resolve to persevere in adhering to the system of truth contained in the Holy Scriptures, confession of faith, &c." From this they infer, that the synod look on some doctrines of the Bible and confession, &c. as not true. But would candour have put this construction on the words? Paul says to Timothy, "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me;" What Paul! of sound words only! Have you then delivered any unsound words to Timothy? This is an exact specimen of their critics. But they say, that the synod's adherence to the confession of faith is to them equally dubious with the adopting act of the synod of New York and Philadelphia. Nothing but a determination to find fault could have said so. The synod make no distinction between fundamentals and circumstantial. They give no toleration to their Presbyteries, nor claim a discretionary power to themselves, to admit ministers and candidates though scrupling and denying any article or articles, if judged circumstantial. But say they, "The synod allow full liberty to their members to communicate their scruples and objections. The whole of the mist here arises from the word *allow*, which Johnie Anderson has foisted in; and he infers from it, that the synod positively allow scruples and objections. Well done John! But it is clear, that the synod cannot prevent such things arising in the minds of men; they only suppose that they may take place, and provide against the evil; and the provision is, if the scrupler shall disturb the peace of the church by publishing them to the people, or urging them in judicatories with schismatical zeal, he shall be forthwith censured: but if he only communicate them to his brethren, he shall be patiently heard, calm dispassionate reasoning to remove them shall take place before he be censured. This is the native meaning and construction of the words, for the truth of which I can appeal to all candid men; and the clear consequence is, that if after all, the scrupler persist, he shall be laid under censure. Now is this to allow of the objections, as Mr. Anderson affirms? But says Beveridge, the synod forbids unnecessary criticisms only. To be sure, he would not have had them to forbid necessary and useful criticisms, which tend to explain and illustrate the doctrines of the confession; many useful criticisms have been made on the Old and New Testaments, which have tended to throw light on them; but the criticks were men of a different spirit from our little snarlers. Nothing is more manifest, than that the synod intended in this to prevent their ministers and candidates preaching any doctrines to the people contrary to the doctrines of the confession; yea and even to forbid their

criticising

criticising or undervaluing the language of the confession; and in this part of the constitution, they had a respect to the conduct of Mr. R——, who, without acquainting his brethren, spent a number of years in preaching new-fangled doctrines to the people, so that much damage to him and them ensued.

But a terrible uproar is raised, because the synod reserved three sections of the confession to future discussion. I shall not mention all the horrid things which they infer from this. Let it be observed, that the three sections amount but to one point, the power of the civil magistrate about the church. There was only one member in the whole convention, that withheld for this reserve, and he wished only for a candid discussion. The discussion has taken place; that member himself has discussed the subject in the overture, and transcribed the sections with little or no variation. Let these gentlemen, if they can, point out the difference. It is true the overture is not yet become a judicial deed; but I have the best reason to say, that the doctrine of the overture on that head is agreeable to the minds of all the members of synod. These men must excuse the synod if they cannot run so fast as they.

But the dissingenuousness, dishonesty, and base hypocrisy of all this, ought to be made manifest to all men. They exceedingly cry out against the synod, for leaving these three sections to a future discussion; while they themselves have totally rejected, renounced and reprobated, the doctrines of the confession on that head: for proof of this assertion, see their judicial testimony, pages 8 and 9. They affirm as a part of their creed, and make it a point of testimony, to which no doubt, they as faithful witnesses will by and by swear, that the magistrate, as a magistrate, has nothing to do with the kingdom of Christ, or in matters of religion. And then gravely add, "If any article of our confession of faith seems to give any other power to the civil magistrate in matters of religion than what we have now declared to be competent to him, we are to be considered as receiving it only in so far as it agrees with articles of the same confession, &c." And is it come to this! Why do they say, if it seems to give? Let any body read chap. 20, sect. 4, chap. 23, sect. 3, chap. 31, sect. 2, and they will see clearly, that it not only seems to give, but really gives, more, much more power to him than they do. Indeed they strip him of all power as a magistrate, he has none but as a church member, that is, just as much as a common mechanic. Why do they suppose the confession of faith to contradict itself on this and other heads? They receive

it only in so far as it agrees with articles of the same confession, in which the spiritual nature of the church is asserted; in so far as it agrees! but they have not told us how far that is; or whether it agrees at all with these other articles. But finally, here I affirm, that in this point they have apostatized from the confession of faith, from the secession testimony, from the national covenant and solemn league, and from the confession of all the Protestant churches in Europe.

They greatly blame the synod for not appointing a larger formula of questions to put to candidates at their ordination. Mr. Beveridge has exhausted all his collection, namely, 5, and then adds, "In place of these the synod have only this one, Do you approve, &c. Now were even this the case, I ask, might not all his five be put in one? Moses declared the law in ten precepts; Christ summed them up in two. Therefore, says Beveridge, Moses was certainly the best lawgiver. But this assertion, which is also repeated in their narrative, is not true; for I have now the minutes of the synod before me, and find that their formula contains eight questions, besides some peculiar to ruling elders and deacons. This needs no remarks.

They exceedingly blame another article in the constitution, the intencion of which is to guard against the abuse of ecclesiastical censures; namely, "That notorious violations of the law of God in practice, and such errors as unhinge the Christian profession, shall be the only scandals for which the sentence of deposition and excommunication shall be passed." It is clear enough, what is meant by deposition, and it is clear enough too, that the higher sentence of excommunication is meant in the paragraph; for as Mr. Anderson, in his letter on excommunication, has remarked from Mr. Gillespie and others, that which is called the inferior sentence is not properly excommunication. But they know not what is meant, by notorious breaches of the law, nor what, by errors that unhinge the Christian profession. I cannot see any difficulty here to any person that does not wish to make one. These gentlemen will allow, that infirmities, and even sinful infirmities, cleave to the best men in this imperfect state; and also mistakes, and even sinful mistakes, in judgment; for which it would be exceeding improper to depose and excommunicate them. The synod wished to distinguish these from notorious scandals and capital errors. The former may be objects of forbearance, and were not this true, woe would be to all men! more especially, I fear, these critical gentlemen would have fallen under the heaviest censures of the church before now.

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This resolve of the synod is perfectly conformable to the two examples of the higher sentence of excommunication recorded in the New Testament; one of these took place in the case of the incestuous person who had taken his father's wife; this was a most gross scandal in practice: the other is the case of Hymeneus and Alexander, who had made ship-wreck of the faith by denying a capital doctrine of Christianity, or saying the resurrection was past already.

But it is alledged, that the synod have invented a new censure, viz. "The dissolution of the connection between the offender and the synod." Now this is declared to be the highest on the scale, before proceeding to deposition and excommunication. Other previous means may be used, reproof, admonition, &c. but if after all, the person be an uncomfortable member, and particularly an uncomfortable minister (for to ministers the article chiefly refers) may it not be prudent to let him try his talents in some other church? Paul and John Mark parted, in consequence of their sharp contentions; but they did not go to the extreme of excommunicating each other.

It is clear to me, that the synod in this article, had a reference to the deposition and excommunication of the Burgher ministers. The gentlemen with whom I contend, may attempt to vindicate that censure as much as they please; but impartial posterity will not justify it. Would it not have been better, if they had contentably parted for some time, until at least their passions had cooled? The Associate Synod in Scotland appear to have been soon sensible that they had gone to an extreme of rigor with their brethren; for they have never ventured to take such a step since, and I hope never will. Some such caution, as the above, is peculiarly necessary in America, where discipline is much relaxed, censures extremely obnoxious and odious, and generally contemned. The proposal of the synod is a prudential motion or resolution. And of all men on earth, our quarellers should be the last to find fault with it, as they are existing under its protection.

There are two things farther which I shall mention in this chapter, and refer for the remainder of their objections to the next. They say, That the bond proposed by the committee, Overture, page 104, is too general. Mr. Beveridge says, page 28 of his pamphlet, "The bond they have framed is such, as almost any denomination of Christians may swear it, &c. It is quite agreeable to the constitution, &c. It is framed for people who are agreed in what are called the essentials of Christianity, &c. Doctrine, worship, discipline, and

and government are mentioned; but it does not ascertain what doctrine, worship, &c." This is a false representation; for the bond mentions the doctrine, worship, discipline and government, of the gospel of Christ, and the committee have ascertained from the scriptures, what the gospel says on all these particular heads, much more fully than they have done.

Finally, these men leave no stone unturned to destroy the good work of God in the hands of the synod. I am informed, that they have been endeavouring to raise a clamour against the doctrine of the Overture, on regeneration. Chap. 10. It is hard to have to deal with ignorance, pride and envy combined. Nothing is more manifest than, that the Overture acknowledges all the passiveness in regeneration, that can consistently be ascribed to the intelligent, free and active soul of man. It says, "Man is under the power of a moral incapacity fixed as death for things spiritually good." And again, "That men could as easily pluck the sun out of the firmament, as command these perceptions and volitions, without the spirit of God." Here men are acknowledged to be utterly passive as to originating the work of grace at first, or any holy perceptions and volitions afterwards; and this is the meaning of the word *passive*, as used in the confession of faith; as will be evident to any one who will pay attention to the confession. But the Overture asserts that, the moment the spirit of God begins to operate on the soul, he awakens its powers to action. Who can doubt this? Can a man be convinced of sin without thinking of it; or enlightened in the knowledge of Christ without thinking about Christ, &c. A work of conviction is, to the person's own apprehension, nothing but his own conscience arraigning and condemning him at the bar of the divine law; and the same remark is applicable in kind to all the steps of the spirit's work in effectual calling. The man is sensible of nothing, but of his own perceptions and volitions. The great difficulty in composing the Overture (as the writer has often said, and as I well believe) was to make it short enough; brief sketches only were required. The chapter on regeneration treats only of the effectual calling of adult persons. The way of the spirit with infants is unknown to us. And we know less of the manner of God's creating the soul of Adam in perfect holiness; and less still of the manner of his forming the souls of Adam's posterity with the privation or want of original righteousness. But we know something, from experience and the word of God, of the manner of his convincing the conscience, en-

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lightening the understanding, renewing the will, and purifying the affections of corrupt man. Christ says "This is life eternal to know thee the true God and Jesus whom thou hast sent." Believers are begotten by the word of truth, to a lively hope, by the doctrine of Christ's resurrection from the dead. God, who made the light to shine out of darkness, causes the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, to shine into their minds." And the apostle says, "Galat. iii, 26, For ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ." But how men can know, can receive the truth, believe it, hope in it, or how the light of any knowledge can shine in the mind, without any activity of the mind in thinking, is as incomprehensible as transubstantiation. But this activity is ascribed in the Overture to the soul of man, not as prior, but as posterior, in the order of nature, though not of time, to the divine and gracious agency of the spirit of God.

## C H A P T E R IV.

*Wherein their doctrine about the secession-testimony, communion, covenanting, and their subordination to the Associate synod in Britain, is considered.*

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

*Containing their doctrine about the secession-testimony.*

**T**HEIR doctrine about the secession-testimony, on which they make a very great noise, and give us much pompous declamation comes under review in the first place. Here I remark, that I am glad to find them once on safe ground, and speaking like Protestants. In page 10 of their narrative they say, "The word of God is our testimony," and Mr. Anderson in his letters page 41 says, "The Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible is the standard of the church's terms of communion," and in the narrative they seem to claim no more than a power of applying the Bible in a manner suited to their circumstances. But we will not find them long on this ground. Here indeed is a manifest deficiency, for a confession of faith is not mentioned, which, as the Bible has been variously interpreted, and the most pernicious errors

errors fathered on it, becomes necessary in every church, to give the sense in which that church understands the Bible, and to make the Bible truly a bond of union and communion in her.

The doctrine of the overture on this head is undoubtedly true, pages 4-13 inclusive. "The Bible and nothing but the Bible is the matter of the church's testimony, for in the Bible the Lord testifies of himself, and all the church can say, is, truth, Lord, &c." The power of the church is only ministerial and declarative; and we must carefully distinguish between the testimony of Jesus, and the ministerial declaration and application of it by the church. The testimony given by Christ to the church, and which she ought to display, is at all times and in all places the same: but the application may be very various, according to the various circumstances in which providence places her. The first is always perfect: but the last often, if not always, imperfect. This one distinction is sufficient to clear away all the mist and fog, they have thrown out against the synod, for abandoning the secession testimony. It is the duty of our brethren in Scotland to apply the testimony of Jesus in a suitableness to their circumstances, or against the errors and evils prevailing there; and it is our duty to apply it against the errors and evils prevailing in America. The testimony is the same, but the application very different: and if we ought to make their application, they ought also to make ours; and the consequence is, we must put our selves in their circumstances, and they in ours; yet, this will not do; for to adjust the matter to common sense, they must be both in their own circumstances and in ours, and we in our own and theirs at the same time. These circumstances are comprehended in three classes, objects, time and place.

But what is this secession-testimony? It is not the Bible, nor the confession of faith. An adherence to these may take place, it seems, and yet the secession-testimony be rejected. What then is this thing called the secession-testimony? It is in fact the application of the Bible and confession made by our fathers in Scotland, in a suitableness to their circumstances. We will find it in Mr. Gib's book, entitled, "A display of the secession testimony; containing the act, declaration and testimony of the Associate Presbytery, the act concerning the doctrine of Grace, the whole controversy with Mr. Nairn, and the more perplexing one with the burghers, the act about the Chapman's oath, and Maion oath, &c. But this is not enough. That synod in Scotland, on this plan, must publish the whole body of their minutes to the world, and we must swallow the whole; for all these amount to the same thing,

a ministerial application of the testimony by that synod. That this is the thing that they mean by the secession-testimony, is evident from their narrative in many places, particularly page 54, and from Mr. Anderson's letters, page 5, 12, 13; and from Mr. Beveridge's pamphlet, pages 12-24 inclusive. Now if the application of the testimony of Jesus, in the proceedings of one synod in one place, be necessary to constitute our testimony; I ask a reason, why the application made of it by all reforming synods in all places since the world began, is not equally necessary? This would make our testimony pretty bulky; all our church histories would be to it as the drop of a bucket to the ocean. Mr. Anderson in his second letter admits the above principle and all its consequences.

