

SUPPLEMENT TO THE FREE CHRISTIAN COMMONWEALTH.

LOUISVILLE, KY., THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 21, 1865.

DECLARATION AND TESTIMONY

Against the Erroneous and Heretical Doctrines and Practices which have obtained and been Propagated in the Presbyterian Church in the United States, during the last five years.

To the Ministers and Ruling Elders and Members of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, Greeting: "GRACE BE UNTO YOU, AND PEACE FROM GOD OUR FATHER, AND FROM THE LORD JESUS CHRIST."

BELOVED BRETHREN—The occasion upon which we address you is one of no ordinary interest to the Church of our Lord Jesus. For several years past that Church in this country has been departing farther and farther from both the spirit and the plain letter of her commission to "preach the GOSPEL to every creature," and her charter as a "Kingdom not of this world." The Presbyterian branch of the Church—that which we stand immediately connected with—for which our fathers labored, and suffered and prayed; and whose doctrine and order we have loved above all things else on earth, sadly disappointing our most sanguine hopes, and receding to her principles and ancient testimonies, has essayed to take the lead in this grievous departure from the faith and practice enjoined by her King and Head, and solemnly professed in her confessions and catechisms and symbols. Step by step she has gone away from the old paths, despite every warning and entreaty addressed to her by those who have still remained faithful, until we have reason to fear it will be in vain to attempt to bring her back again to the way of truth from which she has departed. From year to year, as the General Assembly has come together, we have cherished still the hope that it would reconsider those acts which have been the occasion of distrust and alarm, and recalling the Church to the true spiritual and divine nature of her calling and work, would restore the ancient landmarks, and thus re-assure the hearts of those who have trembled for the safety of the Ark of God. But these hopes have again and again been doomed to disappointment, until, by the decisions of the Supreme Judiciary of the Church at its recent meeting in Pittsburgh, the consummation seems to have been reached, and the seal finally set upon all previous unconstitutional and unscriptural acts of the body, and the full purpose declared, to compel our ministers, elders and members to approve of those acts, under the pain of exclusion from the communion and fellowship of the Church.

Such is the crisis which is now upon us, and which we are compelled to meet. There is left to us no alternative; if we would not prove ourselves unworthy of the trust which has been committed to our hands by our Divine Master, handed down from our fathers, baptised with their tears and prayers and blood. Fidelity in our lot requires, that we should give utterance to no equivocal testimony, and hesitate in no uncertain posture, at such a moment. To remain silent or to stand inactive, must alike be fatal to ourselves and to the Church. To suffer ourselves to be cajoled by "good words and fair speeches," or intimidated by threats, into acquiescence in, or a feeble, compromising opposition to the unscriptural doctrines and unconstitutional measures now maintained in the Church, will most assuredly make us partakers in the sin of those who have corrupted and betrayed her. It is, therefore, under a deep conviction of the imperative call made upon us, to bear a clear and unequivocal testimony against this departure of the Church from her ancient faith and order, that we have drawn up and do now publish to the world this solemn DECLARATION AND TESTIMONY, that so we may acquit ourselves of all complicity, with that subversion of the Law of Christ's Kingdom and surrender of the Crown Rights of Zion's King, on account of which, the name and honor of our Lord are this day everywhere blasphemed. If we can do nothing more than clear ourselves from the guilt of so great a crime, we shall have thereby secured ourselves from a participation in its punishment. Yet by the blessing of God upon our efforts in this behalf, we shall not despair of so rallying the faithful friends of a Pure and Free Church, around the Banner which God has given us "to be displayed because of the Truth," as to be able to defeat in great measure the schemes of those, who seem by their acts to be saying, concerning the beautiful and holy temple of our fathers, "Raise it, raise it even to the foundation thereof."

THE ERRORS AGAINST WHICH WE TESTIFY.

In the name therefore of the living God, the Holy One of Israel, we do solemnly testify—

I. Against the assumption on the part of the Courts of the Church of the right to decide questions of State Policy. This right has been assumed by all the Courts of the Church. But we shall here only speak particularly of what has been done by our Court of highest jurisdiction. That the General Assembly has claimed and exercised this right of jurisdiction, over questions of State Policy, for the past five years, and that to the fullest extent, certainly no one at all acquainted with the acts of that body can deny. We cite in proof only, the so-called "Spring Resolutions" of '61; the papers on the state of the country in '62 and '63; the Act on the subject of slavery in '64; and the ordinances on "Loyalty" and "the Southern Churches" in '65. The discussion of these several acts, occupied a very large part of the time, and absorbed nearly the whole attention of the respective Assemblies by which they were passed. In all of them the substantial questions at issue and about which the Assembly gave its decisions, were questions touching the policy of the State in regard to its citizens, and the duty of the citizens in respect to the policy of the state. Concerning the first of these acts, namely, that entitled the "Spring Resolutions," the following judgment was expressed in a protest against the passage of those resolutions, drawn up by Rev. Dr. Hodge and signed by about sixty others. Let their language be attended to:—"That the paper adopted by the Assembly does decide the political question just stated, (viz: "To what Government the allegiance of Presbyterians as citizens is due,") is in our judgment undeniable. It asserts not only the loyalty of this body to the Constitution and the Union, but it promises in the name of all the churches and ministers whom it represents, to do all that in them lies to strengthen, uphold and encourage the Federal Government. It is, however, a notorious fact, that many of our ministers and members conscientiously believe that the allegiance of the citizens of this country is primarily due to the States to which they respectively belong, and therefore, that when a State renounces its connection with the United States, and its allegiance to the Constitution, the citizens of that State are bound by the laws of God to continue loyal to their State and obedient to its laws. The paper adopted by the Assembly virtually declares, on the other hand, that the allegiance of the citizen is due to the

United States, anything in the Constitution, or ordinances, or laws of the several States to the contrary, notwithstanding. * * * In adopting this paper, therefore, the Assembly does decide the great political question which agitates and divides the country. * * * It is not a question which this Assembly has a right to decide."

