

# R. E. M. A. R. K. S.

*American Antiquarian*

U P O N A

*Society*

## PROTESTATION

P R E S E N T E D T O

T H E S Y N O D O F

P H I L A D E L P H I A,

*June 1. 1741.*

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By GILBERT TENNENT, A. M. and Minister  
of the Gospel in *New-Brunswick, New-Jersey.*

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PROV. XVIII. 17.

*He that is first in his own Cause, seemeth just; but his  
Neighbour cometh and searcheth him.*

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P H I L A D E L P H I A

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# P R E

Candid READER,

**I** HAVE thro' bodily Indisposition and many Avocations, been prevented writing the following Remarks so soon as I intended.

IT is with some Degree of Reluctance, that I enter the thorny Maze of Controversy; and more especially with my Brethren.

I would much rather we had been contending in a united Way, who of Us should do most in promoting vital Godliness amongst us.

AND I can't but think, That, if peaceful Measures had been concerted, the last Synod, and suitably pursued, the Ferment of Opposition would have, in some Course of Time, languished and expired.

I can sincerely declare, that it was with a View to promote Peace and Union, that I went to the last Synod; and I know that others of my Brethren, who are now rejected, were of the same Disposition.

**BUT** Affairs being brought to a sudden Crisis, a melancholy Necessity urges our just Vindication.

**ALL** that I desire of the Reader, is an impartial Consideration of what is proposed in the following Sheets, after humble Supplication to GOD for Light and Direction.

**MAY** the All-powerful Sovereign of the Universe, and King of the Church, over-rule these uncomfortable Debates, to his own Glory, and his Kingdom's Good. I add no more; but remain

Thy Servant in CHRIST,

G. TENNENT.



I.

# R E M A R K S

Upon the INTRODUCTION  
to the Protestation.

*Am. Antiq. Soc.*



OUR Brethren observe justly, ' That  
' there was some Dissatisfaction in  
' the Minds of some of the Synod,  
(the Occasion thereof was two Acts or  
Canons made by the Majority, which  
are afterwards mentioned) ' the Re-  
' moval of which, it's said, was in-  
' dustriously try'd by the greater Part of that Body.'  
It is true Proposals were made, and that by Persons on  
both Sides of the Question; which ought in Justice to  
have been observ'd. ' The Rev. Mr. Jonathan Dickin-  
' son did offer such an Overture, (as our Protesting  
' Brethren mention) viz. Of getting the State of the  
' Case debated drawn up, by the Consent of both Parties,  
' and sent to the General Assembly of the Church of  
' Scotland, or to their Commission, or to the General  
' Synod in Ireland, &c.' We gave in before the Synod  
in Writing; the Reasons why we declined a Compliance  
with this Proposal; which our Protesting Brethren  
thought proper to omit entirely: We were of Opinion,  
that a Representation of the State of Debate, consented

to by both Parties, would be exceeding difficult, if practicable. Again, we thought, that this would keep the Matter in a long and uncomfortable Suspense; not to say, that after repeated and deliberate Enquiries, we were fully fixed in our Judgment, and found the Smiles of Heaven upon our Practice, according to it. And therefore, to consent to make Application to distant Judicatories, where Matters might be misrepresented, when we were Conscience-bound in the controverted Affair, was, we thought, but a Tempting of GOD; and would, as we conceived, insinuate what was not true, *namely*, That we were **not** fixed in our Judgment, when the Case was otherwise.

But altho' we couldn't ~~consent~~ with the Dictates of our Consciences, comply ~~with~~ the Measures which the ~~the~~ *aforesaid* Gentleman proposed; yet in the general, we cannot but approve of his taking Pains to preserve a Union in this Infant-Church. And I am of Opinion, that, if our Protesting Brethren were of the same Catholick Principles with him and the rest of the Brethren of that Presbytery, they would not have forced such a sudden Rupture as they have done.

Our Protesting Brethren proceed to observe, ' That still the Synod used their Endeavours to accommodate this Difference, --- that they protested and assured us, that they had no other Design in their late Act or Agreement, but to secure a learned Ministry, &c.' --- Well; and didn't we on the other Hand, whom they have rejected, assert the same Thing, *viz.* That we desired and designed a well-qualified Ministry as much as our Brethren? Only we thought that the Method, which the controverted Act proposed, infringed upon the Rights of Presbyteries, which we could by no Means give into, either by a Compliance with the Act, or any Equivalent: We judged the *aforesaid* Design sufficiently secur'd, without overturning the Plan of our Government.

As

As to what is said concerning ' the Overture brought in by the Rev. Mr. *Gillespy* -- and my declaring (as is said) upon that Occasion, that the protesting Brethren would be only accountable to the Synod for their Conduct in Licensing and Ordaining Candidates --- and that I insisted, that they should be obliged to receive all whom we should license or ordain.'

So far as I remember, the Case was thus; I was then as I am now, willing to come into all regular Subordination of Judicatories to one another; but what I principally intended to oppose, was this, *namely*, A superior Judiciary's assuming to itself a Power, upon groundless Jealousies and Surmises, arbitrarily to examine over again, Candidates who had been in an orderly Manner licensed or ordained: I apprehended, that if this was given into, as it would encourage Uncharitableness, so it would effectually baffle all our Endeavours to maintain the respective Rights of different Judicatories.

I confess I was in some Suspense of Mind, not having studied the Point, what Power the superior Judiciary had to invalidate the Acts of the inferior in the particular Case refer'd to. I do not well remember what I said upon that Head; but what I said, was not by Concert with my Brethren; and if there was a Mistake in it, it was not theirs but mine.

It is like that I might urge the Reasonableness and Necessity of the Synod's receiving as Members of their Body, such as we did license and ordain; without calling them to any farther Account: And this, in ordinary Cases, is no more than what is rational, and what has been practised by the Synod of *Philadelphia*, ever since it had a Being. And therefore to say that this Practice would ruin our Constitution --- as our Brethren suggest, is in Effect to say, that to act according to the Frame of our Constitution, tends to destroy it; and that our Synod have been ruining their

own Constitution, ever before the controverted Act was fram'd. It's true when Matters of Complaint are offered against any particular Candidate, no doubt they ought to be judged of, according to their Weight and Evidence; but to set up a Court of Inquisition, is, I think, of dangerous Tendency.

• But tho' our Brethren severely censured One whom we had ordained, contrary to their Canon, without hearing him in his own Defence, and would not admit him as a Member of their Body; yet we never pretended to separate from them upon this Occasion. And here it may be observed, That, in order to remove the Jealousies some of our Brethren seem'd to entertain respecting our Care as to human Learning in Candidates, one of our Number offer'd a Proposal of this Tendency to the Synod, That we were willing they should appoint Two of their Number to be present at our Examination of Candidates for the Ministry; who, if they found us guilty of male Conduct, might accuse us before the Synod. But some were not satisfied with that Proposal, urging that a Majority should sit with us in our Judicatory; which we could by no Means consent to, because it would take away the Power of our Judicatory, by setting a Negative over it.