There is nothing more certain than that, the testimony of a church must be a term of communion in her; for it must be her bond of union: a testimony which the members of a church might all reject if they pleased, would be no testimony at all; and if this be their meaning of the secession testimony, as it evidently is, Mr. Beveridge was right in saying, page 20 "Upon the whole, no such testimony as that maintained by the Associate Reformed Synod;" that is, they never did and never will make the whole of their proceedings a term of communion. And it was this view of the matter, that induced the committee to speak as they do in the overture, page 13, "The synod are afraid to publish too many papers called testimonies, because these may tend to turn away our attention from the Bible to human compositions; and they are convinced that, in this manner all the trumpery of the church of Rome was gradually introduced." The committee in the lines following, clearly distinguish between the testimony and the application of it made by men. "They offer no testimony to their churches but the Bible as explained in the confession of faith, and add "The application of this testimony to the confutation of error, they will attend to from time to time." Mr. Beveridge could not miss to see this distinction; but it did not suit him to notice it. He resolved to raise a clamour against the synod, by blinding the people's eyes and publishing to them a falsehood. Every testimony in a church must necessarily be a term of communion, as is said above; now if we add to this testimony, every application of it made by ecclesiastical courts, these also must be terms of communion; and consequently we shall multiply terms of communion to as great a number, as the particles of sand on the sea shore. Would there

there be safety in this? Is it not proper to make terms of communion as few, comprehensive, clear and scriptural as possible.

Mr. Beveridge, with a high air of insolence, pride and vain glory, descants upon the above paragraph in the Overture. He says "The secession has often been accused, but scarcely ever, with more malignity and injustice." The truth is, the secession in Scotland is not pointed at by the committee. Their application of the testimony of Jesus may be in general well enough; though doubtless attended with much infirmity, and sinful imperfections." But it is the applying of their application to America, where it will not in many things apply, and making their application a term of communion in America, that is rejected. And to multiply such acts of synods and decisions of councils as terms of communion under the specious name of the testimony of the church, is extremely dangerous.

Mr. Beveridge banters at a great rate, on this subject, in the 22 page of his pamphlet. "They further tell us," says he, "That their synod are convinced, that in this manner (viz. by publishing papers called testimonies) all the trumpery of the church of Rome was gradually introduced." Then he adds, "Aye, gentlemen! Your convictions have been very strong as to the evil tendency of the secession-testimony, before you renounced it. After this, I hope, no man will ever doubt of your repentance, for ever having been among the defenders of it, &c." This deserves no other reply, but silent contempt. He has quoted unfairly; for he has thrown in a sentence of his own in a parenthesis ("viz. by publishing papers called testimonies") as if the committee ascribed the introduction of popery immediately to such testimonies. But it is clear, from the natural construction of the words, that the introduction of popery is ascribed to this, viz. the turning mens attention from the Holy Scriptures to human compositions. It is true, it is alledged, that publishing many papers under the name of a testimony, which testimony must be a term of communion, for the reasons already given, may have a tendency, among other things, to fix mens attention too much on acts of councils or human compositions, and turn it from the Holy Scriptures; and this cannot be denied. They themselves grant, that the Bible is the testimony of the church. Mr. Anderson affirms, that nothing but the Bible ought to be the standard of the church's terms of communion. Why then

then introduce ten thousand acts of synods; For if we introduce five, or six, or ten, by an equal reason, we may introduce ten thousand.

Mr. Beveridge adds " But as to the manner in which the abominations of popery were introduced, this committee greatly err; and if they are acquainted with ecclesiastical history, they must have done so wilfully." This poor man, they say, affects to be a great historian, and as such proceeds to tell us how they were introduced. " The truth of the gospel was forgotten, &c." I ask, was it forgotten by reading and studying the Bible, or hearing it preached? If the attention of the careless had not been turned from the Holy Scriptures, would they have forgotten the gospel? " The gospel, says he, " was slighted and denied, and the Lord's witnesses, such as he and his brethren (for they claim that character exclusively; all others are enemies to the work of God) were constrained to retire into the wilderness." How came this about? Were the Lord's few witnesses driven to the wilderness by the great body of the people and their clergy; because these people and clergy read and studied the Bible, and made an adherence to it the principal term of communion? The truth on this subject is; that when popery, or the man of sin, came to the birth, and was gradually advancing to maturity, the clergy, moved by pride, and a lust of dominion, secreted the Bible as much as possible from the people, and claimed to themselves great power over their consciences. This soon involved them in gross ignorance. The darkness increased, until clergy and laity were equally ignorant. During the whole progress of this, synods and councils of the clergy met at different times. They issued out their decisions, decrees and judicial acts. This council made one decree, that council another, and a third council a third; until they decreed the bishop of Rome to be the infallible head of the church; and then he and his council of cardinals ruled with absolute sway. Sometimes a general council was called, as superior to the pope, and to decide which of the contending claimants should be pope. Poor fools! The infallible popes contended between themselves, and shewed the world, that an umpire was necessary to decide which of their infallibilities was right. Thus amidst the rubbish of acts of synods, and decrees of councils, and of popes; the Bible, the only rule of faith and practice, was lost; men were gradually led on to pay, first, as much respect to these decrees, as to the Bible, then a little more, and a little more, and when the pope became infallible, there was no need of the Bible at all. The most part of the clergy themselves

elves had never in their lives seen it. It was by accident that Luther hit on a copy of it in the library of his convent. And after he began to preach the doctrines of it, the council of Trent was called to exhibit a testimony against him and them, which they did very effectually. I appeal to all candid men, if this be not a true state of the case; and was it not by the traditions of the elders, or if Mr. Beveridge please, their testimonies, that the scribes and pharisees made void the law of God? Are we in no danger of erring on the same hand? Is not popery the religion of corrupt nature? Is there not a pope and popery in every man's breast? Is it not natural for great synods and councils to become very proud? Is not the synod of Edinburgh in danger of claiming too much power? And to become servile tools to them is not the way to advance the religion of Christ. But more of their popery presently.

But after all the dust they have raised, the din and noise they have made, about the secession testimony in the sense above defined; would it not be astonishing, if the men should be so self-contradictory and absurd, as to renounce it themselves? Yet this is absolutely the fact. I have perused their testimony again and again, and cannot find, that in any part of it, they have adopted the judicial act and testimony of the Associate Presbytery, the act concerning the doctrine of Grace, the defence against Mr. Nairn, nor the defence against the Burghess oath, &c. I see, in their testimony, mention is made of the national covenants, of which I shall speak anon! But not a word of the other things. It is true, they are mentioned in the narrative: but what says the act of their Presbytery concerning the whole and every part of their narrative? See page 6 "The Presbytery do however declare, that an adherence to this narrative, as is evident from the nature of the work, can make no part of that profession which will be required of church members upon their admission to communion with us. This by order of the Presbytery is signed, William Marshall, moderator." Astonishing! And so the whole secession testimony is thrown down at once! Their narrative is no more a term of communion or part of their profession than Mosheim's church history, or Crookshank's, or even Rollin's Roman history. This needs no comment. But O ye poor well-meaning people, whom they attempt to hoodwink, and then delude with empty sounds; can you be deceived by such sounds? if you can, you richly deserve to be deceived!

The narrative being wholly set aside, I shall now proceed to consider their testimony, and it is the only thing left to consider,

the only distinguishing instrument of communion in their society; for they say, page 2, "This adherence is not, however, an implicit assent to all that any church has said or done; it is not to be considered as extending beyond what we do in our testimony assert." It is true, a few lines before this they tell us, that they mean in their testimony "An adherence to the testimony maintained for the truth of the gospel, by the churches of the reformation in their confessions of faith, especially to the testimony maintained by that particular church, with which they are most particularly connected, in its best and purest times." I suppose the church here meant to be the church of Scotland in her best and purest times. But this adherence to the testimony of that church is not to be considered as extending beyond what they do in their testimony assert. Now it is clear, that the narrative is no part of their testimony, and it is only in the narrative that the judicial act and testimony, the doctrine of grace, &c. are mentioned, and consequently they have dropt and renounced the whole secession testimony in their sense of the words. They adhere only to the confession of faith, the directory for worship, and form of Presbyterian government and national covenants. This makes their testimony shorter.

But I blame their application of this testimony as being extremely defective, unsuitable to their circumstances, and erroneous. First defective, there is no proper argumentative testimony against deism, the great prevailing evil among those called Christians, nothing but their *ipse dixit*; nor against the sceptical philosophy about the creation of the world and other things; nor against Quakerism and Anabaptism; nor in favor of the free agency of men and angels, in opposition to the vile divinity, or false philosophy of moral necessity, and God being the author of sin; nor against marriages within the degrees of affinity and consanguinity; and even the doctrine of universal salvation is passed over very slightly. Consequently, it is, secondly, very unsuitable to America, for these are the great evils laying waste the church of God in this land. Thirdly, It is really erroneous. Their doctrine about the civil magistrate, as having nothing to do with religion in his magisterial office, is utterly opposed to the confession of faith adopted by themselves, and indeed to the doctrine of all the Protestant churches in Europe. And they have manifestly denied the doctrine of their own confession on the subject of communion. But more of this in a little. And their doctrine on excommunication, viz. "That church judicatories have nothing to do, in church censures, with the person's state before

fore God; and that it is not necessary to delay the highest sentence of excommunication, till the offending person give evident signs of his being in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity," appears to me to be altogether unscriptural and unsound. How can a person be supposed to be a proper member of satan's kingdom, and yet not supposed to be in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity; but in a state of grace and salvation? Peter pronounces Simon Magus to be in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, and yet does not immediately excommunicate him, or deliver him up to satan. But according to their doctrine, a man may give evidence, that he is in a state of grace and salvation, and yet be warrantably delivered over to satan. It is the external visible evidence that we must attend to on both sides. It is evidently by external evidence alone that men can judge of the religious character of their fellow Christians. But these men, in their doctrine about the higher sentence of excommunication, suppose us to judge without any evidence, yea contrary to all evidence; for by external evidence the censure of excommunication determines the person to belong to satan's kingdom; and yet they suppose that, contrary to this evidence, he may belong to Christ's. On what grounds? On none at all. For any farther than external evidence supports us, neither they nor any man else can judge. But on that evidence, the excommunicated person is already by the sentence judged to belong to satan's kingdom; and therefore on none at all is supposed to belong to Christ's. Men cannot judge as God judges, by looking immediately into the heart. Peter, it is clear, judges in the very way, and by the same evidence, other men must judge by. I perceive, says he. How did he perceive it? not by inspiration, nor revelation; for he might have perceived it before, in that manner: but from Simon's offering to purchase the Holy Ghost with money. He perceived it by the man's behaviour before the church; and yet exhorts him to pray, that if possible, the thoughts of his heart might be forgiven him. This is not excommunication. And when Simon desired him to pray for him, there is reason to think that Peter did so. Indeed if Simon Magus persevered in his desperately wicked course, as probably he did, no doubt he would be delivered up to satan. Thus Mr. Beveridge may with the greatest propriety apply to himself and his brethren, the insidious and insulting words which he applies to the synod, page 10. "It would be more honest if they would own any part of the confession not agreeable to the word

word of God, to tell us so. Neither we, nor they, need be ashamed to acknowledge," &c.

When but one member of the synod expressed a doubt on but one point, viz. the magistrates power *circa sacra*, the synod left it open to future discussion, though they were sensible, that in doing this, they threw themselves open to the clamours of the party. The discussion has taken place, and turned out in entire conformity to the confession. But these very honest men have renounced the doctrine of the confession on that and other heads, and yet pretend they are the only zealous adherents to it; and to reconcile this duplicity and dissimulation, with their pretensions to extraordinary purity, zeal and faithfulness, as the only witnesses for Christ, they suppose the confession to contradict itself; and on the subject of communion have twisted, wrested, and perverted the confession to make it mean communion only in beef and cabbage, as one wittily expressed it. And on the whole, I must say, that their testimony is one of the lamest performances, ever I saw emitted by any ecclesiastical body; for proof of this, let the reader peruse their article on faith, and indeed almost every other.

## S E C T I O N II.

*Wherein a view is given of their doctrine about communion.*

**I** WILL now proceed to speak of their doctrine about communion. All the three champions have stepped forward on this field, as boldly as Goliath; and like him defy the armies of Israel, reason, scripture, confession of faith, the synod, and all the protestant churches at least in Europe. They say, narrative page 55, "This new synod so far as we can understand the sixth and seventh articles of their constitution, have one set of terms for fixed, another for occasional communion;" and in their testimony page 76 they say, "We do also testify against what some call occasional communion; by which they mean, &c." Here they put an odious meaning on it, of which the synod never thought, and so they go on, after having formed a picture on the wall, to break their knuckles in battering it. But any thing to make the synod odious. Mr. Beveridge has given full vent to his gall on this subject, see page 35, to the end of his pamphlet. says he "occasional communion is both name and thing a late invention." Doctor Watts is introduced with his psalms, no doubt,

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in his hand, to frighten the people; but yet his sense of this subject is much preferred to the synod's. Then he proceeds to inform us, what the Westminster assembly intended or did not intend. No doubt, he knew their intentions! "He is sure, they never intended to withdraw from the fellowship of other churches agreeing with them, &c." I am sure of that too. But what is this to the purpose of confuting their doctrine of communion with all who in every place call on the Lord Jesus, as God gives opportunity. The relief Synod in Scotland is then introduced, as he knew that synod to be odious to Seceders from Scotland. The two synods are then coupled together as equally opposed to the testimony, and perverting the confession.