"A man may conscientiously believe that he owes allegiance to one Government or another and yet possess all the qualifications which the Word of God or the Standards of the Church authorize us to demand in our members or ministers." * * * *

"It is the allegiance of the Old-School Presbyterian Church to the Constitution, the Union and the Federal Government, which this paper is intended to profess and proclaim. It does, therefore, of necessity, decide the political question which agitates the country. It pronounces or assumes a particular interpretation of the Constitution. This is a matter clearly beyond the jurisdiction of the Assembly."

"That the action of the Assembly in the premises does not only decide the political question referred to, but makes that decision a term of membership in our Church is no less clear." * * * *

"The General Assembly in thus deciding a political question, and in making that decision practically a condition of membership to the Church, has, in our judgment, violated the Constitution of the Church and usurped the prerogative of its Divine Master." [Minutes 1861, pages 339, 340.]

In answering this protest the Assembly does not deny, but admits the allegations contained in it, and argues, in defence of the right of the Assembly to make the decisions objected to. The action of subsequent Assemblies has still further asserted and exercised this usurped power, until the Highest Court of the church, once so venerated for its apostolic character, has become transformed in the eyes of the world, into a political convention, the chief occupation of which is, to debate and determine matters of a partisan political character, and to anathematize all who claim the right of private judgment on such matters.

II. We testify against the doctrine that the Church, as such, owes allegiance to human Rulers or Governments. Allegiance or loyalty in respect to human governments, is alone predicable of persons, as citizens. The Church owes her allegiance alone to Jesus Christ, who is sole King in Zion. To no earthly power can she yield submission, without being unfaithful to her Lord and Husband, and being guilty of that spiritual harlotry on account of which the most fearful plagues are denounced against her in the Prophets.

III. We testify against the sanction given by the Church to the perversion of the teachings of Christ and His Apostles upon the subject of the duty of Christians, as citizens, to "render to Cæsar, the things that are Cæsar's," and to "be subject unto the higher powers." These and similar scriptures are cited, to sustain the claim of the Assembly and other church Courts, to decide upon political questions; to prove that the allegiance of a Christian, as such, is due to a particular Government; to warrant the exclusion of a minister from his office or a member from his church privileges, because he does not believe his allegiance is due to this or that particular Administration, or that he is bound to obey every decree or law of the Government under which he may chance to live; and to bind the citizen, as a Christian, by the law of Christ "to uphold, strengthen and encourage" a particular form of Government, or a present Administration of that Government, or the acting Ruler by whom it may chance to be administered, in antagonism to other existing Governments or Rulers, as though the one were of Divine right rather than the others; and as if such particular Government or Administration or Ruler were so "the ordinance of God" and "ordained" of Him, as to make it, for that reason, obligatory upon the Christian, as such, "as far as in him lies to promote and perpetuate" its existence and power, and to sustain and pray for the success of whatever measures it may see fit from time to time to adopt, for the accomplishment of its particular ends, or to give effect to its peculiar schemes at home or abroad. We deny that these scriptures, or any others, when fairly interpreted, give any sanction to the doctrines just stated. These doctrines are contrary to the teaching of the Word of God, and are virtually the doctrines of despotism and unquestioning, unconditional submission and obedience to the commands of any actual ruler, no matter what those commands may be. This is to make Christianity the tool of tyrants and its teachings the bulwark of unlimited arbitrary power.

IV. We testify against the action of the Assembly on the subject of slavery and emancipation in 1864, and as confirmed in '65. In that action the Assembly has laid itself justly liable to the charge of disingenuousness, in that it does not quote fairly from former utterances upon the same subject. It omits altogether all reference to the uniform and most important declaration contained in its previous expressions of opinion, that "immediate, indiscriminate emancipation of the negro slaves amongst us would be unjust and injurious to both master and slave. And then it leaves entirely unnoticed the Act of 1845 and treats it as a nullity, although precisely the one only act, ever passed by the Assembly, which is sustained and enforced, by an appeal to the only authority to which the Church has any right to appeal for the support and sanction of her decisions, to wit—the Word of God. And then, upon this basis of suppression and perversion, there is laid down a new doctrine upon this subject of slavery, unknown to the apostolic and primitive church; a doctrine which has its origin in infidelity and fanaticism; a doctrine which the Presbyterian Church had before uniformly treated as a dangerous error, and which the Assembly of 1845 solemnly declared they could not sanction "without contradicting some of the plainest declarations of the Word of God," and "charging the Apostles of Christ with conniving at sin, introducing into the Church such sinners, and thus bringing upon them the curse of the Almighty." And further, that Assembly declared that should they affirm the doctrine which the Assembly in '64 did affirm, it would be "to dissolve itself," and "abandon the organization under which by the Divine blessing it has so long prospered." Nor has the Assembly been content with merely affirming these new doctrines upon slavery and emancipation, but has required a cordial belief and approbation of them, as a condition of membership to the church and of the exercise of its official functions to the ministry. (Acts of the Assembly of 1865 passim.)