Our Brethren farther observe, ' That while they were making fruitless Proposals to accommodate the Difference, they found their protesting Brethren industriously laying the Foundation of a Separation, and going farther from them by their Practices than ever, for they claimed (say they) as their particular Right, by Virtue of the Rev. Mr. *Whitefield's* Orders, to preach at *Society-Hill*, and would not allow any but themselves and Adherents this Privilege; tho' it was desired in Favour of Mr. *Dickenson*; and thus, in some Measure, they refused ministerial Communion with the Synod, when requested.'

A.

A. Here it is insinuated, that what was done in the aforesaid Affair, was done by the joynt Consent of all the Brethren, whom they oppose; which was not Fact: If there be any Fault in the aforesaid Business, it is my own intirely; however I will relate the Reasons of my Conduct, and leave them to the Reader's Judgment.

When Application was made to me, as aforesaid, I was in some Confusion of Thoughts for a Time, and knew not well what to do. But being informed, that the People of the Town generally desired to hear those who did preach on the Hill, more than others; I tho't it would be an Imposition upon them, to do otherwise than I did. The Stage being rais'd for the Rev. Mr. *Whitefield* by his Friends, did, as I conceived, properly belong to them, and therefore was to be disposed of by their Direction. Mr. *Whitefield* having publicly advised his Friends, to hear some particular Ministers, whom he expressed a peculiar Value for; If I had encourag'd others, without his Consent, to come into his Pulpit, I knew not but that it might be offensive to him. And I confess I had an earnest Desire to preach myself at the Time requested; it being the Season, when in all Probability the greatest Number would convene.

I think it strange, that the Protesters should call this a Breach of Communion with the Synod: Pray, is one Member the whole Synod, or was any Request made in the Name of the Synod? I would have been far from denying the aforesaid Gentleman, or any other of the Brethren, the Liberty of my own Pulpit; but the Stage was what I had not a Right to dispose of. I may farther add, That I had no Thoughts of what our protesting Brethren suggest, viz. Of opening a Breach with the Synod, by the aforesaid Transaction.

If any of our Number have refused to keep Christian and ministerial Communion with any of the protesting Brethren, since the Time aforesaid; I doubt not but

they will be able, at a proper Season, to vindicate their Conduct in so doing. But this by the by I may observe, That the greater Part of those who are now rejected, (so far as I know) have not refused Communion with their Brethren.

As to what is farther alledged, in respect of our encouraging the Flocks of our Protestant Brethren to forsake their Ministry, I know nothing of this. I have not done it myself, neither do I know of any of our Number that has.

Whether our Protestant Brethren be sound Divines, and of a Gospel-Conversation, will probably farther appear, in the Course of this Debate.

‘ And thus, they say, we have industriously rent their Congregations, by unscriptural Methods, without taking Notice of Christ’s Rules, *Matth.* 16.

*A.* That there have been some Divisions consequent upon our Preaching in some Places, we acknowledge; but that we industriously or designedly rent their Congregations, by unscriptural Methods, we deny.

As to the Papers of Complaint, which our Brethren now call Libels, they contained Grievances distressing to us, which we thought it our Duty to make publick Mention of; and the Synod, I remember, did not think proper to censure us for so doing. We did then offer to prove the Matters of Charge against particular Members, if the Synod required it; but this was wav’d.

As to what is farther alledged of Mr. Blair, my Brother Charles, and Myself, that we were earnestly pressed by the Presbytery of *Newcastle*, to table our Complaints against them, if we could convict any of them of any Thing unbecoming a Minister of the Gospel; but all to no Purpose. As to my Brethrens declining to offer Complaints at that Time, they are of Age, and able to speak for themselves. As to my own Conduct, this, I think, may be a sufficient Apology, *namely*, That the Proposal was Matter of Surprize to me;

me; I had no Thought about any such Thing, before it was mentioned in the Face of the Judicatory; my meeting with the Presbytery at that Time and Place, was meerly accidental; and my entering into a judicial Process against any of them, was utterly inconsistent with my Design, and previous Appointments, of Itinerary Preaching.

From the Particulars aforesaid, our protesting Brethren conclude, ‘ That the Separation has been made by us, for a considerable Time past, tho’ we were united ‘ in Name:’ But how justly, I leave to the impartial Reader to determine.

The Truth is, tho’ we differed in Sentiment from our Brethren in respect of some Acts or Canons they had made; yet we designed no Separation from them upon that Account; we thought that mutual Forbearance would be the best Expedient in the Case aforesaid. As we desired Liberty of acting according to our Consciences, in the controverted Affair; so we were far from a Desire of imposing our Judgment upon our Brethren, or imagining that there was a Necessity of Separation upon the Account of the aforesaid Diversity of Sentiment.

Our Protestant Brethren, in their Narrative, have quite omitted any Mention of the late extraordinary Act or Canon fram’d by the Presbytery of *Donnegal*, which *ipso facto* excommunicates, or deprives of Church-Privileges, all of their People that go to hear any of the Itinerary Preachers.

Whether this shew’d a Disposition to Peace and Union, I leave others to determine.

Our Protestant Brethren add, ‘ That at their meeting this Year, when they called to Mind, how unsuccessful they had been in using all healing Measures, that this damped their Hopes, and cut off all probable Grounds to think that we would listen to any new Proposals of this Kind; and therefore they chose

‘ chose to lay open some of their crying Grievances,  
 ‘ and to complain of our infringing and violating the  
 ‘ known Rights of Presbytery, &c. --- That if we  
 ‘ had any Intention to an Accommodation, or were  
 ‘ resolved to adhere to the Presbyterial Constitution,  
 ‘ this would open a Door for us to make Proposals for  
 ‘ Peace, and to testify our Dislike to Confusions and  
 ‘ Disorders in Christ’s Church: But after much Time  
 ‘ spent (say they) without being allowed to enter into  
 ‘ the Merits of the Cause --- by a meer Circumstance;  
 ‘ --- This put them out of all Hopes of obtaining Peace  
 ‘ with their protesting Brethren upon Scriptural Terms.’

A. The Case, so far as I remember, was thus; When the Roll was call’d, the Protesting Brethren having Exceptions against Mr. *Craighead*, and having suspended him, thought it proper for the Synod to enquire into that Matter first, before they proceeded to other Business; which Motion was comply’d with. Hereupon the Presbytery who had passed the Censure, related divers Reasons for their so doing, (in their Minutes) and among others this, of his preaching in Mr. *Allison’s* Congregation without Leave. --- Mr. *Allison* several Times desired, that this Article might be considered, immediately and separately by itself; this we opposed, as judging it reasonable that it should be considered in the Place and Order it was brought in before us, namely together with the other Reasons of the Presbytery’s Process against Mr. *Craighead*; tho’ in the mean time, we often declared our Willingness to reason upon, and consider that Matter distinctly, in its proper Time and Place. But after we had entered upon the Consideration of Mr. *Craighead’s* Affair, not being able to come to any final Determination about it, for want of Evidence; while some of the Members were discoursing about referring the Affair to a Committee, I was surprized to see Mr. *John Thomson* rising up, and hear him protesting against some Brethren in the Synod (who he said were of a different  
 Opinion

Opinion from the rest) being concerned in the Committee. This inclined me to think, that our Brethren were determined for a Rupture, and discourag’d my proposing an Overture for Peace and Accommodation, which I was waiting for an Opportunity to communicate.