He tells us, "That the secession utterly reject and testify against that occasional communion." I desire him to tell us, in his next, where, in what public deed they have done so. It is true, He and his fellows have done so. But woe to the secession! If its principles are to be collected from them. Let us hear the reverend Mr. Alexander Gellatly on this subject, he was early a Seceder, well acquainted with the principles of the original members of the body, and the first that planted the associate churches in America, a gentleman of unquestionable abilities, and great zeal for the cause of religion. In his observations on the detection detected, page 20. He says "To prevent mistakes let it be remembered, first, that I am not to speak of the basis of communion in the church invisible; the members thereof being the elect only, this does not affect the present question. Nor, secondly, am I to speak of the basis of what is called catholic or occasional communion with other particular churches, differing somewhat in principle from that particular church, whereof we are stated members; as there is so much dependance upon circumstances in this matter, I believe it is but very general thoughts any have given or can give on it; such as Mr. Shields on church communion page 25 offers, "If we were in Africa or Asia, says he, we would join with all christians holding the same fundamental testimony against Jews, Turks and Pagans, though, not with Heretics." After him let us hear the reverend and learned Mr. William Wilson of Perth in Scotland, one of the first four, who made the bold stand against the corrupt prevailing party in the general assembly, and a father of the secession. In his defence of the reformation principles of the church of Scotland, page 38. He says, "There is a union and communion catholic and universal among all Christians, considered as such; and an ecclesiastic union and communion amongst members of  
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one particular organical church, considered as members of that church. This observe I take from Mr. Shiells on church communion, page 25, a book frequently cited in the essay. The same worthy author likewise observes, that "Organic communion must be on stricter terms than catholic communion with others that are not members of the same organic church." He adds, "If we were in Africa or Asia, we would join with all christians holding the same fundamental testimony against Jews, Turks and Pagans, though not with Heretics." And it is plain, that all Christians have union and communion together, in so far as they hold the fundamental testimony of Christianity against declared infidels; in like manner all Protestants, in so far as they hold the Protestant testimony against the errors and corruptions of the church of Rome." The same author in his continuation of the defence, page 47 says "I shall conclude this chapter when I have observed, that our secession from the judicatories is not a secession from the Christian, Catholic, visible church; this is our New Testament mount Zion, unto which a gospel ministry and gospel ordinances are primarily given, 1 Cor. xii. 28. But our secession is a departure from a corrupt part of the catholic visible body, upon the account of their defections and backslidings continued in, and from which they refuse to reform, though the proper means have been used to reclaim them.

"Again, our secession is not a departure from any of the Protestant churches, in so far as they maintain the protestant testimony against Rome Antichristian; but it is a departure from ecclesiastical union and conjunction with judicatories, who have, in many particular instances, departed from the Protestant reformed testimony, as the same was lifted up in Scotland, in her reforming and covenanting times; according to my seventh observe in the above quoted section. Likewise, our present secession is not a departure from the principles of the church of Scotland, as they have been confessed, acknowledged, and sworn unto, by this whole church & land."

Now, will our striplings pretend to more knowledge of the secession principles than those men? or a more pure and holy zeal for the truth of the gospel. Our authors should blush for their impositions on the world on this head. Indeed, their doctrine on this subject unchurches and annihilates all the Protestant churches. I will grant that every separation from a church does not imply an unchurching of it. It may be expedient and lawful to withdraw from a church, and continue in a separate state, on account of some prevailing evils in her, while we allow that she still possesses the essential signatures of a true

true church of Christ; just as we may withdraw from a brother that walketh disorderly. But their principle is, that in no possible circumstances whatsoever, it is lawful to hold communion with any of the Protestant churches, and consequently, if any Christian of their communion step out of the bounds of that communion, or to a place where none of their societies exist, he is got beyond the bounds of the church of Christ. If it would be unlawful for him, when in the same circumstances with the ordinary members of these churches, to hold communion with them; it is surely unlawful for them to hold it with each other, for sin and duty are certainly the same to all men in the same circumstances. The communion itself must be unlawful, and the church a synagogue of satan. This is their horrid doctrine: and it is, in fact, the principle of the old Donatists, who maintained, that there was no church of Christ but theirs, no communion lawful but theirs.

Mr. Beveridge indeed denies this consequence, "We do not, says he, confine the church of Christ to those of our own denomination. Such a thought is far from us. We are bound to love all who love our Lord Jesus, but are not bound to follow them, in strengthening the hands of backsliders, &c." that is in strengthening their own hands, for he supposes these lovers of Christ of whom he speaks to be men unfit for communion in every possible case, and so backsliders with a witness. He and his party can never get rid of the consequence above mentioned, by all their flimsy wreathings, and doublings. The committee of the synod have stated the true Protestant terms of communion, Overture page 116. Still farther, to prevent mistakes, they declare, they do not so much as state the question even of occasional communion with the church of Rome, raving sectarians, or if our critics please, heretics; or any that would impose sinful terms of communion. By a little cunning, he gives such a turn to their expressions, as would make the reader think, that they excepted none but the last, and then brings in Arians and Socinians as persons with whom the committee allowed communion. But it is in vain, to speak to such a man. Let the reader remember the positive terms of communion stated page 116, and what follows in the next page, and see whether these will admit of communion with Arians and Socinians. Beveridge was determined to say any thing to make the synod odious, and gain Profelytes. It is impossible that a church can be in any sense a church of Christ, if it be, in all supposable cases, in communion with her. The apostle says, Cor unto you: not to keep company with fornicat

gether with the fornicators of this world, &c. for then must ye needs go out of the world." With a small variation, we may also say, that if we cannot, in any supposable circumstances, keep fellowship with other Protestant churches, the moment we leave our own society, we go out of the church.

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

*Wherein their doctrine about covenanting, and the obligation of the national covenant and solemn league is examined.*

**I** WILL now proceed to consider their doctrine of public and social covenanting, and the obligation of the national covenant of Scotland and solemn league. I wish the reader to peruse the doctrine of the Overture on this subject, chap. 22. This question is not concerning mere civil associations, such as that into which the Americans entered at the commencement of the war, for the defence of their civil and religious liberties; but it is concerning religious vows, in which the parties avouch the Lord to be their God, &c. The synod maintain the following principles on this head, that such a public, explicit and social vow is lawful; that it is an extraordinary duty; required in extraordinary circumstances; that it is an institution properly ecclesiastical and belonging to the church; that as in baptism and the Lord's supper parents give themselves and their posterity to the Lord, so they do in this, and that therefore such vows are obligatory on posterity; that the word of God is the original authority for this duty, and the rule by which it is circumscribed, that is, the law of God points out all the duties to which men can lawfully bind themselves and their children. I suppose it will be granted that God alone is the Supreme Law-giver to men, that his authority is the source of all moral obligation; that the creature can never lawfully become a law-giver to itself, for this would exalt it to God's throne; so that while we acknowledge an obligation on the conscience arising from the vow, still the obligation to obedience must rest ultimately on the divine authority.

There is in this case a two-fold obligation to duty, one arising directly from the authority of God in his law, positively requiring and enjoining such and such duties, the other taking its rise in the creature's voluntary consent, and this consent expressed by a solemn vow. But this last must be finally resolved into the first; for it is the law of God that requires

requires us to vow, and when we have vowed, binds and obliges us to perform our vows; so that the whole obligation rests on the divine authority; and our vow cannot be considered as the source of the obligation; for if so, the creature would undoubtedly be a law-giver to itself. It is true, that in some cases, the creature's vow may be the occasion of the very existence of the duty; as when his vow respects a thing previously indifferent in itself: probably Paul's vow was of this nature. But even in this case, the vow is not the origin of moral obligation; the authority of God alone is so, which requires us to pay what we have vowed. The vow is only the occasion of the existence of the obligation.

It will be granted, that if man had never been created, he could never have been under the obligation of a law; yet creation is not the source of moral obligation; the authority of the Law-giver alone is this origin, and creation the occasion of the existence of the obligation. and thus new relations are the occasion of the obligation of new duties; such as, the relation of husband and wife, of parents and children, yet these relations are not the source of moral obligation; but the authority of God in his law is so. And by a parity of reason, a vow may be said to be the occasion of the existence of a superadded tie or obligation, even in the case of moral duties obligatory on the conscience, previously to the vow. For example, men are at all times obliged by the divine law, to use all lawful endeavours to preserve their own lives and the lives of others. But having come under a vow or covenant to obey the divine law, they are bound to abstain from murder, not only by the sixth commandment, but also by the third commandment, which requires us to perform our vows. And all the commandments of God mutually confirm and support the obligation of each other; and the obligation of the first precept includes the obligation of all the rest. So true is that which the apostle James says, "He that offends in one point is guilty of all."

A covenant is something more than a bare law; it is not necessary to the obligation of the divine law, that the creature consent unto it. God has an unquestionable claim and title to obedience by his creatures, previously to all consent or contract; & his law must be obligatory, whether we suppose the creature to consent or not. But it is impossible that a holy creature can refuse its consent, and therefore perhaps no holy creature can be under the divine law, but in the form of a covenant. To constitute a covenant, there must be the consent of the two parties concerned, and this is more than a bare law. And in  
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this manner, viz. by covenant, God condescends to introduce his rational creatures, to the fruition of himself as their chief good.

The revelation of the covenant of Grace, contains God's gracious offer and promise, to be the God of his church and people, and of their children. "I will be your God and the God of your seed," says he. They in giving their consent, resolve as Joshua did, "As for me and my house, says he, we will serve the Lord." And the Lord says of Abraham, "I know that my servant Abraham will command his house to serve the Lord." And David says to Solomon, "And thou Solomon my son know thou the God of thy fathers." This assent and consent to the covenant of Grace is yielded in heart by Christians in the exercise of faith and love, and it is variously expressed by them externally, viz. in solemn prayer, by obedience to all Christ's laws and institutions, and particularly in baptism and at the Lord's table, in which they surrender themselves and their children to the Lord, and avouch him to be their God and the God of their seed. But it may be expressed also, either in a personal, or private vow; in a family vow; or by an explicit, public and social vow, or by public covenanting in the church. And indeed some such covenant, either explicit or implicit, is necessary to the formation of every Christian society, family or church; and is a necessary bond of union therein.

But on particular and extraordinary emergencies, the church, whether consisting of one, ten, or a thousand congregations, may give themselves and their children to the Lord, in such a vow or covenant. It differs from what is done in baptism and the Lord's supper, not materially, but only in the manner of expression. Thus every Christian church is a covenanted church. And all churches of Christ are under the same covenant, the covenant of Grace in its promises and precepts. The church of Scotland has indeed gone farther than some churches, in the manner of expressing her consent to the covenant of Grace, viz. by a solemn oath or vow; and, I believe, she was well warranted by God's word to go this extraordinary length in some extraordinary circumstances: but though differing, thus in one step, as to manner, the matter is the same. And it is absurd to call her a covenanted church, and her principles covenanted principles, in an exclusive sense, merely because of this difference as to manner.

Furthermore we may add, that it is impossible for creatures to make any addition to the authority and moral obligation of God's law, they may more openly, explicitly and solemnly.

ly, consent and submit to that obligation; and this is the nature of an oath or vow; for in such a transaction, the creature appeals to God, to witness the sincerity of its consent, and on the matter imprecates all the curses of the law, if it wilfully violate that law. These curses are the wages of disobedience at any rate, but here the creature declares that he knows them to be so, and that he expects nothing else, in case of disobedience. And a violation after this, becomes a more aggravated transgression of the law; it becomes so in a twofold respect, 1 Because the superadded tie is violated, namely the law that requires us to vow and when we have vowed to perform our vows, as well as all the other precepts from which the duty or duties did directly arise. 2 The creature must be supposed to sin more against light and conviction, more in a deliberate and wilful manner.

The committee of synod say, Overture page 103. "As we are the children of covenanting ancestors, we do acknowledge ourselves to be dedicated to the Lord in their vow, and engaged by them to serve him in every religious and moral duty." It merits our notice here, that the committee suppose these duties to be obligatory, 1 Directly from such precepts of the law as require them. 2 By reason of a superadded tie, occasionally taking its rise in the oath or covenant of our ancestors, in which they yielded themselves and their posterity to the Lord, which superadded tie or obligation must nevertheless arise also from the Divine law, which requires us to vow and to pay our vows. The vow of our ancestors is not the origin of moral obligation, but is only the occasion of the existence of a new obligation arising from the precept of the law that enjoins vows, and requires a fulfilment of them. And after all, this is really no addition to the divine authority enjoining, nor is it any increase of the moral obligation to duty. God's authority is infinite, and the obligation arising from it is infinite, and cannot be increased. It is as great in one precept, as in all the ten, and indeed all the precepts are involved in each other, and all of them implied in the first. But the design of these superadded ties seems to be, to set before the creature the fulness and force of the divine authority, and stimulate it to faithfulness and diligence in its obedience. The committee add, that they will take up the duty of covenanting on its first principles, its original and true ground, the authority of God in his word warranting and enjoining it. Our cavilling gentlemen are not pleased with this. Mr. Beveridge says, "They go on this principle, that they have no particular concern with the covenant engagements of our fathers, &c." He must have seen what is quoted above; but

it did not suit him to mention it. It was better to tell a lie! It is true, the committee think the authority of God in his word a very good and sufficient authority for any duty. All the apostles and prophets built the obligation to duty on this foundation. Our ancestors in Britain and Ireland did the same; and their example is worthy of our imitation. The committee consider themselves as included in the vow of their ancestors; but consider the third commandment as the source of moral obligation, both to vow, and perform their vows. The vow of our ancestors is the occasion of the existence of the superadded tie, and may be an excitement to us to imitate them, both in vowing, and performing our vows; but never can be the origin of moral obligation; for in that case they would be law-givers to us.

Thus both parties are for the duty, and seem willing to reduce it to practice; but these gentlemen are not for taking it up on its original and true ground, the authority of God in his word; but on human tradition, or the historical account of the conduct of our ancestors, in entering into the national covenant and the solemn league and covenant. I have no doubt, but that our ancestors really entered into these covenants. I believe it as well as any other fact narrated in Hume's history, or Wodrow's, or Crookshank's: but still, this is but human tradition; and to rest the obligation to any solemn moral duty on the actions and traditions of men is extremely dangerous; and it is still more so, to make our resting it there, a term of communion.

In the formula of questions published by Mr. Beveridge, in his pamphlet page 31; I find the following, "Do you acknowledge the perpetual obligation of the solemn covenant engagements, which we in this church are under, as they have been explained in the declaration and testimony agreed upon, &c." Here we are referred to their testimony for an explication of these covenant engagements. We will find this explication in their testimony page 11 and 12. It is the national covenant of Scotland and the solemn league of Britain and Ireland which they attempt to explain; and if the commentary have any precise meaning, if it be not completely ambiguous and deceitful, they infer moral obligation chiefly, if not entirely from these human transactions. They declare "That as their ancestors engaged to hold fast and defend the doctrine, &c. To study the preservation, purity and increase of the church, &c. To assist each other in maintaining the cause of Christ, &c. So the same engagements lie on them." These duties are what every true church of Christ well acknowledge

knowledge to be incumbent on her ; and that by the supreme authority of God's word, and also by virtue of the most solemn vows in the sense above explained. Why then so much ostentation? Why such a flourish of words as in these pages? Wherein do they differ from other churches of Christ here? Wherein are they superior? Why in this, they derive the moral obligation of these duties from the national acts of Britain, called the national covenant and solemn league. This is their Shibboleth. This is their *Sanctum Sanctorum*. Their ancestors were law-givers to themselves and to them. The act of their fathers is the origin of moral obligation. Other Christians are bound by God's law; but they are bound by the law of man. I cannot put any other sense on their words taken altogether. But their ancestors never meant any such thing. They never meant to assume God's prerogative, but only a particular manner of expressing the same thing which all the churches of Christ express, viz. their consent to the obligation of the divine law and covenant, and knew well that they could add nothing to the moral obligation of that law, nor in any manner increase it. A proper question comes in here, What good do our engaged gentlemen perform more than others?