V. We testify against the unjust and scandalous contradiction of their own recorded testimony and the well known facts, in regard to the labors of the Presbyterian Church and ministry for the Christianizing of the slaves of the South, and the preaching to them of the Gospel of Christ. On this subject the Assembly of 1847 speaks thus: "In reviewing the past, we find that notice has been taken by several previous Assemblies of the interest manifested in the religious instruction of the colored population of our country. The reports received

this year, justify the belief that this interest has greatly increased since the meeting of the last Assembly. Almost all the Presbyteries covering the ground where this portion of our population are found in the greatest numbers, refer to the subject, and speak of efforts to supply them with the means of Grace, as being decidedly on the advance."—[Min. 1847, pages 403, 408.] Again in 1854 this testimony is borne by the Assembly: "The reports sent to us from the Presbyteries covering the portion of the Church in which there is a large slave population, reveal the gratifying fact that the zeal hitherto manifested on behalf of the religious welfare of this class, instead of abating, is evidently growing more ardent and active. In their houses of worship, provision at once special and liberal is made for the accommodation of the colored people so that they may enjoy the privileges of the sanctuary in common with the whites. Besides this, nearly all our ministers hold a service in the afternoon of the Sabbath in which the exercises are particularly adapted to their capacities and wants. In some instances, ministers are engaged in their exclusive service—not ministers of inferior ability, but such as would be an ornament and a blessing to the intelligent cultivated congregations of the land. In a still larger number of instances, the Pastor of a church composed of the two classes, inasmuch as the blacks form the more numerous portion, devotes to them the greater share of his labours, and finds among them the most pleasing tokens of God's smiles upon his work. Besides the preaching of the word to which they have free access, in many cases a regular system of catechetical instruction, for their benefit, is pursued, either on the Sabbath at the house of worship, or during the week on the plantations where they reside. Thus we give thanks unto God, our common Father, that he has inspired the hearts of our brethren in the parts of our Church referred to, with love to the souls of this numerous race, and that he has opened among them a wide and effectual door of usefulness."—[Min. 1854, page 484.]

But in contradiction of all this the Assembly now affirm that "the removal of the shackles of bondage" has brought this race "within the reach of missionary effort as objects of Christian benevolence." They rejoice in the fact that God has, in the midst of the desolation of so much of our country, "opened a way for the instruction and elevation of this long degraded people;" that the slaves are "inspired with the fact that they are now called by God to conquer for their people a position among the races of mankind." It is affirmed that in their condition of servitude they were degraded and brutalized; that their masters were also brutalized; slavery being the cause of rebellion and cruelty, and the natural root of assassination and murder. That whilst in a state of servitude they were deprived of the means of becoming acquainted with the Christian religion, and that the Presbyterian Church could not heretofore carry to them a pure gospel.—[Min. of Assembly 1864, '65—Reports of Freedmen's Committee to the General Assembly.]

VI. We testify against the doctrine widely taught in the Church and even countenanced by the Assembly, that the acts and deliverances of the Courts of Christ's Commonwealth, may properly be based upon and shaped in accordance with the ordinances and laws of State Legislatures, the orders and proclamations of military chieftains, and even the results of popular votes given at the elections. That before a Court of Christ ought to take action upon important questions brought before them, it is right and fitting they should inquire "what the Cabinet at Washington may wish them to do," and ascertain what effect their action may be likely to have upon the mind of the President and the Army, or upon the price of Government stocks abroad.—(Assemblies of '61 and '64.)

VII. We testify against the doctrine that the will of God as to the duty of the Church and of his people is to be learned from partial providential events, and that the teachings of the Scriptures are to be interpreted by these providences. Thus the Word of God is subjected to the mere caprice of man's own fancy, and its supreme authority as the only infallible rule of faith and duty, is subordinated to the blind and ever-erring interpretations which may be put upon certain isolated occurrences, by human ignorance, passion, pride, prejudices, superstition and selfishness. And the more false and subversive of the Divinely-given foundations of faith and duty does this doctrine become, when amongst the special providences, from which the will of God is to be learned, are enumerated by the Assembly, such as these: "The organization of a bloody rebellion;" "the proclamations of the highest executive authority;" "the declared policy of the President" concerning certain measures of doubtful result and over which he himself has only partial control; the "enlisting of slaves as soldiers in the National armies," and "the setting on foot of measures of emancipation in the loyal States, which measures are near their consummation." A mere total abandonment of God's Written Word, for the uncertain light of dark and mysterious and yet undeveloped providences, and these to be expounded by men, may be "having their understandings darkened" and, for "not obeying the truth," perchance "given up to believe a lie," can scarcely be conceived of. As we go back to the simpler superstitions of the Greek and Roman priesthood, and regard the flight of the vulture or the eeking of a goose as indications of the will of God. For these are not less providential events, than the marshaling of negro soldiers or the declared policy of the highest executive authorities. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father."

VIII. We testify against the sanction which has been given, both directly and indirectly, to the usurpation, by the secular and military power, of authority in and over the worship and government of the Church. This usurpation has been sanctioned by Sessions, Presbyteries, Synods, and the General Assembly, directly, by various acts, which are fully known to the world. As, for example, in the case of the Pine Street Church and Dr. McPheeters of St. Louis, in 1863, '64; and in the case of the St. Charles Church and Messrs. Farris and Watson in 1864, '65. By the endorsement in word and act of such usurpation, as perfectly right, by the Seminaries at Princeton and Danville, as witness the doctrine laid down by the Princeton Professor of Theology, and the doctrine and practice of the Danville Professor in the same department. Indirectly, this usurpation of the Kingly rights of Jesus Christ in his own Kingdom, has been sanctioned, by the persistent neglect and refusal of the Assembly and almost all other Church Courts, as also the seminaries and pulpits, to condemn such usurpation, or to assert in any way, the rights and liberties of God's people in all things pertaining to the worship and government of his house.