This Incident also strengthened my Perswasion (as aforesaid) namely, that when according to the Order of last Year’s Minutes, they should have appointed a Committee for the Fund, as usual, they wav’d it to another Time.

Their whole Management look’d in my Opinion, like a pre-concerted Scheme; and if our protesting Brethren would candidly tell the Truth, I’m perswaded they would acknowledge, That before they came to *Philadelphia* this Year, they had resolved on a Rupture, and so prepared Matters for it.

However I couldn’t perswade myself, that Matters would be brought to such a sudden Crisis, as they were, by Mr. *Robert Cross’s* bringing in of a Protest, and desiring it might be read. After the reading of this, our Brethren signed it with great Precipitation; and altho’ we desired to be heard, again and again, upon the Reasons of the Protest, our Brethren were deaf to our Importunity, till they had finished the tragick Scene.

And yet they declare a Willingness to receive us, with all Tenderness, upon our hearty Return to the Obevation of the Rules of the *Presbyterian* Constitution; (what, with all the Errors they charge us of being guilty of? O strange!) But whether this Declaration be consistent with the aforesaid Practice, let others judge.





II.

# R E M A R K S

## U P O N A P R O T E S T A T I O N

Presented to the SYNOD,

June 1. 1741.

**I**N what preceeds the Articles of Protest, these Things following may be observed.

1. The Protesters acknowledge, ' That notwithstanding of the comely Order and sweet Harmony, which they say have subsisted in this organized Church, for above these Thirty Years past, in a very great Degree; that there was a great Decay of practical Godliness in the Life and Power it, and many abounding Immoralities.' If so, then we query, Why was not this tragical Outcry raised before, of the Expiring of this Infant-Church? --- Is there not more Reason of Complaint, when there is a Decay of vital Religion, than when Church-Order is broken? upon the Supposition the Charge be true. Is it not unreasonable to take more Care about the Tything of Mint, Anise and Cumin, than the weightier Matters of the Law?

2. The protesting Brethren inform us, ' That they are wounded and grieved at their very Hearts, at the dreadful Divisions, Distractions and Convulsions, which, they say, have all of a sudden seized this little

' Infant-

' Infant-Church, to such a Degree, that she is in no small Danger of expiring outright, as to the Form, and Order, and Constitution of an organiz'd Church --- unless he who is the King in Zion do interpose!

Well, no doubt, Divisions are to be lamented, in respect of their Authors and Tendency; because of the Guilt hereby contracted, and the Prejudice hereby frequently occasioned, to inconsiderate and unregenerate Sinners.

Yet we are far from imagining, with our protesting Brethren, that this Church is in such Danger as they apprehend upon the aforesaid Account; because we are assured by the sacred Oracles, that the spreading Power of Religion is usually attended with the aforesaid Consequences, in a greater or lesser Degree. Our Lord himself informs us, that he *came not to send Peace upon Earth, but a Sword, Fire and Division; and to set at Variance one Relation against another.* Not that the Gospel is the proper Cause of such Divisions; no, but the innocent Occasion only.

The protesting Brethren proceed to inform us, ' that after the most deliberate and unprejudiced Enquiry into the Causes of these Confusions, they evidently see, that their protesting Brethren, and their Adherents, are the direct and proper Cause thereof, by their unscriptural, anti-presbyterial, uncharitable and divisive Practices; which they have been pursuing (say they) with all the Industry, they have been capable of, for above these twelve Months past, &c.

Here, after, we hope, an impartial Examination of the Case, we must beg leave to differ in Sentiments from our Brethren, and to ascribe the present Debates to a different and more early Source.

That which, in our Opinion, gave Rise to the present Controversy among us, was our Brethren's Framing two Acts or Canons some Years past; the one respecting the Admission of Candidates to the Ministry, and the other against itinerary Preaching. We

We conceiving the aforesaid Laws to be (in our Opinion) unscriptural and arbitrary, as well as of fatal Tendency to mar the Progress of the Work of God in this Land; did judge ourselves obliged, in Conscience, to oppose them, both by Speech and Practice. Our Brethren, on the Contrary, thought it proper to maintain them 'til last Year. That against itinerary Preaching has drop'd; but the other was still preserved.

Our Brethren express their Protest with extraordinary Solemnity, but we hope that this Method, without sufficient Evidence and Foundation, will not influence the Impartial and Judicious.

We agree to the first Article of their Protest, *namely*,  
 ' That it is the Duty of this Synod to maintain and  
 ' stand by the Principles of Doctrine, Worship and  
 ' Government, as the same are summed up in the Con-  
 ' fession of Faith, Catechisms and Directory, composed  
 ' by the *Westminster* Assembly, which this Synod have  
 ' adopted.'

We also judge, that Part of the Second is reasonable,  
 ' *namely*, ' That the Confession of Faith, Catechisms,  
 ' and Directory, should be adopted by the Members of  
 ' the Synod: But, that no Person should be allowed to  
 ' sit and vote in the Synod who acts or persists in any  
 ' Practice contrary to any Rules contained in the Di-  
 ' rectory, or Orders made by the Synod, until he pro-  
 ' fesses of his Sorrow for such sinful Disorder, to the  
 ' Satisfaction of the Synod, or such inferior Judicatory,  
 ' as the Synod shall appoint for that Purpose;' is, we  
 think unreasonably severe.

According to this Plan, not only all the Rules in the Directory, are Terms of Communion, but also every Canon, form'd by the Majority, is a new Term added thereto, which may be multiplied yearly to an immense Volume.

And if one did adopt the Directory, in the strictest Sense, it is no sufficient Security against Exclusion, un-  
 less

less he can swallow all the after-Canons, which shall be contrived by the Majority.

Such a Scheme allows no Mercy for scrupulous Consciences, and renders synodical Communion as precarious as the variable Humours and Fancies of Men.

In Adopting of the Directory, the Synod declared, that they were resolved to conform to it in Practice as far as was suitable to the Circumstances of the Church in this Country. This Resolution we adhere to.

But altho' we highly approve of the Plan of Government, asserted in the Directory; yet we think it hard and unreasonable to make every Rule in it a Term of synodical Communion: For at this Rate our protesting Brethren would be excluded from the Synod also.

And we can't but think it strange, that our protesting Brethren should with such Solemnity declare to the World (in Effect) that they themselves have no Right to sit and vote in the Synod; for they act and persist in Practices contrary to the Doctrines and Rules of the Directory, as will appear by the following Instances.

The Directory saith, that the Scripture doth hold out Deacons as distinct Officers in the Church. But have our protesting Brethren any such?

The Directory saith, it is convenient that ordinarily one Chapter of each Testament be read at every Meeting; and that the Canonical Books be read over in Order. Do our Brethren observe this?

The Directory saith, concerning Marriage, that the Minister is publickly to solemnize it, in the Place appointed by Authority for publick Worship. Do our Brethren observe this?