In thinking on this subject, I have frequently called to mind the story of the Brazen Serpent in the days of Hezekiah; it seems then the children of Israel offered incense to it. It had been a type of Christ, and exceeding useful in its time and place. But the good king saw it necessary to break it in pieces. Why? because it was become an object of superstitious veneration, the children of Israel offered incense to it. It is likely their fathers did not esteem it so much, when it was really of great use and service. I know that our critics will infer from this, that I am for abolishing these covenants likewise. But I say no. I introduce this only as a similitude to show that, we may put good things out of their time and place, and carry our veneration for them to the length of superstition. I ask, is the national covenant and solemn league the only bond of union and communion between Christ and his church? Is it the only copy of the covenant of Grace in its promises and precepts and duties? or are these covenants the chief and principal instruments by which a church can express her consent to the covenant of Grace? Can no church be a covenanted church unless she own the perpetual obligation of these covenants? Or may she not be so equally without this, as with it? To what nations will they extend the obligation of these covenants? Only to the nation whose acts they were, or to all nations? I find Mr. Anderson is for extending their authority

rity and obligation as widely as the law of God; in his eighth letter, he says, "I cannot help thinking, my friend, that the whole church of Christ is interested in these covenants, especially as the church stands opposed to Anti-christ." The question here is not about the religious and moral duties contained in these covenants. These duties are obligatory on all churches, and all churches of Christ vow and engage to practise them: but we are speaking of the national covenant and solemn league, as national acts of Britain; and it would be absurd to call religious and moral duties, "These national covenants." It is only as acts of the nation, that they can be called the covenants of the nation. And, if the words of these men be not altogether ambiguous and deceitful, they plead for the universal obligation of these covenants as acts of the nation, or as national deeds.

But their inconsistency in this is very manifest. For while they plead for the perpetual and universal obligation of these acts of the nation, they set aside the one half of them, viz. the whole civil part; and to complete the absurdity, the civil part so set aside, is the very part which constituted them acts of the nation; for setting that aside, they behaved to have been merely ecclesiastical acts. They say in their testimony, page 11, "As to what may be called the civil part of these covenants, it is what we neither have, nor ever had any thing to do with, &c." But what is it that constitutes any act an act of a nation? It is certainly the civil authority of the nation's passing it into a law, enjoining the duties of life therein, and the nation's submitting to the law. The parliaments of Britain passed these covenants into civil and national laws, and the members of the Scottish and English parliaments swore them, and enjoined them on their constituents. Well, but a query arises here. Did their constituents give them instructions and delegate to them power for this purpose? Did they send them to parliament to form a covenant partly religious and partly civil, to be imposed on all the nation? Or did they commission them to transact only their civil affairs? But according to the view which these gentlemen have of these national covenants, there is still a more pressing question. Did the British parliaments receive instructions from their constituents, to form the principal copy of the covenant of Grace, the grand bond of union and communion between Christ and his church, and the chief bond of union and communion among the members of the church, pass it into a civil law, and enjoin it on the nations, on all civil pains? I say on all civil pains; for this they not only did, but

on the hypothesis of their having a right to pass them into a law at all, they also had a right to do it on all civil parts; because a law without a penalty is no law; it is but a mere sham and pretence, and in no sense obligatory. But I need not insist on this, for these men tell us, that civil rulers as such have nothing to do with religion, no power to do any thing for the church of Christ. Well then as they entirely set aside the civil part of the covenants, and say the British parliament had no power to enjoin or impose the religious part, consequently the whole of these covenants is set aside by them, as national covenants, or as the covenants of the nation. I am persuaded, that the British parliaments never viewed these covenants in the light in which these gentlemen view them, viz. as a chief copy of the covenant of Grace, and the principal bond of union between Christ and his church, and between the members of the church: but only as lawful engagements to defend their civil and religious liberties, and probably, also, as a temporary expedient arising out of the necessity of the times.

But how will they extend the obligation of these national acts of Britain over America? Mr. Anderson pleads for this in his letters, pages 29-31. The United States of America will not regard them as national acts of Britain, any further than imitable examples on similar occasions, and perhaps not that. The civil associations, at the commencement of the war, were somewhat similar, and had there been a religious part in them, would have been nearly alike. How will these men instruct and support their authority and obligation over the churches in America? Would not this be erastianism? What, the British parliament extend its authority and give laws to the church of Christ in America! The British parliament establish terms of communion, not only for the church of Christ in Britain; but also for her in America! And how does it suit the spiritual and independent nature of Christ's church, for her judicatories to make any act or acts of the British parliament a term or terms of communion any where; but more especially in America? Would not this be a submission to an erastian supremacy, and contrary to the covenants? These men will not receive a recommendation of a fast day from the civil powers, but will receive a copy of the covenant of Grace and a term of communion from them. But they will say, that the religious and moral duties contained in these covenants, are founded on God's laws, and we can never go out of his dominions. True; but why call these religious and moral duties, or an engagement to perform

form them, the national covenant of Scotland and the solemn league? Or why call such an engagement a renovation of these national acts? It is, in fact, no more a renovation of these covenants, than of Nehemiah's covenant. And the last is as obligatory on us as the first, considered as national acts.

I find, it is merely as church-covenants that these men sometimes pretend to regard them, as appears from the question above quoted, which is the fifth in their formula. But this is inconsistency and imposition. It was not as a church only, that Britain entered into them. They were enjoined by civil authority and under civil pains, and in fact became the law of the land. And this, with the duties of civil life contained in them, is the very thing that made them acts of the nation, or national covenants. But viewing them as church-covenants only, this is wholly set aside. The national act, or civil authority making them such, is totally rejected. And these gentlemen tell us also, that viewing them as church-covenants, they entirely set aside all duties merely political, or the whole civil part, that is, the one half, and indeed the far greatest part of the solemn league: this alone would divest them of all their national character and distinction. But the religious part fares no better, with them, as has been noticed, all goes to the pot together. One would think after this, that they would never speak a word more of the obligation of the national covenant and solemn league. The whole is utterly rejected by them. But strange to tell! in their confession of sins prefixed to their bond, page 20, 21, of their overture, and in their narrative, page 33, compared with page 11, 12 and 13 of their testimony, they call their bond a renovation of these national covenants, or intimate that they mean this in it; and accordingly they have fronted their bond with them; and in their testimony, page 11, after mentioning the lawfulness of the national covenant and solemn league, they proceed to declare, that the same engagements lie on them, and then in the formula say, "Do you acknowledge the perpetual obligation of the solemn covenant engagements, we in this church are under, as they have been explained in the declaration and testimony agreed on, &c." The solemn engagements meant, as is evident from the connection of the words, are none else than the national covenant and solemn league. They cannot be their new bond, for I do not know that any of them have yet taken it.

On the whole, taking the religious part of the national covenant and solemn league, and viewing them only as ecclesiastical acts, we wholly set aside their national character and distinction.

distinction. In this view, indeed, they become competent to the church; for they are copies, and but very imperfect copies, of the covenant of Grace, in its promises, precepts and duties; and in fact, this is the foundation of every true church of Christ, and the bond of union and communion in her, and every true church is under the obligation of this covenant, and will daily renew her profession of faith in it, and obedience to it, in one form or other. But the renewal of such a covenant cannot, in propriety of language, be called a renewal of the national covenant and solemn league, any more, nor indeed so much, as it may be called a renewal of the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, all the apostles and prophets, and the whole church of the living God in every age. The repetition of our vows at the baptism of our children, and the Lord's table, is a very proper and solemn renewal of such a covenant: but these gentlemen would not call this repetition, a renewal of the national covenant and solemn league: and what, I suppose, will have some weight with them; this is the view of these covenants which Mr. Anderson gives in his essay on covenanting, if he have any meaning at all: but how consistently with the idea of their being the peculiar national covenants of Britain, let all men judge. But what avails all this pompous noise and parade about acknowledging moral obligations on us to perform our duty, if the duty itself be neglected; the acknowledgment of multiplied obligations in this way may be a covert of hypocrisy; it may have the appearance of much zeal, and deceive our own souls and the souls of others: the great end of acknowledging these obligations, is to pursue diligently and earnestly our duty, and if that be neglected, the acknowledgment avails nothing, but to aggravate our guilt. There is in truth no want of moral obligation; the defect lies not there: but in non-compliance. What do these men do more than others? They pretend to a flaming zeal for truth, where no truth of the gospel is dropt or denied. They have been challenged, and I now challenge them to meet the synod on that ground. But under the pretext of zeal for truth, they have become accusers of the brethren, have thrown off all regard to modesty, Christian charity, candor and honesty; no longer keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace; but sow discord and division, scatter abroad fire-brands, arrows and death, rend and divide the church, promote hatred, variance, emulation, wrath and strife, and think that all is sanctified by their unmeaning cry of zeal for truth, and the covenants!

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Another absurdity in these men is, they make a loud noise about their adherence to the secession testimony, by which they cannot understand the Bible as explained in the confession of faith; because, though the Associate Reformed Synod adhere fully, and more fully than they, to the secession testimony in that sense; yet they affirm, that said synod has renounced the secession testimony. This charge is founded merely on this, that said synod do not make the application of the Bible and confession, made by the Associate Synod in a suitableness to the circumstances of the church of Christ in Scotland, a term of communion here; but insist, that it is their duty to apply the same testimony in a suitableness to their own circumstances, or to the circumstances of the church in America. Now, what they blame the synod for relinquishing, they must be supposed to hold fast. Consequently they seem to hold fast, not only the same testimony, but also the same application of it, as their brethren in Scotland. But still they claim a right to adapt their bond or covenant to their own circumstances. Now if they adapt the bond thus, Why not also the thing bound to? The testimony is the thing to which their bond binds them; if the bond then be adapted to their circumstances, why not the testimony too? But certain I am, what they call the secession testimony, viz. the application of it in the hands of the synod of Edinburgh, is not so adapted; and yet it is this application, which, they blame the Associate Reformed Synod for renouncing, and which they value themselves on, and boast so much of holding fast. I have indeed made it appear formerly, that in the act of their Presbytery concerning their narrative, they have renounced the secession testimony in this sense; but the whole of their work is a jumbled, confused, jarring and contradictory chaos.

#### S E C T I O N    I V .

*In which their subordination to the Associate Synod in Scotland is examined.*

**T**HE last thing which I shall consider in this chapter, is their professed subordination to the synod of Edinburgh, commonly called the Associate Synod. When this matter was first called in question, some of them pleaded for a strict, proper and practical subordination; and said that their ordination vows obliged them to it. A certain gentleman facetiously

tiously remarked to them on one occasion, that he saw no possible way to carry this into effect, but to meet that synod half way, and to apply to the king of Britain, to anchor a ship of war in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean as the place of meeting. However, after some time they fell from this, and got the reverend Adam Gib to explain it for them, see Mr. Marshall's catechism, page 136. Mr. Marshall makes one very shrewd remark, "That appeals from Presbyteries to the synod are not essential to Presbyteries." True: but the possibility of carrying appeals is essential to Presbyterian subordination. Then he adds, "The matter is clearly stated and happily expressed, in a letter from a member of the Associate Synod written by their order, to the following purpose, "An ordinary state of subordination to the Associate Synod, in access to attend our meetings, with a ready course of references and appeals, is not indeed competent to your Presbytery at such a distance; but still, as there may be applications to, and assistance from the synod, so it is a matter of great consequence to have such a subordination maintained, as is necessary unto the state of being still all one witnessing body."

When the corporation of the Scots Presbyterian church in Spruce-street, obtained a law to repeal the clause in their deed of trust, which subordinated their church property to the above synod; these gentlemen passed an act of Presbytery, explaining subordination into a mere friendly correspondence, and again passed another act, forbidding all appeals to the Associate Synod: but all this was but manœuvering, to establish their claim to the church property, consistently with the law of the state annulling the subordination of that property. The synod of Edinburgh it seems was not quite pleased with this; and so took upon them to explain the dark affair themselves; and by their explication, it amounts to this, that these gentlemen be subordinate to them, not in matters of discipline, but only of doctrine; and references and appeals, as to doctrine, must be laid before that Synod; and Mr. Marshall says in the forecited page of his catechism, "That references and appeals in respect of doctrine, can as well be decided by the synod at Edinburgh, as if they met at Philadelphia." And in his plea for the church property in Spruce-street, he absolutely pleads subordination to that synod in matters of faith. Thus their subordination now stands, consentably on both sides.

But

But is this agreeable to Presbyterian principles? No. The Presbyterian plan of government is founded on the principles of equal liberty; it maintains a parity or equality among its members. But it is essential to liberty, that every person, every family, every society, whether civil or ecclesiastical, have the power of judging for, and governing themselves. For if we be governed by the will of another, we cannot be free. Presbyterian government in the church, like republican in the state, admits of representation; and says, no human law can bind without our consent, given either personally, or by our just and legal representatives. And in the government of the church on this plan, all her rulers and ministers are brethren, or equals. And in fact, subordination, without representation, is not Presbytery; but downright popery: it is not liberty; but absolute slavery. Subordination in discipline, in this form, would be bad, very bad: but subordination in doctrine, or in matters of faith, is much worse; for it is the popish doctrine of implicit faith, in the fullest sense of the words.