IX. We testify against that alliance which has been virtually formed by the Church with the State; by which the State has been encouraged, and even invited, to use the Church as an instrument for giving effect to its various schemes of a political character. And on the other hand, the Church has become a subordinate agent, to en-

force with ecclesiastical pains and penalties, the demands of the State. This alliance and subordination are shown in the clearest manner, in the appointing and enforced observance, by the secular power, of days of Fasting and Thanksgiving; in the attempt, in various ways, to prescribe what shall be or what shall not be "said and sung" in the prayers and hymns and sermons upon those days, as also on the Sabbath. In the issuance of orders, directed to certain ministers and committees, and accepted by them, giving them authority to preach the gospel in certain places and to take possession of churches, to the exclusion of other ministers and their congregations. In the setting up and prescribing as tests of ministerial standing and membership in the Church, certain political dogmas, and these too, necessarily of a purely partisan character; so that no man may preach the gospel, or enjoy the fellowship of the sanctuary, unless he can say, he holds these dogmas and renounces *ex animo* as sin and heresy, the contrary opinions.

X. We testify against that persecution, which has been carried on for these five years past and with increasing malignity, toward all those, who have steadfastly refused to sanction or acquiesce in, these departures of the Church from the foundations of truth and righteousness. This spirit of persecution seems to have broken over all bounds in the late meeting of the Assembly. The testimony of one of its most influential members, one too who acted in perfect harmony with the great mass of that body, is, that "He had been in many political Conventions—yet he must say he never anywhere had seen such relentless persecution as is manifested by this General Assembly."* This testimony is true. The deliberate and avowed purpose of that body, as its several acts most unequivocally show, was to distract and destroy churches all over the land, (but especially in the Southern and Border States) who do not and will not submit to the unconstitutional acts and unscriptural doctrines, put forth by the Assembly during the past five years. Every minister is to be ostracised and driven away; and every congregation to be scattered, that will not subscribe the new tests. Schools, Seminaries, Church Edifices and Manses, are to be seized and appropriated to the use of those, who are willing to become heralds of this new evangel of "freedom and loyalty," who think that gain is godliness, and who appear fully prepared to lead on the Dragonades of another crusade, in the name of God and the State, against Christian women and children, whom they have first branded as rebels. Thus the persecution which began in '61, when the Assembly "violated the Constitution of the Church and usurped the prerogative of its Divine Master" by "action * * * unjust and cruel in its bearing on our Southern brethren;" (Dr. Hodge)—which was carried out more fully in '64 when the Assembly cast Dr. McPheeters "out of the Synagogue;" was consummated in '65, when the Assembly virtually excommunicated the whole Southern Presbyterian Church, and in effect ordained, that they should be treated as heathen and outcasts. And as in all former times, so now this persecution is sought to be justified, by false statements and misrepresentations, and is carried on, under professed zeal for the glory of God, abhorrence of the wickedness of those against whom it is aimed, and a most profound and unselfish regard for the rights and prerogatives of Cæsar.

XI. We testify against the wide spread and destructive perversion of the commission of the ministry and the province of Church Courts. The commission of the Christian ministry is plain and simple. To preach the gospel. To persuade men to be reconciled to God. To teach all things whatsoever Christ has commanded. As Harbors and Ambassadors, they are required to confine themselves within the exact limits of their commission. They are to know no man after the flesh. With them, in the discharge of their ministerial functions, there is to be no difference between Jew and Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free. As ministers they owe and can hold allegiance to no human government, nor can they give their influence to the support of any, without violating their commission. They are to know nothing in the pulpit, but Christ and him crucified. Neither North nor South, neither Secessionist nor Unionist; neither Loyalist nor Rebel; neither Whig nor Tory; neither Republican nor Democrat. And so of Church Courts. Their authority is only ministerial and declarative. It is spiritual. It has nothing to do with matters which do belong unto the civil magistrate. These courts can only speak when Christ has spoken and declare what he has said. Anything beyond this, is USURPATION, and of no binding force.

Yet how entirely the ministry has ceased to execute their commission; and to how great an extent the ecclesiastical courts have transcended their jurisdiction, is so notorious, that both have become a by-word and reproach amongst unbelievers. Topics of a secular and political character, are ordinary and favorite themes of the pulpit. Ministers are become the fiercest of political partisans and cry loudest for blood. And even the mercy-seat is profaned by the out-pourings of hatred and revenge, by those who alike profess to be sinners, saved by grace, children of the same heavenly family, and subjects of one Prince of Peace. When Church courts meet, it is to pass resolutions and listen to harangues, "to strengthen and encourage the Government," and to "fire the popular heart" with patriotism. The house of God, the pillar and ground of the Truth as it is in Jesus, designed to be "a house of prayer for all people," has thus, to an alarming extent, become transformed into a mere earthly forum, where the spirit of this world usurps the seat of the Spirit of truth and mercy and love.

XII. We testify against the action of the Assembly in reference to the Churches in the Seceded and Border States, and against the basing of that action upon an assertion of what the Assembly had the clearest evidence was not true.

The Assembly affirm that the "General Assembly of the Confederate States was organized in order to render their aid in the attempt to establish by means of the rebellion a separate national existence, and to conserve and perpetuate the system of slavery." [Min. of General Assembly, 1865—p. 500.] And it is upon the assumption of the truth of this assertion, that the whole action of the Assembly, touching the Southern Presbyteries, Ministers and Churches, is founded. Yet the evidence was distinctly and repeatedly brought before that body, both by oral testimony and public documents, that the assertion was contrary to fact. That so far from this, the Assembly of the so-called Confederate States, in the most solemn and explicit manner, denied and disavowed any such objects in their organization, and assigned other reasons for their action. Reasons having their origin in the enactments of the General Assembly itself, touching those political questions, which had agitated and divided the country. "The first thing," says that Assembly, "which

* Hon. Judge Ewing.

roursed our Presbyteries to look the question of separation seriously in the face, was the course of the Assembly in venturing to determine, as a court of Jesus Christ, which it did by necessary implication, the true interpretation of the Constitution of the United States, as to the kind of Government it intended to form. * * * "We would have it distinctly understood, that in our ecclesiastical capacity we are neither the friends nor the foes of slavery; that is to say, we have no commission either to propagate or abolish it. We have no right, as a church, to enjoin it as a duty, or to condemn it as a sin. * * * The social, civil and political problems connected with this great subject transcend our sphere, as God has not entrusted to His Church the organization of society, the construction of Governments, nor the allotment of individuals to their various stations."