The Directory saith, that he that is to be ordained, must bring with him a Testimonial of his taking the Covenant of the three Kingdoms, and that he be 24 Years old, &c. Do our Brethren observe this, or think it should be observ'd upon Pain of Exclusion?

The Directory saith, that the Power of ordering the whole Work of Ordination, is in the whole Presbytery. May our protesting Brethren be reasonably supposed to like this well, when they have cast us off for Conformity to it?

How little Mercy soever our Brethren were disposed to shew to us, yet we think they should have had some upon themselves!

The three following Articles, being grounded on the former, fall with it. But,

I must proceed to consider the *Reasons* of the Protest.

The *first* alledg'd is the Charge of 'heterodox and anarchical Principles, in denying (as is said) that Presbyteries have Authority to bind their dissenting Members,' &c. For the Confirmation of which they refer to the 28th and 29th Pages of our Apology. Our protesting Brethren think 'that the Tendency of the afore said Pages, is to vest the Officers and Judicatories of Christ of all Authority, and that they contradict the 31st Article of the *Westminster* Confession of Faith, which we have adopted.'

*A.* We cannot discover the Justness of the Consequence our Brethren speak of. We think that all that Authority, which is consistent with the Rights of Conscience, and private Judgment, and the Peace of the Church, is asserted in the Pages referred to.

No doubt it is the Duty of Synods to have a Confession of Faith, in which they ought to express their Sentiments, concerning the Essentials of Doctrine, Worship, and Discipline; which ought to be adopted by those they admit as Members of their Body.

But to suppose that a Majority of that Body, who have comply'd with the afore said Terms of Communion, are vested with a Power authoritatively to make new Laws or Acts, from time to time, binding the smaller Number to obey them, who conscientiously scruple and oppose them, and that from the very Time  
of

of their Formation, so that they shall be excluded from synodical Communion, upon their conscientious Dissent and Non-conformity, is, we think, to signify, that the Confession of Faith and Directory already agreed to, is insufficient to answer its Design, without additional Articles, and Terms of Communion; as well as to open a Door for continual Oppressions, Schisms, and Convulsions in the Christian Church.

If a Majority of the Brethren, after adopting the Confession of Faith, &c. as aforesaid, shall judge some new Rules or Acts necessary for the Good of the Church, no doubt they may agree to observe them, and may reason with their scrupulous Brethren concerning their supposed Lawfulness or Expediency; but if conscientious Scruples notwithstanding remain, we think it unscriptural and severe, to exclude them from synodical Communion for such a Dissent in Judgment; in such Cases we judge that mutual Forbearance will better answer the Design of Government, *viz.* The Edification of the Body of Christ, than any rigorous Measures whatsoever, in imposing new Terms of Communion.

As to Appeals or References, we think our Brethren don't give a full and fair Representation of the Case, as it is in the Apology, to which we refer the Reader for Satisfaction.

We would hope, that our Brethren will not labour to defend any supposed Authority in Synods, to infringe upon the Rights of Conscience and private Judgment, which we think ought to be preserved as sacred and inviolable. We know of no Authority on Earth, that can bind us without the Word of God, and it is our own and not another's Judgment of that Word, which we are to follow.

We cannot see any Inconsistency, between our Sentiments expressed in the Apology, and the 31st Article of our Confession. The Article says, that it belongs to Synods and Councils, *ministerially* (not magisterially) to  
B determine

determine Controversies of Faith, --- and altho' the Article speaks of an Authority, to determine concerning Complaints about male Administration; yet it afterwards informs us, that these Decrees and Determinations, *if consonant to the Word of God*, are to be received with Submission. --- This plainly implies, that if we don't apprehend the Decrees aforesaid to be agreeable to the Word of God, we should not submit to them; and therefore it's added, in the next Paragraph, That 'Synods or Councils are not to be made the Rule of Faith or Practice; seeing that all of them since the Apostolick Times, may err, and many have.' Our Confession urges no other Subjection, but in the Lord, and asserts 'his alone Sovereignty over Conscience, and that he hath left it free from the Doctrines or Commandments of Men, which are in any Thing contrary to his Word, or beside it, in Matters of Faith or Worship; so that to believe such Doctrines, or obey such Commands, out of Conscience, is to betray true Liberty of Conscience: And the requiring of an implicit Faith, and an absolute blind Obedience, is to destroy Liberty of Conscience, and Reason also.' See Confess. chap. 20. paragr. 2.

We acknowledge all that Authority, which consists with the Rights of Conscience, and private Judgment; but in the mean Time we cannot but abhor an implicit Faith, and blind Obedience, whatsoever plausible Epithets of Order and Government they may be garnished with, or whatsoever Churchmen they may be urged by notwithstanding.

A second Reason of the Protest, is 'our protesting against the Synod's Act in relation to the Examination of Candidates, together with our Proceeding to license and ordain Men to the Ministry of the Gospel, in Opposition to, and Contempt of said Act of Synod.'

In order to understand the Nature of this Act, as well as the Reasons of our Protest against it, I must refer the Reader

Reader to the Apology hereto annexed: And shall only at present add, That our protesting Brethren misrepresented the Case, when they say we ordained Men; it was but One we ordained, contrary to the Synod's Act.

If our Brethren by these Expressions, viz. *And Contempt of said Act of Synod*, design to insinuate, that in our Practice aforesaid, we contemned the scriptural Authority of the Synod, or the Judgment of the Majority of our Brethren, they wrong us; we gave all that Deference to our Brethren's Authority and Judgment, which was consistent with our irrefragable Right of Thinking for ourselves; we endeavour'd to examine, with all the Impartiality and Care we were capable of, the Reasons of our Brethren's Judgment, after supplicating Jehovah for Light and Direction; and not finding the Arguments upon which they went, in our Opinion, relevant or sufficient, we were constrained by our Consciences to act as we have done.

But tho' we did protest against what we apprehended (after deliberate Enquiries) to be wrong in our Brethren's Conduct, a Practice not unusual in Judicatories of our Denomination; yet we were far from carrying Matters to the present Crisis, which our Brethren have done by their Protest, namely, to exclude our Dissenting Brethren from Communion upon that Account.

The third Reason of the Protest, is 'our making irregular Interruptions (as they say) upon the Congregations of others, without Order or Allowance, --- sowing the Seeds of Division among People, and doing what we could to alienate their Minds with unjust Prejudices, against their lawfully called Pastors.'

Here these Things following may be observed, viz. That what is proper in ordinary Cases may be prejudicial in Extraordinaries; when the Church is planted with a sound, faithful and lively Ministry, no doubt, those Rules respecting Ministers keeping within the Bounds of their particular Charges, until they are invi-

ted in an orderly Manner to go elsewhere, may be of Service: But upon the Supposition that a Number of of the Ministry are either unsound in Doctrine, or unfaithful, and contentedly unsuccessful in their Work: Then is it not lawful to suspend the aforesaid Rules for a Season? especially in such a Situation of Affairs as this; *namely*, when there is an earnest Thirsting, in a Number of the People, after the close and affectionate Preaching of the Word; and Ministers being also importuned by some of the People of the Places whither they travel'd, find themselves spirited to uncommon Labours, and perceive those attended with uncommon Successes.