It is true, the synod of Edinburgh may say, they will judge by the Bible, the rule of faith; and they have the same Bible there, as we here: but this is mere sophistry; for it is well known, that men can put different senses on the Bible; and parties ought certainly to be heard before they be condemned. This was the law of the Romans even while Heathens; it is, in fact, the law of right reason. A subordination of this kind is yielding the conscience to the yoke of slavery. It is implicit faith, and is worse than passive obedience and non-resistance in the state. This is so much the worse in these men, that it is a manifest violation of their covenant engagements, in which they acknowledge themselves bound, by solemn oath, to maintain and defend Presbyterian government. And ye Americans, who maintained so lately at the point of the sword and bayonet, that you would acknowledge no taxation nor legislation, without representation; and having at the expence of your blood and treasure, secured this right of human nature; can you be so base and pusillanimous as to deliver up the conscience into bondage? Is your civil liberty more precious than your religious? your bodies and estates more dear to you than your souls? your purse than your faith?

It is evident, on the whole, that the separation of these gentlemen is absolutely groundless. It is not founded on the articles of union between the Associate Presbyteries and the Reformed

Reformed Presbytery; for they have never been able, and never will be able to prove one of them erroneous or unfound; indeed they have never attempted it, and do not pretend to ground their separation on these.

No: can it be founded upon the constitution of the Associate Reformed Synod; for that constitution had no existence at the time of their separation; it was not formed until several months afterwards.

Nor can it be founded on the Associate Reformed Synod's relinquishing the secession testimony; for, take that testimony in any sense, they cannot found it on that. If by it be meant the Bible as explained in the confession of faith; the members of the Synod never departed from it in that sense. Or if by the secession testimony be understood, the application made of the Bible and confession in a suitableness to the circumstances of the church in Scotland; the Associate Reformed Synod's relinquishing it, even supposing they had done so, cannot be the cause of their separation; because these men have, in the act of Presbytery prefixed to their narrative, renounced that application too, for they declare it to be no part of their profession or term of communion; and in this case, their churches are bound no more to adhere to it, than to Crookshank's history. To what then shall we ascribe their separation? I will leave the reader to determine in his own mind. The Associate Reformed Synod have really done the secession testimony more due honor than they have done it, as shall be mentioned presently.

## CHAPTER V.

*Containing an examination and confutation of their principles about the power of civil magistrates, respecting religion and the church of Christ.*

**T**HE doctrine of our authors about the power of civil magistrates respecting religion and the church of Christ deserves more animadversion than I can at present give it. They have beyond all possibility of doubt renounced the doctrine of the protestant churches on this head, apostatized from the Westminster confession of faith, the secession testimony, and the national covenant and solemn league. Great part of what they call the secession testimony consists in testifying against omissions and defects in the laws, and faults in the conduct of the civil government in Britain with regard  
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to religion, and the church of Christ. And particularly, the Associate Synod in Scotland blame and refuse to take the oath of allegiance to the crown, for this reason among others, that it supercedes the oath of the national covenant and solemn league, which they reckon the best bond of union between king and people. And the whole controversy about the Burghers oath hinges upon the legal securities and civil establishment given to the Christian religion in Britain, the swearing of which oath, Mr. Gib and they say, goes so deep as to subvert the whole secession testimony. These are incontestible facts. But let us hear our faithful adherents to the secession testimony on this subject. In their testimony, page 8 and 9. They tell us "That they mean to declare their mind on the civil magistrates power in matters of religion more particularly than the confession of faith has done." But they do not only say more than the confession; they flatly contradict it. "Christ's kingdom is spiritual," they say, "acknowledging no other laws and no other rulers than he has appointed in it; and so the magistrate has nothing to do with it as a magistrate. As a member of the Christian church he is bound to improve every opportunity which his high station and extensive influence may give him for promoting the faith of Christ, &c." These are their very words. What comes now of all that part (and a large part it is) of the secession testimony that laments, testifies against, and confesses the errors and defects of the civil government in Britain, in their parliamentary treatment of the true religion? And one would think on this principle that, the controversy about the Burghers oath, and its contradiction to the secession testimony, and the oath of the covenant, must be a very idle one; for their doctrine will not allow civil rulers to establish the Christian religion, or do any thing for it in a legal and authoritative way at all.

They say "The church of Christ is spiritual, acknowledging no other laws than Christ has appointed." I suppose the ten commandments must be included among these laws of Christ. But is it not the office of civil magistrates to execute at least the second table of the law? And I am certain the one table cannot be separated from the other. To divide, is to destroy the law. The last table is, like the superstructure, built on the first as the foundation. Remove the foundation and the building falls. Set aside the first commandment, which binds us to acknowledge the being of a God and worship him; the second, which requires us to acknowledge and worship him alone, excluding the worship of idols; the third, which commands a holy reverence of his name; the fourth, which en-

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joins the observation of some set time for his worship; and there is no place for, no possibility of the existence of the second table in any administration, whether of church or state. And therefore the ancient maxim of our wise ancestors, which is despised so much by our modern *would be wise* fools, viz- that the civil magistrate is, *custos utriusque tabulae legis divinae*, or a guardian of each table of the divine law, is founded on reason, truth and good sense. I am certain that without religion there can be no moral virtue. Without a sense of our duty to God, there can be no sense of our duty to man. Unless in every administration of moral government we admit the first table of the divine law, which points out our duty to God, the second table will be the baseless fabric of a vision. On such an absurd hypothesis being admitted, I ask, what is the rule of such a government? By what authority is any rule or law obligatory? What sanction to enforce any? This scheme of civil society detaches rational and moral agents entirely from any regard to God as their law-giver, from his law as the rule of moral government, and from the sanction of divine rewards and punishments, and in short founds civil dominion on Atheism. It makes creatures law-givers to themselves. It is indeed the fashionable doctrine of this Deistical, Atheistical age: but how astonishing that our superlative witnesses for C—— should embrace it!

Civil government is certainly moral government, and by it God carries on his moral government of the world. The rule of this government is the moral law or the law of God; for let men diversify their laws as they please, they must coincide with the divine law. They cannot contradict it without contradicting the eternal and immutable principles of equity and justice. The variety of laws among men calculated for the good of society (and they have no moral power to make any other) is no more than the application of the divine law to the infinite variety of circumstances in society. The authority which obliges to obedience, does not originate only in the consent or compact of society, but in a source infinitely higher, the will of the Supreme Governor. God who created man a rational and moral agent, under the obligation of his laws, also formed him a social being. He made him with a strong propensity to society, and mutual wants and necessities strengthen this principle, and urge men into society. One of the strongest propensities in human nature, the inclination of the two sexes to each other, is the first attracting power, and lays the foundation of the social union. But men are bound to yield to this propensity, not by blind instinct

as the brutes; but by a moral obligation, the authority of God; and to perform the duties resulting from that relation, and indeed all the other duties of the social union, by the same authority. He who gave laws to men as individuals, also gave laws to societies of men. And in fact it is only in a state of society, that the chief part of the divine law can have practically any place, or that there can be any scope for the performance of what it requires. And civil rulers are not mere creatures of the state, but ministers of God and executors of his law.

These gentlemen tell us further, page 9 of their testimony: "That the whole duty of Magistrates respects men not as Christians but as members of civil society." Well then, if their duty respects men not as Christians, neither would it respect them as Mahometans, nor Jews, nor Heathens; that is, it does not respect them as religious beings at all, or regard them as of any religion; for I cannot suppose, that they would have the magistrate to pay a greater respect to Mahometanism and Heathenism, than to Christianity. But I ask, is not civil society an association of moral agents? Is not this society subject to moral government? And is not the law of God the rule of that government? Church and state then are subject to, and must be governed by substantially the same laws, though in a different manner, and, in some respects, for different purposes. They absurdly suppose that, a man may be a member of civil society without any religion, or without acknowledging any God. And indeed, if their doctrine be true, that civil rulers, as such, have nothing to do with religion, the subjects or citizens as such must have as little; and on this plan we should have a society of rational and moral agents formed, and a moral compact and relation subsisting among them, and between their rulers and them, without any regard to a moral law, or to God the giver of that law. This is absolute Atheism. But the truth is, that religion in some form is the very basis of civil or moral government; and the knowledge, fear and worship of God are necessary to the very being and conservation of civil society.

Because some have absurdly attempted to found dominion, not on its true foundation, viz. the authority of God the Supreme Law-giver, and the moral obligation of his law: but on the Grace of Jesus Christ the Mediator, and so have made gracious qualifications essential to the being of lawful magistrates; they, to avoid that extreme, have run into an error infinitely more dangerous, an error that would destroy moral obligation, and subvert moral government altogether. Their  
scheme

scheme would make the moral relation between civil rulers and citizens not half so sacred, as the relation of a common mechanic to society; and the moral obligations on such rulers, to administer moral government, and execute the divine law, with the high spiritual attributes of fidelity, veracity, righteousness and justice, not equal to the obligations on the carpenter to handle his ax and plane, or the blacksmith his sledge and hammer with dexterity.

How natural it is for frail mortals to err! This is so much the case, that a great part of human life is taken up in committing errors, and from experience, and sometimes dear bought experience, correcting them. Whether this be owing to the weakness of human reason, or the abstruse nature of the subjects which fall under our contemplation, or the power of vanity, pride, passion, prejudice, and influence of education, or all of these put together, I shall not determine. But I can see, if I mistake not, a variety of dangerous errors, dangerous because they relate not to mere speculative but practical subjects, at present prevailing in the United States. Many carry their idea of civil liberty so far, as to border on absolute licentiousness. Some, perhaps not a few, carry their idea of religious liberty so far, as to amount to a dropping of religion altogether; such think, that there may be a state without a church. Others would transform the state into the church, and make civil government, in its laws and administration, as mild or nearly as mild as the discipline of the church. The first class who wish to enjoy civil liberty to a degree of licentiousness, greatly miss their mark; were they to obtain their wish, they would acquire no advantage but much the contrary; for if they might be licentious towards others, others might be equally so towards them; and thus what they gained on the one hand, they would lose in a ten-fold degree on the other. Wherefore men, by surrendering in the social compact a portion of their natural liberty and rights, gain a great deal more than they lose. Each member of the community gains infinitely more by the limitation of the liberty of all the other members, than he loses by the limitation of his own; from which it appears, how excellent the institution of civil government is! And that it must be in its execution, strict, just, and rigorous, to promote the happiness and perfection of society. The more it is so, the more true liberty each member enjoys; for each is secured from the depredations of all. Those who would carry religious liberty so far, as to set aside religion altogether, are equally astray with the former. The truth is, there cannot be a state without

without a church; nor a church without a state in this world; that is, there cannot be a society of rational beings formed, without owing duty and reverence to God their Creator, Preserver, and Supreme Governor; and also respect, benevolence, and good offices to each other. To propose to form a state without a church, is Atheism. It is to deny God. And such a state would be a society of Atheists. To form a church without a state, would also be altogether unsuitable to men, who have secular and temporal interests to which they must attend. It might perhaps suit the condition of angels or pure spirits, but would be altogether unsuitable to men in their present state. The officers of the state are distinct from the officers of the church, and each class should move in their respective spheres, and conduct affairs in their own proper province. But as the soul and body in a human person mutually assist, and are assisted by each other, and both form but one perfect complete person, and the co-operation of both is necessary to the actions of a person: so it is with church and state. They must assist and be assisted by each other. Their powers are co-ordinate, and are exercised about many of the same objects in common, but in a different manner.

If we cast our eye through the infinite extent of the works of God, we will discern traits of infinite wisdom, goodness and power, throughout the whole. In material systems the centrifugal and centripetal forces so balance and counteract each other, as to prevent the planets falling on each other to their mutual destruction, and at the same time so combine and embrace them into one system, as to make them render mutual services to each other. Among irrational animals we may discover similar marks of infinite wisdom and benevolence. There is a sympathy and antipathy, if I may use the phrases, which, like the powers of attraction and repulsion, unite and combine; and yet check, repel and limit the whole, so as to form one regular system. All the different species are necessary each to each, and from the combination of all, results the perfection and happiness of the whole. And yet each species is a check upon, and sets limits to another. Every species of creatures has the means of its preservation in its power and in its weapon of defence, which it knows well how and when to use: and yet the degrees of this necessary faculty are so nicely balanced, with the power of assault in others, that all live and depend each on another, like the stones and beams in a building; while no one species can totally exterminate or destroy another. Not only so, but we see universally through the whole system, that whenever any creature

creature is possessed of a power, that would otherwise prove dangerous, it is checked and limited, and reduced to use, by a defect or addition of some other power. The dangerous ferocity of the lion is checked by its rare increase, and, if I remember right, the want of the sense of smelling. The strength of the ox and horse, by their not knowing it, or how to use it to the destruction of others. The fierceness and force of the elephant, by his docility of disposition, and surprising sagacity, and so on of the rest.

Man, it is clear, of all terrestrial animals, is capable of doing the greatest good and the greatest evil. By virtue of his rational powers, he can contrive and execute plans of ruin and destruction, to which the inferior animals cannot reach; and in his lapsed state, he is fearfully inclined to moral evil, or is under the power of a dreadful propensity to spread havoc and devastation among the works of God; and particularly man is injurious to man; his turbulent and outrageous passions spend their fury on his own species. He is a social animal, it is true. His faculties, his propensities, passions, habits, wants and necessities, all declare him to be made for society, and urge him to form it: and yet it is on the very theatre of his felicity, that he acts the madman. He converts his paradise into a scene of distress, horror, devastation, outrage, murder, and ruin! What a mercy is it, that he has boundaries fixed to his fury, barriers to his outrage and violence, which he cannot utterly get over! Were it not for this, the human species would soon totally perish by its own hands. God has put checks on man, which were not necessary to any of the inferior animals. He has implanted in his breast a strong perception and indelible impression of right and wrong, of moral good and evil, of justice and injustice. Conscience is a faithful monitor that always attends him; of its remonstrances he can never get entirely clear: and this conscience is just the authoritative voice of God in the human soul. Man is a religious animal. Religion, in some form or other, is congenial to his soul. He has an impression of the existence of God; of a Supreme Being, the Lord of the universe, the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of heaven and earth, whose he is, and whose are all his ways, and who will judge him according to his works, and fearfully punish him for his evil deeds. Were it not for this religious fear of the Deity, man would be more ferocious than the most ferocious beasts of prey, and infinitely more dangerous than all of them put together. His reason, without the controul of religion, would only make him capable of far greater mischief. Whence

It is evident, that religion is indispensibly necessary to the formation and conservation of the social union. Religion and more especially the true religion, is the only sure basis on which good government must rest. If this foundation slide, society rushes to ruin by its own weight. And thus it follows, that there cannot be a state without a church. And wise states will always study, by all means in their power, to diffuse abroad, and promote religion among the citizens. Although a full toleration, as to speculative opinions, and modes and forms of religion, be proper, yet all should profess religion in some form—for otherwise men cannot be the subjects of moral government; and since many mischiefs have sprung from false religions to the almost utter subversion of some states; wise rulers will keep their eye on, and principally regard the true religion. The true religion is not such an indiscernable thing, or so indistinguishable, as some would represent it. The infallibility of the pope and fallibility of the sceptic, are equally absurd extremes. The christian religion is evidently divine, and experience has proved it to have done infinite service to the world. Why should the United States then drop their christian character? The protestant reformation has also been of infinite service to the nations. I can see no reason then why we should drop our protestant character. The true protestant reformed religion is the best neighbour that ever any civil state sat down beside.