This ordinance of the Assembly, thus unjust, in that it is founded upon the assertion of what is untrue, is equally unrighteous and inequitable, and contrary to the fundamental principles of the Presbyterian Church, in that it establishes a law concerning ministers and Church members, that is to be enforced only in certain localities and upon particular persons. There is no reason nor justice, in requiring ministers and members in the Southern and Border States, to repudiate opinions and feelings in regard to Secession, State Rights, Slavery, &c., &c.; whilst ministers and members in the Northern States are allowed to hold unquestioned those same opinions and feelings, or others equally contrary to the new doctrines of the Assembly upon those subjects. Against so gross a violation of that equality in God's house, which has always distinguished a pure Presbyterianism, we do most earnestly bear our testimony, as a palpable violation of that principle of the Divine law, enjoined in both the Old and New Testaments, "Thou shalt not respect persons in judgment."

XIII. We testify against that act of the Assembly by which the Board of Domestic Missions, (that is, the Executive Committee at Philadelphia, or its Corresponding Secretary,) are constituted a Court of final and superior jurisdiction, to judge of the orthodoxy of the ministry and the soundness of their views touching the nature of the Government of the United States; the doctrine of State Rights; the freedom of the negroes; and the various important questions touching their social and civil status now and prospective.

XIV. We testify against all and every movement in the Church, however cautiously or plausibly veiled, which looks to a union of the State with the church, or a subordination of the one to the other, or the interference of either with the jurisdiction of the other. We testify against any test of a religious character, in order to the exercise of the rights of citizenship; and against any political test whatever as a qualification for membership in the Church, or the exercise of the functions of the gospel ministry.

REASONS FOR THIS TESTIMONY.

Against each and all these errors in doctrine and practice we testify:

I. Because they are contrary to the Word of God and subversive of its inspiration and supreme authority as the only infallible rule of faith and practice.

The Scriptures constantly assert their own completeness, sufficiency, infallibility, and supreme authority, as the only rule by which man is to be guided in his belief and duty. The setting up of any other guide or rule, is every where condemned both by prophets and apostles, speaking in the name of God. To add to these complete oracles, or take from them, is pronounced a heinous crime. To pervert, or make void, or handle deceitfully, or shun to declare any part of this written Word, is to expose oneself to the severest punishment. And it is an abomination for any one, but especially for the Church, to leave these living oracles and follow the voice of false prophets, who undertake to tell what is the will of God, by reading the signs of the times and interpreting the meaning of passing events. "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God. Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of my hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow." (See also 2 Tim. 3: 16, 17; 2 Peter, 1: 16-21.) And our Lord specifically rebuked those in his day, who were so ready to interpret the will of God as they supposed it to be made known in particular acts of Providence, when he said to some who told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices, "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Whatever the uses to be made of the providential events passing around us, they neither furnish us a rule of duty, nor a key to the interpretation of the written Word, nor a basis of judgment concerning our fellow men.

II. Because they are contrary to the doctrine of the Presbyterian Church as taught in her Confession, Catechisms and Constitution. On this point a few citations will suffice: "The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture; unto which nothing at any time is to be added whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men." "The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture, is the Scripture itself; and therefore when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifest but one) it may be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.

"The Supreme Judge by whom all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture." [Conf. Faith, c. ii. sec. 6, 9, 10.]

"There is no other head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ." "The Lord Jesus as King and head of his Church, hath therein appointed a government in the hand of Church-officers distinct from the civil magistrate." "To these officers the keys of the kingdom of heaven are committed by virtue whereof they have power, &c." [Conf. Faith, c. xxv, sec. 6.]—Also [Conf. Faith, c. xxx, sec. 1, 2.]

"For the better government and farther edification of the Church, there ought to be such assemblies as are commonly called Synods or Councils; and it belongeth to the overseers and other rulers of the particular Churches, by virtue of their office and the power which Christ hath given them for edification, and not for destruction, to appoint such assemblies, and to convene together in them, as often as they shall judge it expedient for the good of the Church."

"Synods and councils are to handle or conclude nothing but that which is ecclesiastical, and are not to intermeddle with civil affairs which concern the Commonwealth." [Conf. F. c. xxxi, sec. 1, 4.]

"These assemblies ought not to possess any civil jurisdiction, nor to inflict any civil penalties. Their power is wholly moral or spiritual, and that only ministerial and declarative."

*Address of G. A. C. S., to the Churches of Jesus Christ throughout the world.

"Civil magistrates may not assume to themselves the administration of the word and sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven; or, in the least, interfere in matters of faith. * * * It is the duty of the civil magistrate to protect the Church of our common Lord, * * * in such a manner that all ecclesiastical persons whatever, shall enjoy the full, free, and unquestioned liberty of discharging every part of their sacred functions, without violence or danger. And as Jesus Christ hath appointed a regular government and discipline in his Church, no law of any Commonwealth should interfere with, let or hinder the due exercise thereof among the voluntary members of any denomination of Christians, according to their own profession and belief." [Conf. F., c. xxiii, sec. 3.]

In the Second Book of Discipline of the Scotch Church, we find the principles, which are embodied in the later standards, thus briefly and clearly laid down:

"This power ecclesiastical, is different and distinct in its own nature from that power and policy which is called the civil power, and appertains to the civil government of the Commonwealth; albeit they be both of God, and tend to one end, if they be rightly used, to wit: to advance the glory of God, and to have godly and good subjects.