But what our Synod did the last Year, at their Session, in my Apprehension, weakens the Force of the preceding Reasons: Did they not cashier and vacate an Act formerly made against itinerary Preaching, and openly in the Face of the World, acknowledge that there was a Work of God carrying on in the Land, and express their Gratitude to God for it? Did not Mr. *Robert Cross*, who introduced this Protest, at that time, in a particular Manner, speak honourably of the Work of God aforesaid, and of itinerary Preaching, and excite his Brethren to invite such into their Pulpits, mentioning what he and his Collegue had done to this Purpose in *Philadelphia*? What is the Occasion of this sudden Change, that what was then allowed of by our Synod, should now, by some of the same Persons, be loaded with bad Names of unscriptural, anti-presbyterial, uncharitable, divisive Practices, and barefac'd Arrogance; and that a Number of Ministers (equal to those that cast them off) should be rejected, because that they were said to follow what was approved of last Year, and that before they were heard in their own Defence?

What is the Reason that our protesting Brethren were so full in Favour of the Work of God last Year, in their publick Speeches and Acknowledgments; and that they  
make

make no honourable mention of it in their Protest this Year? Has a little Space of Time alter'd the Nature of Things?

But supposing that Ministers were both sound and faithful, would it not be of Service to the Church of God for such as are sincere of their own Communion especially, to preach in their Places? And if so, is it not their Duty to invite them? Which if they neglect or refuse, when a proper Occasion offers, are they not guilty of an uncharitable and divisive Practice? This, as I am informed, has been done by more than one of our protesting Brethren.

As to what is alledged, of our 'sowing the Seeds of Division among other Congregations, and doing what we can to alienate and fill their Minds with unjust Prejudices against their lawfully called Pastors; is, I believe, without sufficient Foundation;' the Seed sown by myself and Brethren, so far as I know, is the Word of God. I hope our protesting Brethren will not call that the Seed of Division. And our Intention in itinerary Preaching was not as our Brethren unkindly suggest, to alienate and fill the Minds of the People with unjust Prejudices against their Pastors; but to glorify God, and bring Sinners to him. But the Truth is, that some of those who were awakened, without any Speech of ours in their Prejudice, have entertain'd, of their own accord, meaner Thoughts of the Ministry of some of our protesting Brethren than formerly. *THIS, THIS*, seems to have alarmed their Jealousies and Resentments about and against the Work of God, and such Instruments as he has been pleas'd graciously to use in promoting of it.

Again, the aforesaid Reason of Protest, seems to insinuate, that all of us, whom they have excluded from their Judicatories, have preached in the Congregations of other Ministers without their Consent; A Charge which cannot be fairly proved. But to proceed: The  
*Fourth*

*Fourth Reason of Protest*, is (as they say) ‘ our Principles and Practice, of which, Judging and Condemning all who do not fall in with our Measures, both Ministers and People, as carnal, graceless and Enemies to the Work of God. For the Proof of this, they refer to my Sermon against unconverted Ministers, and to two Papers of Complaint offer’d to the Synod last Year, by Mr. Blair, and myself.’ *Answer*; We know of nothing in the aforesaid Sermon and Papers that gave Ground to the aforesaid Charge. We own that rash Judging is a Sin against God; but we know of nothing in our Principles that leads to it. We are far from such Narrowness and Bigotry as to imagine that all God’s Ministers and People are coop’d up within the Verge of any one particular Denomination; or that they are all of our Sentiments, and willing to comply with our Measures in lesser Things.

Our Brethren alledge, ‘ that rash Judging has been our constant Practice for above Twelve-Months past, as well as of (as they call them) our disorderly Probatationers.’ This Charge, our Opponents, we think, will not be able to prove. Indeed, we have been very jealous about our protesting Brethren’s States towards God, because of their inconsistent Conduct in respect of the Work of God, sometimes Approving and sometimes Disapproving of it; and representing of it in a gloomy Dress, because of some uncommon Incidents and Circumstances, which might admit of a favourable Interpretation. Has not Mr. John Thompson ‘ term’d the late Revival of God’s Work a new-fangled Stir about Religion; as also a spiritual Frenzy? And have not the Authors of the Pamphlet, entituled, *The Wandering Spirit*, expressed great Bitterness against it? We have Reason to suspect some of our protesting Brethren to be guilty of Forming that malignant Satyr: And are there not some shrewd Strokes of this kind in the *Sixth Reason of the Protest*, which we are now considering?

We

We are sorry that our protesting Brethren have, by their Speeches and Conduct, given us such Reason to believe them to be Opposers of God’s Work.

As to what is said in the Conclusion of the present Argument, *namely*, ‘ that since their Congregations have been shatter’d and divided, few or none of them can say that they have that Comfort or Success among their People which they enjoyed before. As to Comfort, we believe them; but respecting Success, we thought it had been the same as formerly; for, truly, this is the first time that ever we have heard of the Success of most of them. The

*Fifth Reason of the Protest*, is, that ‘ we (as they say) industriously persuade People to believe, that the Call of God whereby he calls Men to the Ministry does not consist in their being regularly ordained, &c. but in some invisible Motions and Workings of the Spirit: And that the Gospel preached in Truth by unconverted Ministers, can be of no saving Benefit to Souls. In answer to the aforesaid Charge, we declare our Opinion as follows, *namely*, we believe that there is a Necessity of previous Tryals and Ordination in order to the Ministry; and that such who are regularly set apart, being sound in Doctrine, and blameless in Life. however their inward State may be, are true Ministers in the Sight of the Church, and that their Ministrations are valid. But in the mean time, we think that none should undertake the ministerial Work but those that are truly gracious; those that intend therein chiefly the Glory of God and Good of Mankind; those that are inclined of God thereto: For we know not how a graceless Man can be faithful in the Ministry. Now, whether those inward, pious Dispositions aforesaid be termed the inward Call of God to the Gospel-Ministry, or only Qualifications necessary or pre-requisite in the Persons whom God calls, it seems to be the same in Substance. A Debate about Words we judge needless.

As

As to what is farther alledged in this Paragraph, *namely*, ' that the Gospel preached by unconverted Ministers in Truth can be of no saving Benefit to Souls, according to our Opinion. This Charge we deny as slanderous. God, as an absolute Sovereign, may use what Means he pleases to accomplish his Work by. We only assert this, that Success by unconverted Ministers Preaching is very improbable, and very seldom happens, so far as we can gather. Alas, for them poor Souls! partly thro' Ignorance of the Nature of *vital* Religion, and partly thro' a native Enmity against it, and partly thro' Fear of losing their Credit, &c. by its Spread near their Borders; they are under great Temptations (instead of Befriending of it) to rise up against it, and try to pull it down by all their Art and Eloquence. The

*Sixth* Reason of the Protest, is, ' our Preaching (as they say) the Terrors of the Law in such a Manner and Dialect as hath no Precedent in the Word of God, but rather appears to be borrow'd from a worse Dialect; and seditiously Working on the Passions of weak Minds as to cause them to cry out in a dismal Manner, and fall down in Convulsion like-Fits, to the Marring of the Profiting both of themselves and others, who are so taken up in Hearing and Seeing their odd Symptoms, that they cannot attend to, or hear what the Preacher says; after all Boasting of these Things as the Work of God; which we are persuaded do proceed from an inferior or worse Cause.'