But while we affirm, that there cannot be a state without a church; it is equally certain, that there cannot be a church without a state. Men must have civil government. They have temporal affairs to manage, secular interests, and sometimes jarring interests to accommodate; differences will take place even between the wisest and best of men; much more, where wisdom, integrity, and justice are greatly wanting. The members of the Christian church are and must be the members of civil communities. They are bound, not only by the social compact in common with others, but also by the express and positive precepts of Christianity, to submit themselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake. "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers," is the law of Christ. And would they not be afraid of the power, says Paul, let them do that which is good, and they shall have praise of the same. This is the way, in which the Christian religion will banish punishments, and particularly capital punishments from the world; it will do it, not by bringing the law to men, but by bringing men to the law.

It is altogether erroneous to attempt to transform the state into the church, or to make civil government the same, or nearly the same, with church discipline. There cannot be a state without a church, nor a church without a state; and yet the state is not the church, nor the church the state: the component members of each may be the same persons, but the two societies are erected for different purposes, are under a different administration, and very different policy and discipline.

In the civil state, God is represented absolutely as a just moral Governor. In the church, he is represented as in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses; hence ecclesiastical laws have no civil penalties. The discipline of the church cannot go beyond an exclusion from the communion of the church; and this only in the case of impenitence; for the highest crimes, if truly repented of, will not warrant church officers to cast out of communion, according to the laws of Christ. And thus the efficacy of Christ's atonement, and the mercy of God to the chief of sinners, if penitent, are fully manifested and displayed in the discipline of the church. The state, as a state, knows nothing of a Mediator, or of his atonement, or of faith in God's mercy, or of repentance, as the rule of its proceedings. Its procedure represents God more, as he will act at the day of judgment, when he will render to every man according to his works. Church and state are, beyond doubt, different societies, though consisting of the same component members; their officers act in different spheres and in a different manner: yet the officers of the one, as well as of the other, are ministers of God, and executors of his law. It is true, the ministry of the church has a more particular respect to the first table of the law; but by no means in such a degree, as to exclude all attention to the second; for a breach of any precept of the second table is a scandal in the eye of the church. And the ministry of the state especially respects the second table of the law: but not in such a degree as to exclude all attention to the first; for, as has been remarked, if we set aside the first table, there is no place left for the second. The church, in her censures, inflicts no penalties: but freely dispenses mercy to the believing and penitent. The state inflicts severe penalties, even to the taking away life; it does not attend so much to mercy, as to strict justice. And thus, in the co-operation of church and state, "Mercy and truth meet together; righteousness and peace embrace each other." Like soul and body in a human person,  
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they mutually assist, and are assisted by each other. If the body be diseased, the spirit will be affected; if the spirit be troubled, the body will not be easy. So it is with church and state. And the administrations of both should be directed to the same general end—the glory of God and good of men. The state affords external protection to the church, and the church sanctifies the state, in giving energy to government and efficacy to the laws, by the sanction of eternal rewards and punishments; and experience proves, what principle teaches on this head, that true Christians, *ceteris paribus*, will always be the most useful members of the state.

I have said, that the state must not attend to mercy, but to strict justice. I do not mean to intimate, that states can never exceed in the severity of their laws; it is possible to sport with human life; and it is dreadful when this is the case. The gospel has already done infinite good to the world. It has in a great measure already healed the plagues of the nations, particularly in humanizing war, rendering it more rare, and causing it to be conducted with less ferocity; it has also made great alterations to the better on the policy of states, and I hope it will go on to melorate, by its benign influence, civil governments throughout. Christ came not to destroy mens lives, but to save them. This is the native tendency of his blessed gospel; it makes men wiser and better, wherever it is cordially embraced; its tendency is to save not only the souls, but also the bodies of men. But Christ does not save men in sin, but from it. He does not bring the law to men, but brings men up to the law. He will accomplish their temporal and eternal salvation, not by weakening the laws of equity and justice, much less by repealing them, or annulling the penalties which give them energy; no, but by subduing the hearts of men to the obedience of faith, or making men reasonable, holy, just, and good.

In addition to these remarks, there is one thing further which I shall only mention; and, although it may appear to some to be problematical, yet I am persuaded, it is absolutely a fact, viz. that one Christian institution alone, the sanctification of the Christian sabbath, diffuses a more benign influence on society, and has a greater efficacy on the morals of mankind to purify and refine them, than all the institutions of civil policy or terrors of civil government put together. The pauses it creates in human transactions, the interruption it makes in the progress of our worldly cogitations and earthly cares; its fixing, or keeping alive in the mind, the impressions of a God infinitely great and dreadful, whose we are, and to whom

whom we must be accountable for all our ways, and who will most dreadfully punish the wicked and plentifully reward the good; its tendency to keep constantly in our view, the immortality of the soul and a future state of retribution; its being connected with such religious services as reading the Holy Scriptures, in which the most august, grand, and awfully sublime ideas of the Almighty are exhibited, and between which ideas and the magnificent works of nature and providence, the vast expanse of heaven, the sea and the dry land, the rising and the falling of empires at the Almighty's nod, there is such a manifest analogy; its relation to Jesus Christ, who was delivered to death for our offences and raised again for our justification, and by whom life and immortality are brought to light, to the infinite love of Christ to mankind manifested in his death and resurrection, and the peremptory and awful injunctions of this Divine Saviour, that men love one another and obey all the other infinitely benevolent and holy precepts of his religion, together with our joining, on the Lord's day, in solemn and heart-felt supplications, confessions, and thanksgivings, at the throne of grace; these things I believe have had, and still have, an efficacy on the minds of the great body of the people in Christian nations, I was almost going to say, infinitely great. This Christian institution gathers into a point, or collects into a focus the whole spirit, force and energy both of natural and revealed religion, and pours it with an efficacy almost irresistible on the human mind. And I firmly believe, that no man, who ever became very vile and profligate, could possibly be so, until he renounced all solemn and serious attention to the Lord's day. A question has sometimes employed my thoughts, what in human nature it is, that will account in a rational manner, for the generally extreme wickedness of soldiers and sailors? They are always conversant with dangers and death, and one would think should be the most thoughtful and sober of the human race. I have sometimes attempted to account for their too common wickedness notwithstanding this, by reflecting that men may be habituated to any thing and being daily conversant with dangers, they become indifferent to them. But this solution does not satisfy. This, I own, may be sufficient to make them bold, adventurous and daring. Such is its natural effect: but how can it tend to make them more wicked? The true solution of the problem, I believe, is this,—They do not carefully observe the Lord's day, they have no opportunity or very little, of attending the worship of God, consequently the impressions of a God, of the worth of their souls, the evil

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of sin, and the infinite importance of a future state, are either very faint in their minds, or perhaps in some, scarcely existent. In this respect, the institutions of Christianity have a most benign influence on society; and wise rulers, who wish rather to prevent crimes than to punish them, will take great care, both by precept and example, to promote the sanctification of the Christian sabbath; for I am certain, this is the best security of our life, property and liberty. This is like the wings of the Almighty spread over us. No man, who conscientiously and with knowledge sanctifies the sabbath, will find a liberty in his mind to injure us through the week. We might pass our days and nights more safely under this covert, were it universal among men, than under all the protection civil government can yield us. This is **God's** shadow extended over us; it is heaven's protection.

But I will produce, on this subject, three weighty witnesses. The first is a member of that Associate Synod to which these men plead subordination. The reverend Mr. Archibald Bruce, in a discourse preached before the Associate Synod, and published under the title of "True patriotism or public spirit," speaks in the following manner: "But yet in order to avoid one extreme, there is no necessity of running into another. A church and commonwealth may have certain connections together, and may perform mutual offices and duties towards each other, without losing their peculiar distinctive characters, and without being absurdly blended together in one heterogeneous constitution. A medium may be found, however hard to hit, between an Erastian supremacy and Sectarian anarchy; tyrannical slavery and lawless licentiousness.

"If indifference about the cause of God be culpable in others, how can it be excusable or laudable in rulers? Are they, of all men, excepted from the authority of Christ? or are they the only persons who, by virtue of their office, are necessarily debarred from any possibility of knowing with certainty *what is truth*? Or are they, upon such a discovery, under the hard necessity of neglecting, and, on the matter, renouncing it again; having their hands tied, in their official character, from showing it any distinguished respect, or affording it any peculiar assistance; being equally obliged, in order to rule well, to nurse up its opposite with the same care and tenderness? Must the crown of Cæsar and the crown of Christ be ever at variance, and incapable of any friendly alliance? Shall a cry be raised among any, but such as have a mind that Christ should be crucified, that the man who shall pass a sentence

sentence in favour of Christ from the judgment-seat, is not "Cæsar's friend," nor a friend to the natural rights and liberties of mankind? Or is the sceptre so profane, that it may not touch any thing that hath the image or superscription of Jesus upon it? However such maxims should now be cried up as the quintessence and height of good policy, and as containing the model of the most perfect and happy government, I am afraid they can hardly be exempted from the charge of impiety.

"A magistrate who, like Gallio, should account religious matters none of his care, instead of meriting hereby the title of a good magistrate, would more properly deserve that of an irreligious infidel."

The second witness is the celebrated Doctor Blair of Edinburgh. In the last sermon of his second volume of sermons, he has, in a masterly manner, handled this subject. And a note informs us, that the sermon was preached before the society instituted in North Britain for propagating the gospel. The title of it is, "The importance of religious knowledge to mankind"

He shows its importance, first, to man as an individual; and, secondly, as a member of society. The whole sermon is well worth perusal. I shall only quote a few sentences to my present purpose. "Religion, says he, is the great instrument of civilizing the multitude and forming them to union; there is much reason to doubt whether any regular society ever subsisted, or could subsist, in the world, destitute of all religious ideas and principles. The wisest legislators of old, through the whole progress of their systems of government, considered religion as essential to civil polity. If even those imperfect forms of it, loaded with so much superstition and error, were important to the welfare of society, how much more that reasonable worship of the true God which is taught by the gospel. Religion is not only subsidiary to the improvement, but necessary to the preservation of society. It is the very basis on which it rests. Religious principle is that which gives men the surest hold of one another. That last and greatest pledge of veracity, an oath, without which no society could subsist, derives its whole authority from an established reverence of God. Banish religious principle, and you loosen all the bonds which connect mankind together. Indeed the belief of religion is of such importance to public welfare, that the most expressive description we could give of a society of men in the utmost disorder," and so going to ruin, "would be to say, there was no fear of God left among them. On the other hand, in order to form an idea of a society flourishing in its  
highest

highest glory, we need only conceive, the belief of Christian principles exerting its full influence on the hearts and lives of all the members. Politicians may lay down what plans they please for advancing public prosperity; but, in truth, it is the prevalency of such principles of religion and virtue which forms the strength and glory of a nation." He adds, "If good seed be not sown in the field, tares will infallibly spring up. Superstition, in itself a formidable evil, threatens consequences still more formidable, when rendered the tool of design and craft. Hence arises one of the most powerful arguments for propagating the pure and undefiled doctrines of the gospel of Christ." Much more, to excellent purpose, the Doctor has written.

The third witness is the Rev. Adam Gib, who has treated somewhat on this subject in his book entitled, "A display of the secession testimony." Vol. II. pages 405--408, inclusive. I suppose many of their followers will scarcely believe it possible, after the noise they have heard them make about holding fast the secession testimony, that they have really renounced it. But it is an absolute fact. Mr. Gib, is arguing against this very principle maintained by them, viz. That magistrates, as magistrates have nothing to do with the church of Christ or the Christian religion. "This new scheme," says he, "means an abolishing of all scripture-precepts, promises and prophecies; about the state of the gospel-church, with regard to civil powers.—For, according to this scheme, kings are not to be wise now, nor are the judges of the earth to be instructed; that they should serve the Lord, the King upon the holy hill of Zion! The kings of Tarshish and of the isles should not bring presents, the kings of Sheba and Seba should not offer gifts to him; as appearing in his kingdom of the visible church: No kings, in their kingly state, should fall down before him; no nations, in their national state, should serve him! It is to be of no consequence to the church, that the Lord hath said: kings shall be thy nursing-fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers! Nor is it to be admitted of, according to any intelligible use of the words, that the kingdoms of this world should become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. It is for abolishing all obligation upon Christians to manage their secular callings and advantages in a way of homage to the Lord Christ, or in a subordination and subservience to his interests and glory: though he should in all things have the pre-eminence. It is for abolishing all seriousness, among men, about religious matters; with all their rights concerning the same. It is for abolishing all sense of the Lord's great goodness; in  
his

his spiriting and determining our rulers, once a day, to seek and promote the good of the house of the Lord our God. It is for abolishing all sense of the Lord's controversy, on account of what civil powers have done against his work in these lands. Even all that they have done wickedly in the sanctuary, when they did break down the carved work thereof at once with axes and hammers."

I now put the question to these gentlemen, if these things be so, can their doctrine be true, "That civil magistrates, as such, have nothing to do with the church of Christ, or the Christian religion, and that their office respects men wholly as citizens and not at all as Christians?" Are not civil rulers intrusted with the care of society, and does not their office oblige them to do every thing within their sphere for its safety and preservation? Is not religion of some kind the very basis on which civil society rests? Is the Christian religion less fit to support society than any other? Is it less worthy of attention? Are civil rulers under no obligation to preserve the very foundation on which their government rests? But the absurdity and inconsistency of our authors is still the more glaring when we recollect, that they maintain the perpetual obligation of the National Covenant and Solemn League on the British dominions, and even on the United States, if there be any sense in their words. Will they say, that these covenants do not oblige civil magistrates to do any thing, as rulers, for the church of Christ, and the Christian religion? Strange contradiction! Well may we say, Alas! poor human nature!