"For this power ecclesiastical flows immediately from God, and the Mediator Jesus Christ, and is spiritual, not having a temporal head on earth, but only Christ, the spiritual King and Governor of His Kirk. Therefore this power and policy of the Kirk should lean upon the Word immediately, as the only ground thereof, and should be taken from the pure fountains of the Scriptures, (the Kirk) hearing the voice of Christ, the only spiritual King, and being ruled by His laws." [Second Book of Discipline Chap. I. Sec. 9, 10, 11.]

III. Because they tend to obliterate all the lines of separation between the civil and ecclesiastical powers, to confound their jurisdictions, to identify them with each other and so to destroy the freedom of both. If the Church may adjudicate upon "civil affairs which do concern the Commonwealth" on the pretense that these affairs "rise up into the region of morals," and the State may assume to regulate the worship and teaching and discipline of the Church, and control her courts, under the pretense of "maintaining the authority of the Government and preserving the life of the nation;" then there is a practical union of Church and State, and an end of civil and religious liberty, and the establishment of a meretricious Politico-Ecclesiastical Despotism.

To render our views upon this point still clearer we quote the language of another. "Nothing in the history of society, is more remarkable than the strength of that tendency to confound and identify its civil and religious institutions, which has manifested itself in all ages. And yet from the moment that the tribal form of society was superseded, by what may be properly called the State, and the Church became visible and separate; nothing would be more illogical and nothing has been more disastrous."

"The Church of Christ, though in the world, is not of it. The Kingdoms of this world are exclusively, both in it, and of it." * * * "The State is for things temporal, things local, things visible and transitory." * * * "In that spiritual Kingdom manifested in the visible Church, and whose true seat is within us, neither time, nor place, nor condition, nor race has any vital significance; nor can flesh and blood inherit it; nor does anything avail but the new creature. Its union with the civil power is the highest aggravation of confounding it with the world—for the State is the highest form in which the world appears. So that neither the Visible Church, nor the Civil Power, can have any duty either toward God or itself, or each other, more other and transcendent, than that each should confine itself with respect to the other, to its own obvious sphere—each regarding the other as the ordinance of the common Father and God of both." * * * "This spiritual independence of the Kingdom of God in this world, is a necessity so fundamental, that no portion of the Visible Church has surrendered it, without surrendering in an equal degree, the spirit of its Divine vocation. And all corrupt churches which have sought the closest union with the civil power, have done so, not in order to submit themselves to the dominion of the State, but rather to subject it to a tyranny as relentless as that, which they made it the instrument of inflicting. To plead for the freedom of the Church is, therefore, to plead, at the same time, for the independence of States, and for the security of mankind against the cruelties of all false religions."

"The Crown and Kingdom of Jesus Christ appertain to Him as exclusively as His Cross. He alone is King in Zion, as really as He alone is the Redeemer of Israel. He is the King, the Law-giver, the Judge, the Lord in Zion. It is precisely in this absolute and exclusive headship of Christ, and the consecration of his Church to Him responsive thereto, that the root of her inward freedom lies; just as it is on her entire separation from the world, that her outward freedom is grounded, and can be made manifest."—[Knowledge of God Subjectively Considered, Chap. xxii.]

IV. Because they have brought the ministry and the ordinances of religion, and the authority of the Church into public dispute. Multitudes who once frequented the Sanctuary, finding the gospel no longer preached there, have ceased to attend. Those who were once listened to with reverence, as they held forth the word of truth as it is in Jesus, are now despised as mere political demagogues, who have degraded their calling and become the worst panders to the passions of the unthinking mob. Our Synods and Assemblies, whose utterances in former years were received with veneration, as coming with the sanction of a Divine warrant, have ceased to command even ordinary respect. Thus by reason of the grievous departures of the ministry and councils of the Church from the law of their Divine Commission, the way of truth is evil spoken of and the name of God and His doctrine are blasphemed. Infidelity, in all its various and subtle forms, is undermining the faith of not a few, who once gloried in the christian name and esteemed it a privilege to be numbered amongst the children of Presbyterians. Pure Protestantism has been arrested in its growth, and is rapidly losing its power to retard the advance of error and superstition, of rationalism and formalism.

V. Because they tend to keep up strife and alienation among brethren of a common faith and thus delay the pacification of the country. Is there one act of the General Assembly, for these years, that has breathed the spirit of peace and good will? Is there one that has seemed to be actuated by the spirit of brotherly-kindness and charity? Alas! which one is not the reverse of all this? Which one, that does not bear the impress of bitterness and wrath and anger? Which does not necessarily tend to perpetuate hostility between the alienated sections and parties of the country; to widen instead of healing the breach made by the sword of civil and fratricidal war; and dig a gulph, that shall be forever impassable, between those, whom it is the interest both of Church and State, to unite again in common bonds?

VI. Because they are schismatical. Those who invent new doctrines, who teach "for doctrines the commandments of men," who "bring in damnable heresies," are, by the Word of God, adjudged as schismatics. It is not those who withdraw from such corrupters of the gospel, that are chargeable with the sin of schism; but those who, by their false teaching and scandalous practice, render it necessary for the faithful to separate themselves in order to preserve their garments undefiled. The woe pronounced by our Lord is upon those "by whom offences come." The plagues of consuming judgment symbolized in the Apocalypse, are to come upon the Apostate Church, not upon those