*A.* This Reason, when applied to all whom they reject, as it doubtless is by our Opponents, which their indefinite Manner of Expression signifies, is groundless and slanderous. We challenge our Opponents to prove their invidious Charge against the greater Part of those whom they have rejected: If any one of our Number has been guilty of Indiscretion at any time in his Manner of Address to the People, we will not pretend to justify

justify it; but to charge the Whole with this Fault, is unjust.

We know not that we use any Dialect in inculcating the Terrors of the Law, but what accords with Scripture and Reason; or that we endeavour to excite the lower Passions, but after the Information of the Understanding, and that by scriptural Incentives: Which is so far from being seditious, that it is the Duty of every Gospel Minister. We are bid to cry aloud and not to spare; to shew to *Judah* her Transgressions, and to the House of *Jacob* her Sins. *Knowing the Terrors of the Lord, we must persuade Men.* If we speak smooth Things, or please Men, we are not the Ministers of Jesus Christ.

If any one among us has boasted of People's falling into Convulsion-like-Fits as the Work of God, as our Opponents suggest, I think it is a culpable Weakness in the Person guilty of it. It is, doubtless, the Duty of People to labour to keep their Passions within due Bounds, especially in publick Assemblies, lest they interrupt their own and others Edification.

I know of none among the rejected Brethren who look upon the afore said Convulsion-like-Fits to be a sufficient Evidence of the Work of God.

We only judge such Appearances to be probable Indications of Concern of Mind, which when it issues in a Closure with Christ by Faith, a Communion with him by Love, and Conformity to him in humble Holiness; we believe it to be a special Work of God's Grace: But even before it has those Effects, while Sinners are only bewailing Sin, chiefly thro' Fear of divine Wrath, we think we have Reason to hope that it is a common Work of that Holy Spirit, whom Christ has promised, to convince of Sin, in order to Conversion and Consolation.

' And altho' some under Conviction of Sin, should be overcome by an Excess of Sorrow or Fear, we think that

that a milder Construction might be put upon this, than to ascribe it to the Devil.

In the mean time it may be observed, that there are but a few that are overcome as aforesaid, in Comparison of the Multitudes that are convinced.

It may be prov'd, by many Witnesses, that several Times when the Truths of God have been preach'd in the mildest Gospel-Strains, that many Persons have been overcome with Love, Joy or Sorrow.

What worse Representation of the Work of God, now Spreading in the World, could be expected from a professed Enemy of all Religion, than we have from our Brethren? Is it not doleful to see Religion thus wounded in the House of its professed Friends?

Do they not manifestly make use of an uncommon Circumstance to blacken the whole Work?

But while our protesting Brethren were expressing warm Resentments against the Work of God, under the plausible Umbrage of a seemingly exceptionable Incident; methinks they should have taken some Care to avoid horrid Reflecting against the sacred Scriptures, and even against God himself.

When they say we preach the Terrors of the Law in such a Dialect as hath no Precedent in the Word of God, but rather appears to be borrow'd from a worse Dialect: Does not this, comparative *worse*, necessarily suppose the positive *bad*? So that the Meaning of the Sentence is this; The Scripture contains a bad Dialect, but they have chosen worse. And when they speak of our Boasting of People's Out-cries, &c. as the Work of God; which (say they) we are persuaded do proceed from an inferior or *worse Cause*; Does not this suppose God himself to be a bad Cause, in their Apprehension? But hoping that this was only a Slip of their Pen, I therefore pass it by without any farther Observation.

Must they not be stone-blind that do not see, that there be all the Evidences of a Work of GOD now among

among us, that can reasonably be desired? Are not the Ignorant enlightned, the Secure made solicitous about their Salvation, the Profane reformed, many Formalists shaken off their false Foundations, and brought to experimental Christianity? Have we not all needful Evidence from their Speech and Practice, that the prevailing Temper of many Men's Minds is turn'd into a holy, humble and heavenly Channel?

Divers Opposers of God's Work in several Places of this Land, have been lately struck to the Heart, and made to acknowledge their Wickedness in the most publick Manner.

Some aged Persons, some middle-aged, Multitudes of young People in the Bloom of Life, as well as many little Children, have been brought to experience deep Sorrow for Sin, and the Sweets of a Saviour's Love. Of young People turn'd from Sin in its Strength, we may say, as in another Case, *Thou Sea, wherefore fleddest thou? and thou Jordan, why wast thou driven back?* Shall any dare to reproach the Work of GOD, while *out of the Mouths of Babes he is ordaining Strength?*

Yea, divers Negroes, and Indians, have been of late, to all Appearance, effectually wrought upon. Several Places in this Continent, are at this Time joining Hand in Hand, in seeking of the LORD; they are setting their Faces Zion-ward, and weeping as they go.

And have not Persons of almost all Denominations been wrought upon by the Word as aforesaid? Do they not unite to give Testimony to God's Work, and celebrate his Praise? Herein *Judah* and *Ephraim* have harmonized. What can be desired more to prove it to be the Work of the Eternal GOD?

If it be objected, that many of those who are said to be under good Impressions, are guilty of rash Judging. *A.* I can't think it rash Judging to believe those to be graceless, who, in the midst of Means of Conviction, do

do habitually oppose the Work of God, under the Cover of some supposed or real Indiscretions.

A *seventh* Reason of the Protest, is ' our preaching and maintaining (as they say) that all true Converts are as certain of their gracious State, as a Person is of what he knows by his outward Senses; and are able to give a Narrative of the Time and Manner of their Conversion, or else we conclude them to be in a graceless State; and that a gracious Person can judge of others gracious State otherwise than by his Profession and Life, --- that People are under no sacred Tye to Pastors, &c.

A. Our Judgment as to the aforesaid Particulars, is this, *namely*, That gracious Persons may attain a full Assurance of their good State, and some of them do attain it; but we do not believe that all arrive thereto in this Life; and those that do, may, no doubt, lose it again, and get under Clouds and Darkness.

But in the mean time we think, that all who are converted, ordinarily have a lesser or greater Degree of comfortable Perswasion of their gracious State, either immediately upon their Closure with Christ, or some Time afterwards, when Faith is in Exercise, either for a shorter or longer Duration. Surely, those that are rightly humbled by the Spirit of God, will not be satisfied 'til they obtain this.

And altho' those that are converted in adult Age, can generally remember the Time and Means of their Conviction, and give a satisfactory Account of their Experiences to those who are proper Judges of such Things; yet the Case, we suppose, is somewhat different with those who are converted in Infancy and Childhood; yet it must be confessed, that even some Children pass under considerable Convictions. I know of none of our rejected Brethren, that do or ever did believe it to be just or proper, to judge any to be in a  
natural

natural or graceless State, merely because they could not tell the Time of their Conversion; if they have Evidences of the Thing, it is enough.