## CHAPTER VI.

*Containing a variety of interesting things which also claim the Reader's attention.*

**T**HIS Chapter shall contain sundry miscellaneous things that deserve also to come before the public. Popery, it is evident, is much on the increase at present; and it is the opinion of many of God's servants, that it will, once more, overflow the churches. But we have no reason to think that the man of sin will come forward again, and march victoriously through the nations, in his old rotten rags. He can undoubtedly put on a new dress and transform himself into an angel of light. One numerous church is already formed and daily increasing, the fundamental doctrines of which are

the very foul and spirit of Popery, and the practical part of their religion is little short of the penance of Popery. Arminian doctrines have greatly leavened other churches, and in too, too many, Socinian, Arian, Sabellian, Neonomian, and Antinomian errors prevail. Deism is rapidly spreading. It is true, it equally subverts all professions of the Christian religion. But there is a short and easy transition from Deism to Popery; Deism makes men indifferent about all religion, and borders on Atheism: But men can never become altogether Atheists. Conscience will not permit them; and conscience may awake. But when once awakened, Deism provides no plaster for a sore conscience; and so men will naturally seek it in Popery, which has a broad one ready.

## S E C T I O N I.

*Wherein the Popish principles, and other errors of the Separatists are exhibited.*

**I** SHUDDER when I think of it, but I cannot help thinking that Satan is deceiving these gentlemen, and leading them into Popish errors and delusions. Their high veneration for the secession testimony, by which they mean no more than the application of the testimony of Jesus by their brethren in Scotland; seems to border on superstition. I will give all due credit to these worthy men who first made a bold stand against error and tyranny in the church of Scotland; and many of their cotemporaries and successors have done well in Israel: but that they sinned in every thing they did, and came short of the glory of God, they themselves would confess. The honor which our gentlemen put on the Secession-testimony belongs only to the testimony of Jesus. The Associate Reformed Synod, in the second article of their constitution, have done their testimonies sufficient honor in these words: "It is the principal intention of the Synod to carry with them all the judicial testimonies emitted by their brethren in Britain, as far as these testimonies serve to display the truth and comport with the circumstances of our church." But this will not please our superstitious gentlemen. It is our duty, they say, to lament, confess and mourn over the sins of our forefathers who are dead; but we must not touch, or touch very tenderly, the sins of those who are alive. Yet, it is my opinion, that the present ministry of the secession in Britain are not equal to their fathers; they have not the same measure of the spirit

spirit of Christ. They are, I fear, much degenerated in this respect; and this is the common fate of all churches, after they become numerous and externally prosperous: there is more need to lament their own sins and the sins of their brethren presently on the field, than the sins of their fathers. In the case of our authors, I am certain, the gold is become tin, both as to abilities, principles, spirit and practice.

Their superstitious veneration for the national covenant and solemn league has been already mentioned; they undoubtedly put these national transactions out of their due place; and though they have broken these covenants in pieces, and inconsistently too with some of their principles, still they continue to offer incense to the fragments. As a worthy divine of the last century said, when speaking of the treatment some gave these very covenants, they seem to think that surely there is some charm or spell in the letters or sound of them. That there may be a kind of witch-craft introduced into religion is what none can doubt, who has read Paul's address to the Galatians; O, foolish Galatians who hath bewitched you! Their subordination to the synod of Edinburgh in matters of faith or in doctrine, is complete Popery. And their doctrine about communion, that in no circumstances whatsoever it is lawfull for one of their members to hold communion with any of the Protestant churches, is just the same as that of the Roman Catholics, that there is no salvation, but in the communion of their church. And their founding the duty of covenanting, and the obligation to religious and moral duty, on human tradition, appears to me to be very like popery. Their introducing the religious controversies of Scotland, which, however good and proper they may have been there, have no business here, and the defectiveness of their testimony with respect to the errors and evils abounding in America, look too much like the predilection of the Roman Catholics for the wares of Rome. It is more like pleading the cause and supporting the honor of men, than of God; and is putting a yoke on the neck of Christ's disciples much more unreasonable and intolerable than the ceremonial law. It makes void that liberty wherewith Christ has made us free.

There are several other things which, though they may not be directly Popish errors, yet, I am certain, are not Presbyterian truths, that I shall mention. Their renouncing the doctrine of the confession of faith on the power of the civil magistrate about the church, and his duty respecting the Christian religion in Christian countries. Their refusing, though a minority, to submit to the decision of the majority of their brethren

thren at Pequea anno 1782, Their refusing to heal a breach in the church of Christ, when God, by his providence, put it in their power; and because a majority of their brethren determined to do their duty, their making a new breach, erecting themselves into a Presbytery, claiming the name and powers, seizing on, and carrying off the minutes and other papers of the Presbytery to which they had vowed subjection; their zeal to make a party, to rend and destroy the church for the sake of whims and contradictions; These are evils very gross and scandalous. And they are the more guilty in these things, in as much as, they acknowledge themselves to be under oath or covenant, to hold the opposite truths, and practise the contrary duties. Shocking inconsistency, to hear men making a loud noise about covenanting, and the solemn obligation of an oath to do their duty, in the very act of violating covenant, and bursting asunder their solemn vows! It is a full proof, that the heart of man is desperately wicked, and deceitful above all things.

They have also discovered a high degree of a proud Phari-  
saical spirit, in pompously claiming to themselves, in an exclusive sense, at least in this country, the high character of Christ's witnesses, and the honor of displaying a banner for truth. For what reason? Because they have in a lame, mangled manner, exhibited some of the truths of the gospel in their testimony; while they have omitted and neglected others, that would have made their testimony more suitable to the state of the church in America! and because they have plentifully poured out contempt and reproach on their brethren and fellow Christians. These are the reasons of their assuming that high character. But a little more modesty would have become them better; it is not a very difficult task to put religion on paper; but not so easy to admit it into the heart, and reduce it to practice in the life: and, I am sure, there is no religion in reviling and belieing their brethren. Their spirit is not more boastful than bitter, not more proud than cruel.

They say in their narrative, page 90, "The constitution framed by a synod of these united brethren is one of the most dubious professions of the faith we have seen made by any church, &c. and we have reason to believe that it was thus framed with that very design." Mr. Anderson, in his letters, is rather more candid than any of them, though he makes many extravagant fallies, and casts many injurious reflections on the synod; and his whole performance discovers him to be such a blind devotee to all the foibles of the Secession in Britain;

tain; and manifests such a miserable propensity to wretched, uncandid and captious criticism, as is really pitiable. Mr. Marshall, in a piece which he published in the newspapers in Philadelphia, when speaking of the five excommunicated elders, says, "What dispensation they had from the New Synod to neglect their orders so long, and continue in our fellowship, I know not: but, it seems they were spies in our camp. The Jesuits allowed their fraternity to swear the National Covenant of Scotland, in order that, by continuing in said church, they might have it in their power to promote the interests of the church of Rome." Thus spake and wrote that man when it was owing, to the private advice of two members of the synod to his session and people, to deal gently with him, for they hoped he would see his error and return to his duty, that he was not ejected from the pulpit long before he really was so.

Mr. Beveridge discovers the utmost bitterness of spirit throughout his pamphlet. He says, "The synod have laboured to suppress us altogether. Page 43." Whereas it is a fact that the synod have let them alone, and taken no notice of them. And page 26, he says, "Now in America, we are represented by the Associate Reformed Synod's party, as so much attached to Britain, that we ought to be suppressed. This accusation is almost every where in their mouth against us. The charge is grievous, and if it is malicious, &c." Now, to the best of my knowledge, all this is utterly false and malicious. The artful, designing and deceitful turn, that this writer discovers on every occasion, is truly astonishing, particularly in one, who pretends to be a singular witness for Christ.

It is a great truth that, one sinner destroys much good; and it is amazing, how the corruption of the human heart perverts and wrecks every thing. The declared design of the national covenant and solemn league, is to promote the reformation of religion, and to bring the churches of God to the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion, confession of faith, &c. The Associate Reformed Synod have pursued this end of these covenants in their union. But these men make these covenants a wedge to split the church to pieces.

## S E C T I O N II.

*Containing an account of the withdrawing of other three ministers from the synod.*

**T**HERE is one affair which I must mention very briefly. At the last meeting of the synod in May, three ministers withdrew from the synod, viz. the Rev. Matthew Henderson, senior, J— S—, and W— L—; and, it seems, Mr. Henderson has since joined those who call themselves the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, by acknowledging his sin, &c. At an extrajudicial conference among the members of the synod, these three gentlemen gave in a paper in Mr. Henderson's hand-writing, to the following purport: "Will the synod approve the judicial act and testimony of the Associate Presbytery in Scotland; and their act concerning the doctrine of grace; will the synod adopt the declaration made by the Associate Presbytery respecting civil dominion, and the qualifications necessary to the being of a magistrate; and do the synod think that the renovation of the covenant in the secession, is a renovation of the national covenant and solemn league; do the synod profess themselves to be under the formal obligation of these covenants considered as ecclesiastical deeds; will the synod give up the scheme of occasional communion in all ordinary cases, and confine the privilege to the members of our own church?"

The conference on these subjects was amicable. But it was alledged, that these demands were subversive of what had been agreed to, at the union, viz. that we would lay aside all public papers peculiar to Scotland, and concur in a testimony suited to our own circumstances. That the adopting of these papers as instruments of communion was more than Mr. Marshall and his brethren had done, or required to be done. That there was no necessity for them, as the synod were about publishing a testimony themselves, containing substantially the same truths and duties contained in these papers. That there was no occasion in fighting the good fight of faith, to borrow weapons from the synod of Edinburgh, while we had God's own armoury to apply to. But that, if it would please them, a reference might be made to these papers in a note at the bottom of the page. And with regard to the demand respecting occasional communion, it was remarked, that the synod never meant to allow it, but in extraordinary

ordinary cases. The overture was still under consideration. The synod had not gone through many chapters of it; when, next day, these three gentlemen gave in a small paper to the following purport, that as the synod were not disposed to allow them freedom of debate, and as they wished to withdraw peaceably, they begged their names to be erased from the roll of the synod. One or two members of the synod seemed to think it might be best to grant their request; but the majority were not of that mind; one of these brethren then remarked, that they did not intend to join Mr. Marshall's party; that they would make no infraction on the congregations or vacancies belonging to the synod: but would lie by, to see what the synod would do. On which they all three withdrew.

Now from what did these gentlemen withdraw? From no decision of the synod whatsoever. The overture was only under consideration; but a few chapters of it had been gone through. And with regard to the charge, that they were not allowed freedom of debate; the synod unanimously agreed, that no attempt whatever had been made to preclude it, and ordered this to be recorded in their minutes. All these three gentlemen had joined in full communion both ministerial and Christian with the other members of the synod, but the Sabbath before. Mr. Henderson had preached and served a table, though by the best information, it is certain, that before he left home to come to synod, he had got a number of his people to subscribe a dissent from the synod, which dissent, subscribed by himself and them, he had in his pocket, when joining with the synod judicially, and with its members, both in ministerial and Christian communion. The same gentleman, on his return home, took care to transmit a letter to a ruling elder, formerly under his ministry, but now at Rockcreek, advising him of his revolt from the synod; and he preached in Mr. Linn's congregation at Canigocheague, and used some means to divide them. It merits our attention, that this gentleman, to the best of my information, was the first member of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, that joined with the members of the Reformed Presbytery in full communion. This took place at the celebration of the Lord's supper in Canigocheague. Messieurs Linn and Dobbie were both present with him; and the three ministers deemed it prudent that something should be spoken to the people on an occasion so new and extraordinary. It was put upon Mr. Henderson to address them; when, as I can prove by living witnesses, he spake nearly in the following manner: "That for  
many

many years past, he had looked upon the difference between the two parties then and there united, as no solid ground of separation; and that he now rejoiced to see them fully and happily united." Yet this very gentleman has not only withdrawn from the synod, in the manner pointed out above, but has acknowledged his sin in the union, and actually gone over to the other party. This needs no comment. I have frequently thought that personal alienations may be at the bottom of divisions in the church. And as a vision from heaven, of the descending sheet, &c. and a voice too, saying, "Rise Peter, slay and eat" were necessary to conquer Peter's prejudices against the Gentiles, and convince him of the propriety of preaching the gospel to, and holding communion with them; so something no less extraordinary may be necessary to conquer the prejudices even of some good men against their fellow Christians

The last mentioned gentleman, and the two who withdrew with him, have said not a little about obligations to duty, of the obligation of the National Covenants of Britain, of the manner of our adhering to these obligations and acknowledging them. And this they did at the very moment of their violating their covenant of truth, peace and union with their brethren, or breaking their solemn compact with God and man. Strange deception! wonderful deceitfulness of the human heart! All such covenants are but means to obtain the great end of peace and union, in the truth of the gospel, and to strengthen each others hands in promoting it. What a surprising perversion of things! when the means appointed to gain the end are made the means to frustrate and defeat it. And, at any rate, let us give to the National Covenants what honor and dignity we please, they will amount to no more than a certain peculiar and extraordinary manner of expressing our assent to that covenant of grace in its promises, precepts and duties, under which every church of Christ acknowledges itself to be; and under which every true church really is. What a perversion! when a contention about the manner of expressing this assent to the covenant drives men to the most offensive and pernicious violations of it. To pursue and practise the ends of our covenant is most certainly the principal thing. And if the end be forgotten, what avail the means? But there are times when God tries men; and blessed is he who, like gold, stands the fiery trial.

CONCLUSION:

## C O N C L U S I O N.

**I** SHALL conclude this essay with a few remarks on the conduct of those, who call themselves the members of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania. It is evident, that they had and have still great need of being certain, that they were and are on firm ground, and had solid reasons for going the course, and running the career of division, in which they are now so bold and active. The consequences have been, and still are tremendous. God has been dishonoured, religion wounded, the Holy Spirit grieved, Christians stumbled and offended, the church rent, brotherly love marred, ungodly jealousies increased, professors have become contentious, hateful, and hating one another; they have been biting and devouring each other; firebrands, arrows and death have been scattered abroad; discord, sedition and division have taken deep root. But what ground had, or have they to support them amidst all this havock, and under all these tremendous consequences? None at all, as has been made manifest.