who "come out of her" and renounce her fellowship. The command is to withdraw from such as teach "contrary to the doctrine which is according to godliness," that "servants under the yoke" should not "count their own masters worthy of all honor," nor do them service. [Tim. vi. 1-5.] It is plain that in the course taken by the Assembly, against which we testify, that body has given occasion of offence and been the guilty author of a grievous schism in the Church. It was on account of some of those unscriptural and unscriptural, those "unjust and cruel" decrees which we have spoken, that the Southern Presbyteries and Synods felt constrained to withdraw from their ancient and cherished connection. It is the adherence to all these unscriptural doctrines and ordinances, and the declared purpose of enforcing them upon all in our communion, by the exercise of discipline, that is at this moment threatening the whole Church with dissolution. "Our people are no longer as one body of christians;" our churches "are agitated by the tumultuous spirit of party;" and our Assembly "is made the theatre for the open display of humiliating scenes of human passions and weakness." Mutual confidence is weakened; respect for the supreme judicatory of our Church is impaired; our hope that the dignified and impartial course of justice would flow steadily onward, has expired, and a large portion of the religious press is made subservient to error." Those who have succeeded in gaining control of the judicatories of the Church and wielding them for the destruction of her purity, peace, liberty and unity, now seek to give permanent security to their errors and to themselves, by raising an outcry in the churches against all who love the truth well enough to contend for it. "Troublers of the Church," "disloyal," "secessionists," "abettors of treason, assassination and murder," "enemies of freedom," and such like terms of reproach, are heaped upon all who raise their voice against the subversion of the Constitution of the Church. A determination is expressed and already partly put into effect, to use the Seminaries and Boards of the Church, to perpetuate and propagate the false doctrines we have enumerated, and to employ the courts of the Church, to silence and cut off all who refuse to assent to those doctrines. Thus the General Assembly, instead of being the safeguard of the faith and order of the whole Church; the protector of the rights and liberties of its ministers and members, and the bond of unity for the several churches under its care, has itself become the support of heresy, the abettor of injustice and despotism, the fomentor of discord and the prime leader in promoting a great and destructive schism in the body of Christ.

Such then is the alarming, unhappy and ruinous condition to which our beloved Church has, with a rapidity unparalleled, at length arrived. The ancient landmarks of Truth and Freedom which our fathers set amid the raging storm of persecution, have been taken away. The infallible oracles of God have been abandoned, for the purblind leadings of natural instinct and the uncertain teachings of human reason. The pure and heavenly principles of charity taught by apostles and evangelists, and illustrated in their lives, have been substituted by a shallow humanitarian philanthropy, which, whilst it devours widows houses and renders void God's law of love, makes broad its phylacteries and with sound of trumpet parades its zeal for the poor and the enslaved. The plainest teachings of the Holy Scriptures respecting the relation and duties of masters and servants, (despotism kai doulos,) have been pronounced cruel and unjust; to believe and practice in accordance therewith branded as an "unwillingness of the human heart to see and accept the truth against the prejudices of habit and interest." And an institution which has always existed in the Church uncondemned, and which was recognized and sanctioned by Christ and his apostles, is pronounced an "evil and guilt," condemned as "SIN" and affirmed to be the "root of all evil." The long list of horrors which follow in their train. The Prophetic office of Jesus Christ has thus been impugned, and the utterances of false prophets substituted for his words. In like manner has his office as the High Priest, Intercessor of men, been assailed. The right and privilege of the Christian is thus declared by the Apostle: "Seeing then that we have a Great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God—not an High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are—let us therefore come boldly" (metu parvosias free-spokenness, with the liberty of confiding children,) "unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." But the exercise of this freedom has been forbidden. Limits have been prescribed to the Intercession of God's people and to the prerogatives of the Great High Priest. It has been forbidden to pray for this or that person or thing; it has been required to ask only for blessings upon this or that man; and to plead only for the success and safety of this or that cause or measure. It has been demanded that the mercy-seat should only resound with imprecations upon one class of men and benedictions upon another. The military sword has been thrust between the people of God and the throne of grace; and this impious attempt to restrict the prerogatives of the High Priest of the Church and that freeness of access to himself which he has bestowed as an inalienable right upon his people, has received the most unequivocal sanction of the great body of the Church. Nor less has the supreme authority of Christ in the exercise of his Kingly office been trampled under foot, by those who have sworn obedience to his Government. By the repeated acts of the several judicatories of the Church, including the General Assembly itself, the invasion of the freedom of Christ's Commonwealth by the civil and military powers, has been not only allowed, but approved. The right of the secular power thus to interfere in the affairs of Christ's kingdom, has been admitted, and the duty of submitting cheerfully to the exercise of this right enforced upon ministers and Church members. Thus the crown rights of Prince Immanuel have been surrendered to his enemies. The honor and glory of Zion is trailed in the dust. No longer can it be said that our Church serves "another king, one Jesus." As by the Jewish Church of old, so it seems to be again proclaimed, with loud and angry vociferations, by priest and people, "We have no king but Caesar."

The whole Mediatorial glory and dignity of the Messiah, has been thus tarnished; and all the offices of Prophet, Priest and King, which He executes for the salvation of his people, are subverted and surrendered. If this, then, be not an apostasy, surely it needs but little to make it so, clearly, unmistakably, fatally. Nothing can prevent this but the blessing of Almighty God upon the efforts, which his faithful witnesses may make, to arouse the people to the reality and extent of the evil and danger; and to bring them by prompt and decided action, to purge the Church of the evil influence which has corrupted and betrayed her.

Against this corruption and betrayal, therefore, we testify in the sight of God and angels and men. We wash our hands of all participation in its guilt. We declare our deliberate purpose, trusting in God, who can save by few as well as by many, to use our best endeavors to bring back the Church of our fathers to her ancient purity and integrity, upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, and under the Banner of our only King, Priest and Prophet, the Lord Jesus Christ. In this endeavor we pledge ourselves to assist and co-operate with each other. And, by the grace of God, we will never abandon the effort, no matter what sacrifices it may require us to make, until we shall either have succeeded in reforming the Church and restoring her tarnished glory; or failing in this, necessity shall be laid upon us, in obedience to the Apostolic command, to "withdraw" from those who have departed from the truth. Compelled to this course, we will go, bearing with us the true Presbyterian Church with her

doctrine, order, worship and freedom, as they have been given her by her Divine Head, and transmitted from generation to generation, by the hands of saints and confessors and martyrs.