We know of no Way of Judging respecting the gracious State of others, but by their Doctrines, Experiences, and Practice.

No doubt there is a Relation between a Pastor and his People; but the Design of this being to promote their Good, we think it unreasonable that it should subsist to the Prejudice of that, which it's designed to procure. However, in ordinary Cases, we think it to be the People's Duty, to make regular Application to their Pastors, for Liberty to go where they get the greatest Benefit.

But when Ministers conspire to oppose the Work and faithful Servants of God, in the most open and flagrant Manner, we see no Harm in this Case, in using an extraordinary Method.

FOR these, and many other Reasons, our Brethren do in a most solemn Manner protest, that we have no Right to sit with them in Judicatories: The Reasons they have mentioned we have considered, and leave it to the Reader to determine, whether they are sufficient to procure our Exclusion; but as to the rest, we know them not; however thro' Mercy we are not afraid of seeing the Bottom of their Budget. We hope, and pray, that they would bring forth all their Strength, in their Reply to this; for we design no more but another Answer. We have got something else to do, which is more desirable than Controversy. We only want the State of the Case to be fairly open'd; and then, I hope, we shall be easy about the Judgment of the World, respecting our Conduct. But to return.

From the aforesaid Particulars our protesting Brethren reason for the Necessity of a Rupture.

But

But having before considered the Grounds upon which our Brethren's Reasonings are built, I think it needless to speak to them separately; for they can be but such as their Foundation is, and must needs stand or fall with it.

After these Reasonings, our Brethren profess themselves to be resolutely against the Principles and Practice of Anarchy and Schism.

A. Whatever they profess, I think they are guilty of both, in their Protest, *namely*, 1. In laying down this as a Principle, that there must be a complete Uniformity to all the Synod's Rules, or Canons, upon Pain of Exclusion. See the 2d Reason of Protest. And 2. their casting us out of Communion for our conscientious Non-conformity to their unscriptural Canon. Does not the first of these Particulars, because of the varying Opinions of Men, according to the ordinary Course of Things, open a dreadful Necessity of continual Confusions in the Church of God, or else of implicit Faith and blind Obedience to prevent the same? And pray, is not the Remedy worse than the Disease?

We are sorry that our protesting Brethren have given us Reason to suspect them, of being guilty of verging towards the Doctrine of implicit Faith and blind Obedience; this appears from their finding Fault with us (in their Protest) for not obeying the Rules, in the making of which we are in the Negative.

Here we must beg to be excused from Concurring in Sentiment with our Brethren: We are resolved, by the Grace of God, that no gingle or cant of Order and Government shall gull us out of our Reason and Conscience, or rob us of our Priviledges, as Men, as Christians, as Protestants, and as Presbyterians: We declare our utter Abhorrence of all such Pretence to Power in Churches, as is built upon the Ruins of human Nature.

We cannot but join with our protesting Brethren, however, in their Prayer, that God may arise, and that his  
may

Enemies may be scattered, and that those who hate him may fly before him. But, I think, their Application of it to us, shews them to be guilty of that rash Judging which they would charge upon us, *Turpe est Doct.--- quod tibi fieri non vis, &c.*

Our protesting Brethren farther observe, 'That to give Way to the pulling down of the Hedge of Discipline, is far from being the Method of causing his tender Plants to grow.'

A. If so, then why are they guilty of it, by their unscriptural Impositions upon, and rash Separation from their Brethren, in such a Manner as is, for what I know, without all Precedent?

Particular Rules of Churches, are only so far to be valued and obeyed, as they serve to answer their supposed Design, *namely*, the Edification of the Body of Christ. To say that we should regard and obey them when the Case is otherwise, is to say, that we ought to esteem and promote the Injury of Christ's Kingdom; which is absurd.

Our protesting Brethren say, that they doubt not but that when God sees us humbled for our Sins, he will return again in Mercy. No doubt we have at all Times Reason to humble ourselves before God: But if they be not blinded with Prejudice, or otherwise, they may see Reason now to rejoice, that God has returned to his Church in Mercy.

Once more: Our protesting Brethren think that their Protest, which they call their Testimony, may be of use to their Children yet unborn. It may so, for what we know, in shewing them their Fathers Opposition to the Work of God, and schismatical Separation from their Brethren.

But tho' we are called to speak plainly, yet we wish our protesting Brethren all needful Mercies from the Bottom of our Hearts.



# R E M A R K S

U P O N T H E

A P P E N D I X.

**T**HE Narrative our Brethren give of what happened after the Protest was signed, is a strange Misrepresentation of the Affair.

‘ After the Protest was entered and subscribed (say our Opponents) the *Brunswick* Party insisted that a great Number of us, who are now the Synod, should be cast out of Membership; for (say they) there were several Brethren, who did not sign this Protest, who were not of the Number we protested against, and they concluded that all these Members would join with them, and they were exact in Counting of the Roll, and found that when they had counted all such with themselves, they could not make the Majority: But some of the Members, who did not sign this Protest, soon convinced them, that they would not be of their Party; And upon this, they thought it expedient to withdraw.’

As to the *Brunswick*-Party’s (as they are pleased to call us) insisting that they should be cast out of the Synod, it is what I know nothing of; such a Thought did not enter into my Heart.

But

But how can our Brethren assert, what it was not possible for them at that Time to know, without our Declaration, which they had not? *namely*, That we concluded that all these Members, who had not signed their Protest, would join with us? What we concluded upon, was this, That those who had not signed the Protest, had not rejected us; and therefore were so far upon our Side of the Question, that they could join with us in Judicatories.

Our Brethren call themselves a great Number; the Truth is, there was but a small Difference between them and us as to Number, which will appear thus; The Persons they protested against, were these, *viz.*

Ministers.

*William Tennent, senior.*

*Richard Treat,*

*Samuel Blair,*

*Charles Tennent,*

*James Alexander,*

*Alexander Craighead,*

*William Tennent,*

*Eleazar Wales,*

*John Rowland,*

*Gilbert Tennent.*

All the rest of the Ministers in Synod (besides these now mentioned, and the Protesters) were only Four in Number, *namely*,

Messrs. *George Gillespy,*

*Alexander Hutchison,*

*Jedidiah Andrews,*

---- *M<sup>r</sup> Henery.*

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The Two first of those last mentioned, seemed inclinable to join with us; which put us on a Par as to Number with our Opponents: And Mr. *M<sup>r</sup> Henry* was also dissatisfy'd with the Protest. But the Number of the Elders, on each Side of the Question, I cannot tell; not having the Synod's Minutes by me.

It is evident from what has been said, that there was a Majority of Non-protesting Ministers.

Our protesting Brethren assert, that they are the Synod; but I think it is easier for them to assert, than prove it. Does not their offering a Protest before the Synod, signify, that the Synod were a Number distinct from them, in their own Judgment? For it seems unreasonable for a Number of Men, to offer a Protest to themselves.