A great clamour is made about a testimony, and the necessity of holding fast a testimony; but, I fear, it is not rightly understood. Such a testimony as that of the Associate Presbytery in Scotland, called the judicial act and testimony, was, and is merely a temporary and occasional thing. Where was the testimony of the church before the secession took place? The church then was not certainly without a testimony. And if there never had been any necessity for the secession, that judicial act would never have appeared; it arose merely out of the occasion and circumstances in which these good men found themselves; and is no more than an application of the word of God and confession of faith unto that occasion and these circumstances; and such an application is the duty of the church at all times and in all places: but the application of the testimony is not strictly speaking the testimony. The testimony is the same at all times and in all places; but the application may be very various, according to various circumstances; and the bond used in the secession obliges, in the most solemn manner, to apply the testimony of Jesus in a suitability to our circumstances. To do otherwise would be a breach of covenant.

These men endeavour to keep the churches here in perplexity, by vilifying, reproaching and raising suspicions against the ministers of these churches. They have represented them

as apostates, Latitudinarians, deceitful workers, deceivers of, and imposers on the church of God. Satan has ever pursued this plan. He has ever endeavoured to undermine, destroy and mar the usefulness of a gospel ministry, by alienating and scattering the flock from their pastors, and raising suspicions against them. In this manner, the judaizing teachers endeavoured to ruin the ministry of the apostle Paul. "They affect you," says he, "but not well: yea they would exclude you (viz. from your duty and privileges) that you might affect them;" and again, "I would they were cut off which trouble you!" So much trouble and pain had these teachers given this holy man; and all under a pretext of pious zeal. But hypocrisy ever conceals itself under, and makes a noise about external modes and forms; while the main thing is neglected.

Moreover, these men do not proceed honourably; they do not raise churches in places of the country where there are none regularly planted. If they would do this, notwithstanding all their imperfections and absurdities, they might do some good. But they are intensely set to build their works on another man's foundation. This, did not the apostle Paul. He disdained the idea. Says he, "I will not dare to speak of any of these things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient by word or deed, &c. Yea so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation. But as it is written, to whom he was not spoken of, they shall see, and they that have not heard shall understand. Rom. xv. 18--21." And that same apostle has prepared a plaister infinitely suitable to the ulcerous sore of these men, if they would but apply it. 2 Corinth. x. 12--18. I sincerely wish them to read the verses at least. They are zealously bent to divide churches already formed; they creep into houses with very sanctimonious airs, spread their defamatory papers, slyly insinuate suspicions, talk much without sense, of the secession testimony, a banner for truth, the L—d's work, the apostacy of the synod, their contrary sentiments, that they will never publish a testimony, &c. go round and round the congregations of the Associate Reformed Synod, like w----s round a sheepfold, or w--d-p-ck-rs round the fairest fruit. There, and there alone, they hope for success. What congregation has any of them ever planted? Did Mr. M—— ever plant one? No. The congregation at D——, to which he was ordained, soon dwindled to nothing. The congregation in Philadelphia, formed not by him, but by some of the members

members of the synod, being committed to his care, in various ways was torn by him, its members scattered and finally brought into its present deplorable condition. This is a lamentable story; but very true. I doubt not, but the people were in some things defective as well as he; but they are not worse than other congregations. In a word, these men are much more dextrous to destroy than to build up; and it is more easily done.

Furthermore, if their pretensions be really well founded; if it be so, that their little society is the only church with which it is safe to have communion, and if they only be faithful witnesses for Christ in this country; is it probable that the great head of the church, whose fulness is infinite, should have sent them forth without any tolerable or common degree of gifts and graces for the office of the ministry? I mention it with humility, reverence and fear; and most certainly none have reason to boast: But I have often thought to see and hear them in their public ministrations, is a sufficient confutation of their high sounding pretensions. It is, (I hope good men will excuse me, if I speak wrong in this) It is, as if heaven wrote shame and confusion on their high claims and lofty pretensions. It is like staining the pride of their glory; and the accomplishment of that word, the haughtiness of man shall be brought down, and the loftiness of man laid low. Low enough indeed! But such is the deceiving nature of sin, that it not only makes men proud under humbling providences, but even takes occasion from the very thing that should humble, to make them more proud. I mention this if, perhaps, it may be blessed to make them think and speak with more modesty of themselves.

Once more, if people will be deceived by such bare-faced imposition, it is a pity! But they richly deserve to be deceived; and I can only bewail it as an awful judgment of a holy God for their unfruitfulness under the means of grace. But I tremble to think, that under the pretext of high zeal for airy, empty, and unsubstantial pretensions, couched in such phrases as these, "The banner of a testimony, the secession testimony, our solemn covenant-engagements, stand for and never give up one hair or hoof of truth, &c." Satan may persuade men, and their own hearts deceive them so far as to think, that they are very eminent Christians, the only faithful witnesses for God on earth; while real religion is neglected, both in heart and life. What a fearful mistake would this be! Christ spake a parable to some, who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.

"Two

“ Two men went up to the temple to pray, the one a Publican, the other a Pharisee, &c. Luke xviii. Let proud professors read and tremble. Ostentation in religion cherishes some of the worst passions of the human heart. It flatters our pride; puffs up with vain notions of superior sanctity; teaches men to despise others perhaps better than themselves; foment strife, contempt, hatred, emulation, and every evil work; and may deceive us with the idea that we are the peculiar favorites of heaven, while altogether hateful in God's sight.

I find one thing on which they and their adherents lay great stress, that the ministers of the association used formerly to mention to their people the obligation of the national covenants of Britain. Perhaps that matter has never been stated with proper precision with respect to America. Viewing only that part of these vows which is competent to the church, or is a copy of the covenant of Grace in its promises and precepts and duties; considering only the religious vow of our ancestors, to obey God and serve the interests of each other, founding the moral obligation of the matter vowed and also of the manner, viz. the vow itself on the bare rock, the authority of God in his word, undoubtedly these vows are obligatory on all the posterity of those who entered into them; and the committee of the Associate Reformed Synod have expressly acknowledged this, such a vow is just as obligatory, as a vow at baptism and the Lord's table; and in no other sense can they be constructed, from sound reason and the word of God, to be obligatory on Christians in America. But let Christians remember, that there is no want, no deficiency of moral obligation; the defect does not lie there; and this is not the point about which we should chiefly strive. The deficiency lies in non-compliance with the moral obligation, in non-performance of our vows; and the fearful works of the flesh, viz. hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, division, envyings, &c. produced by our contentions about the first point, are a most tremendous instance of our failure and guilt in the last.

I shall conclude with the solemn, serious and very suitable, words of the rev. Mr. John Brown of Haddington, when writing to the reverend Adam Gib on the subject of their contentions in Scotland. Would to God, says he, that cautiousness in representing other mens sins, especially in our addresses to God; while we had been severe against our own; and cautiousness in adhering to human testimonies, while we had ardently received the inspired testimony of Christ, and earnestly  
reduced

reduced it to practice; had been the worst blemishes on Se-  
ceding ministers and people; and that instead of so many dry  
disputes, cavilling at, and perverting each other's words;  
our principal strife had been, who would pray best, preach  
best, and live best; and that all of us, seeing we must in a  
very little appear before the judgment seat of Christ to give  
in our account, would, by his Grace, begin to set before others,  
a proper pattern of that charity, that candor, that humility,  
that meekness, which it becometh ministers and professed wit-  
nesses for Christ to practise.

## A S H O R T

# A P P E N D I X,

*Containing two necessary hints.*

**I**N the narrative Mr. Annan's removal from Boston to Phi-  
ladelphia is mentioned in general terms, and from the ge-  
neral account of it, one might suppose that he removed with-  
out any Presbyterial order: but this is not the case. The  
truth on that subject is as follows. With a considerable de-  
gree of reluctance he had yielded to the urgent importunity  
of the call from Boston, and among many more weighty con-  
siderations there was one which had some influence on his  
mind; he had found it impracticable to give his sons that col-  
legiate education to which, by their birth and baptism, they  
were entitled, and which by his removal he could conveniently  
accomplish. Yielding at last to these considerations, he re-  
moved. At which the congregation he had left, being much  
grieved, after some years had elapsed, they renewed a call on  
him to return to them. This call was laid before the Presby-  
tery, and by the Presbytery referred to the synod.

The synod having understood, that the congregation in Bos-  
ton were dissatisfied with the version of the Psalms used in the  
churches belonging to the synod, though an acceptance of  
that version was a condition of his settlement, and that Mr.  
Annan had been constrained to introduce the version of Tate  
and Brady; and also, that much to his grief of heart and dis-  
quietude of mind, he had found it impracticable to alter the  
mode

mode too common in New England, viz. the employing a bench of concillators, or a group of singing boys and girls, among whom there was often much levity even in the solemn act of praise; while too often a great, and sometimes the greatest part of the congregation, would be silent. The synod, I say, having understood these things, came to the following resolution, and transmitted it, by their clerk, to Boston; That the congregation should, if Mr. Annan continued with them, admit the version of the Psalms used, and mode of singing God's praises practised in the church of Scotland," and further they left it to himself, but expressly on that condition, either to remain at Boston, or yield to the call from Walkill and Little Britain; and enjoined him peremptorily to make his resolution known within a certain limited time, in which time if he did not decide, he should be considered as having resolved to continue at Boston.

The congregation in Boston had in general used him very well. No personal controversy whatsoever had marred his comfort: but he found it necessary to make known to them the above resolution of synod. It appeared to him, that a considerable number, perhaps the majority would have yielded. But others, and some of them the weightiest members as to property were not satisfied; and he told them, that he would take no step that would divide them; it would be better for him to remove, as he did not wish to offend or forsake the synod, nor split the congregation. And besides he had found it extremely difficult to maintain the Presbyterian discipline at Boston. He had tried it in some instances, in all of which it failed. There were particularly two instances of fornication before marriage; and the session yielded perhaps too far in proposing a private rebuke, and only a public intimation of it: but the parties would not submit to the last. To have administered baptism, in such a case, without a public intimation of the satisfaction given, not only to what is called the church in New England, viz. the few communicants in the society, but also to the whole congregation, would not have sufficiently honored religion before the world, and would not have been conformable to the rule and order of the Presbyterian church, and might have offended his brethren; besides his health had been much impaired at Boston; which alone would have justified his removal. At the same time, the commissioner to the Presbytery from Walkill and Little Britain, having returned home under a mistaken apprehension of some words spoken in Presbytery by Mr. Annan with respect to their call, as if he meant to disregard it, while he had with the ut-

most

most sincerity and humility left it wholly to the Presbytery to decide on it; and the Presbytery left it to the synod: this had raised a flame in the minds of some members of these two congregations. Of this he had intelligence from a worthy member of the session there. He endeavoured by a certification from the Presbytery under the moderator's hand, and by letters under the hands of other members, to state the truth, and vindicate himself; but the misapprehension had made too deep an impression on some, and to have accepted their call in such circumstances, he thought, would not have been prudent. At this critical moment the petition from Philadelphia came to his hand; and it appeared to him as if Providence shut him up to a necessity of yielding to it; though he knew well the disagreeable situation in which things were, and expected a torrent of reproach. But having obtained help of God, he continues to this day testifying the gospel of the grace of God. This candid and true account of that matter, the writer deemed it prudent to give; because the above named gentleman is become, without any just cause or reason, the object of the peculiar spite and resentment of the party referred to in the foregoing pages.

There is another remark which I forgot to introduce in its proper place, viz. that after the meeting at Donegal mentioned in the narrative, where the articles as the basis of union drawn up by three ministers of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania were accepted and extrajudicially approved; Mr. Smith a member of that Presbytery, occasionally held communion with one minister of the Reformed Presbytery: but that matter was left entirely to the discretion of the members. No complete ministerial and Christian communion was established, until the convention met in Philadelphia in the latter end of October and beginning of November, anno 1782: and none of the members of the Reformed Presbytery sat in judicature with the others, until after that period.

In fine, the sum of their doctrine about the obligation of the national covenant and solemn league, amounts only to this at best, that they are more obligated to duty than other people, without doing any more than others. All Christians acknowledge that they are obligated by the divine law: but they are under some other, some greater obligation; and yet when we examine this higher, this greater obligation, viz. the national covenants of Britain, they mangle and maim these national deeds and reduce them to nothing. The civil part of the covenants they set aside; the national act and authority, which made them the covenants of the nation, is re-  
jected.

jected: and they are forced to introduce them only as ecclesiastical and private acts, which totally destroys their national character and distinction: for say they, the civil magistracy has nothing to do, as such, with the church of Christ, or in matters of religion. Mr Gib says that, the bond used in the secession in Britain, is a renewal of the national covenants; though not a national renewal of them: and no doubt they are of the same mind with him and his brethren on this, as on another point, viz. the impropriety of blending civil and religious matters together in the oath of God. They consider the national covenants as the principal copy of the covenant of Grace, and chief bond of union and communion between Christ and his church; and between the members of the church; yet these covenants so blend civil and religious things together, as to be unfit for their use in their original and national form. Their bond obliges them to reject and testify against an erastian supremacy over the church, whenever claimed by the civil powers, and yet the obligation of the national covenants for which they plead, is founded on, and derived from what, on their principles must be an erastian supremacy; they affect to be so afraid of submission to an erastian supremacy; that they will not receive from the civil powers, a recommendation of a fast day, or thanksgiving day: but will receive from them a copy of the covenant of Grace, and a term of communion; a very imperfect copy of that covenant indeed, even after they have taken the broad ax to it, and hewn off the civil part, to make it look as spiritual and gracious like as possible. They acknowledge the United States to be a distinct nation from Britain, and a people made up of all nations; and yet they plead (if their words have any meaning) for the obligation of these national acts of Britain on the United States, in which sense nevertheless they reject their obligation on themselves. Again we hear them asserting the obligation of these national deeds of Britain on the whole church of Christ throughout the world; and that, after they have renounced their obligation as national deeds on themselves as a church, though by their own confession, a part of that church which first entered into them. All this is most certainly the work of error and confusion, and after all this noise, and idle declamation, and contradiction, the whole debate is about a mere speculative question; not the fulfilling moral obligation, but only acknowledging it, which, instead of moving them to do more good, or be more active in the way of duty than others, makes them a progressive pestilence to the church, and an offence to Christians.