ACTION PROPOSED.

And now, dear brethren in Christ, that without delay we may begin this arduous and most important work, to you who like ourselves are servants of the Lord Christ; "who adhere to the plain doctrines of the cross as taught in the Standards of the Westminster Assembly;" to all of you who love your ancient and pure Constitution; to you who are grieved for the afflictions of Jacob, and desire to restore our abused and corrupted Church to her simplicity, purity, and liberty; we, a portion of yourselves, ministers and elders of your churches, would propose, most respectfully and kindly, and yet most earnestly:

- 1. That we refuse to give our support to ministers, elders, agents, editors, teachers, or to those who are in any other capacity engaged in religious instruction or effort, who hold the preceding or similar heresies.
- 2. That we refuse to take any part in the discussion or decision by any ecclesiastical court, of those questions touching the policy and measures which do properly pertain to the Civil Commonwealth.
- 3. That we will recognize no authority, in the domain of questions of Christian doctrine or morals, or concerning the rights of the Church or the duties of its members, other than the written Word of God.
- 4. That we will not take any oath prescribed by civil or military authority, as a qualification for sitting in a Church court, or for worshipping God, or for preaching the gospel, or exercising any of the functions of the ministry. Nor will we sit in any judicatory thus constituted.
- 5. That we will extend our sympathy and aid, as we may have opportunity, to all who in any way, are subjected to Ecclesiastical censure or civil disabilities or penalties; for their adherence to the principles we maintain and the repudiation of the errors, in doctrine and practice, against which we bear this our testimony.
- 6. That we will not sustain, or execute, or in any manner assist in the execution of the orders, passed at the last two Assemblies on the subject of slavery and loyalty; and with reference to the conducting of missions in the Southern States; and with regard to the ministers, members and churches in the seceded and Border States.
- 7. That we will withhold our contributions from the Boards of the Church (with the exception of the Board of Foreign Missions) and from the Theological Seminaries, until these Institutions are rescued from the hands of those, who are perverting them to the teaching and promulgation of principles, subversive of the system they were founded and organized to uphold and disseminate. And we will appropriate the monies thus withheld, in aid of those instrumentalities which may be employed, for maintaining and defending the principles affirmed in this Declaration, against the errors herein rejected; and in assisting the impoverished ministers and churches anywhere throughout the country, who agree with us in these essential doctrines, in restoring and building up their congregations and houses of worship.
- 8. "We recommend that all Ministers, Elders, Church Sessions, Presbyteries and Synods who approve of this Declaration and Testimony, give their public adherence thereto in such manner as they shall prefer, and communicate their names, and when a Church court, a copy of their adhering act."
- 9. "That inasmuch as our only hope of improvement and reformation in the affairs of our Church depends upon the interposition of Him, who is King in Zion, that we will unceasingly and importunately supplicate a Throne of Grace, for the return of that purity and peace, the absence of which we now sorrowfully deplore."
- 10. We do earnestly recommend that on the day of A. D. 1863, a Convention be held in the city of

composed of all such Ministers and ruling Elders as may concur in the views and sentiments of this testimony, to deliberate and consult on the present state of our Church; and to adopt such further measures, as may seem best suited to restore her prostrated Standards, and vindicate the pure and peaceful religion of Jesus, from the reproach which has been brought upon it, through the faithlessness and apostasy of its ministers and professors.

"And now brethren, our whole heart is laid open to you, and to the world. If a majority of our Church are against us, (as we have too much reason to apprehend it is,) they will, we suppose, in the end, either see the infatuation of their course, and retrace their steps; or they will, at last, attempt to cut us off. If the former, we shall bless the God of Jacob; if the latter, we desire to stand ready for the sake of Christ, and in support of the Testimony, now made, to endure whatever suffering may be required of us by our Lord. We have here frankly, openly, and candidly, laid before our erring brethren, the course we are, by the grace of God, irrevocably determined to pursue. It is our steadfast aim to reform the Church, or to testify against its errors and defections, until testimony will be no longer heard. And we commit the issue into the hands of Him, who is over all, God blessed forever. AMEN."

NOTE.—Some portions of the above recommendation, together with most of the closing paragraph, are taken from the Act and Testimony, A. D. 1855.

NAMES.

MINISTERS.	RULING ELDERS.
SAMUEL R. WILSON,	SAMUEL CASSEDAV,
JAMES H. BROOKES,	JOHN WATSON,
SAM'L E. McPHERTERS,	A. DAVIDSON,
ROBERT F. FARRIS,	C. A. WICKLIFFE,
ROBERT MORRISON,	PETER JETT,
WM. T. McELROY,	SAM'L B. SHANNON,
FRANCIS THORNTON,	D. McCULLOCH,
W. L. NORTSE,	THOS. W. DUBSON,
J. V. COBBET,	JACOB JOHNSON,
W. W. DUNCAN,	D. L. BROOKS,
H. H. HOPKINS,	J. C. BROWN.
STUART ROBISON.	

Adopted by the Presbytery of Louisville, at Bardstown, September 2d, A. D. 1865.

W. W. DUNCAN, Moderator.
ROBERT MORRISON, Stated Clerk.

NOTICE.

Those Ministers and Ruling Elders, who concur in this TESTIMONY, are requested to send their names to the Rev. James H. Brookes, D. D., St. Louis, Mo.; or the Rev. S. R. Wilson, D. D., Louisville, Ky.

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