It is alledg'd by our protesting Brethren, 'That when some who did not sign the Protest, convinced us, that they would not be of our Party; that upon this, we thought it expedient to withdraw.' This is a gross Mistake; for some of the Non-protesting Members convinced us of no such Thing. Neither was any Thing like this, the Occasion of our Withdrawing; we stay'd 'till the Moderator commanded Silence.

Our protesting Brethren say, 'That our Withdrawing put the House into a little Confusion.' Here is another strange Misrepresentation; for the Confusion the House was in, was neither after, nor occasioned by our Withdrawing; it was before we came away, and was occasioned by the Reading and Signing of the Protest; we did not come away 'til our protesting Brethren came with us; and that was after the Session was concluded, with Prayer, as usual.

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The Roll indeed was counted, but not with the View mention'd by our Opponents, but to see whether in respect of Number, our protesting Brethren could cast us out, according to the Tenor of their Protest.

The Truth is, the Reading and hasty Signing of the Protest, put the Assembly into Disorder; we were surprized with the extraordinary Method of Proceeding, and knew not well what to do; we were loath to be cast out so hastily, without speaking any Thing in our own Defence; but our Attempts to speak were repulsed, the House being confus'd, one spoke one Thing, and another another, and sometimes two or more at once; so that it's hard to tell what was said. Mr. *Blair*, I remember, offer'd more than once, to read a Paper; but the Motion was rejected, and Silence enjoin'd by the Moderator; and thus the Assembly, after Prayer, broke up.

No doubt Societies have a Right to judge of the Qualifications of their own Members, and to reject such as render themselves unworthy of their Communion. But according to the Laws of Nature, of Nations, and of God, they should be first heard in their own Defence, before they are condemned and rejected.

Our Brethren have their Liberty to prove all they can against us; and we have little Reason to doubt their Inclinations that Way. But if they will keep to the Rules of Truth and Justice, we fear not their Allegations.

Their saying, that it was only want of an Opportunity, and not of a willing Mind, that prevented us from turning of them out, is uncharitable and severe; if we had had such a Desire to separate, as our Brethren suggest, we might have easily done it long ago.

But forasmuch as a Historical Narrative of the whole  
Affair of Debate, will in a little Time be exposed to  
publick Light, I will add no more at present.

May the gracious GOD grant that these Contentions  
may issue in Zion's Prosperity. *Amen.*

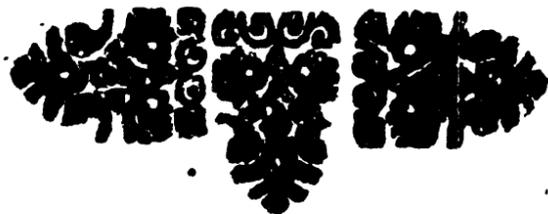
*New-Brunswick,*

*July 3. 1741.*

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*The End of the REMARKS.*

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T H E

A P O L O G Y

O F T H E

P R E S B Y T E R Y of *New-Brunswick,*

F O R

Their Dissenting from Two ACTS or NEW  
RELIGIOUS LAWS, which were made  
at the last Session of our Synod.

*Humbly offer'd to the Consideration of the SYNOD  
now conven'd at PHILADELPHIA.*

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P H I L A D E L P H I A :

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T H E  
A P O L O G Y  
O F T H E

Presbytery of *New-Brunswick*, &c.

*Moderator, and Reverend Fathers, and Brethren,*

WE hope we may, without Boasting or Offence, observe, that, so far as we know our own Hearts, we do not only, in some Measure, desire the Prosperity, but Peace of *Zion*; and that we are heartily willing to pursue all scriptural and rational Measures to compass and preserve both: And therefore the late cloudy Appearances of Uneasiness and Debate among ourselves in this infant Church have been peculiarly afflictive to us; not so much, we trust, for the Fears of any personal Prejudice that our Debates with you may possibly occasion to us, as of the Reproach and Disadvantage that may probably issue therefrom if increased and brought to a fatal Period upon the Honours and Interests of Religion in general.

However, we cannot think, that for the Sake of Peace we should sacrifice the Interest of what we apprehend to be Truth and Justice, and cross the Dictates of our own Consciences: No, we rather concur in Sentiments upon this Head with *Luther*, who justly ob-

observed, *That an honourable and necessary War was preferable to a mean and ignoble Peace. Potius cœlum & terra ruerent, &c.*

We charitably hope, that a Number, at least, of the late Synod designed the Advancement of Christ's Kingdom by their Conclusion: But we are sorry that there is so great a Difference among us in the Course of Expedients to answer the aforesaid truly valuable Design.

We crave leave to inform and assure you, *Moderator, and Reverend Brethren*, that it was not from any Disregard to your Persons, or just Authority, that we so warmly opposed the late religious Acts or Laws you have been pleased to form; but from a Principle of Conscience, influenced by Scripture and Arguments; which we now beg Liberty of proposing to your farther Consideration, in the following Order:

The Tenor of the first Act we dissented from, is, that approv'd Ministers and Members of this Synod are thereby debarred from Preaching in any Vacancy which is in the Bounds of another Presbytery, when any Minister of that Presbytery informs them that he thinks their Preaching will cause Divisions and Disorders; until that Matter be try'd by the Presbytery where the Vacancy is; or until he obtains Liberty from the Synod.

Against the aforesaid Law, we offer the following Objections, *viz.* That we cannot find any Foundation for it in the Holy Scriptures. It was judged, by a Majority of the Synod, that it was a suitable Expedient to preserve Peace and Order in Congregations; and this is the only Reason proposed why it is enacted, without ever once pretending any particular Order or Direction from God about it; and yet it is enacted with as great Appearance of Authority, and made as universally Binding upon all the Members of this Synod, altho' a Number thereof did oppose it in its Embryo, as if it had a *Thus saith the Lord* expressly for its Foundation. If it  
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can be made appear from the Holy Scriptures that the King of *Zion* hath appointed this Act, or the Matter therein contained, in his Word; we hope that there is none in this Synod that would be more careful to observe it than ourselves; and that from a Regard to the Authority of GOD, and not of Men.

But on the Contrary, we humbly conceive, that the aforesaid Act opposes the express Command of God, which obliges Ministers to *be constant in Season, and out of Season*, 2 Tim. iv. It bereaves both Ministers and People of the Privileges Christ has given them; and restrains them from the Performance of commanded Duty for the time being. The Exercise of the Minister's Office, when he is regularly called to preach by the united Voice of Providence and of the Christian People, is suspended for a Time by one Man; and that not for any real Fault already committed, or so much as alledged; but upon Suspicion that some bad Consequences will follow upon his Preaching in such a Place. And, in consequence hereof, the People are debarred from doing a positive Duty of high Importance and Concern in Christianity, *viz.* Hearing an approved Minister of Christ when they have convenient Opportunity. Here is something that is very extraordinary indeed; every Minister in the Bounds of the Synod, that is inclined to be uncharitable to his Brethren, is by the Act aforesaid vested with a Power (in this Instance something more than prelatial) to lord it over his Brethren, and inflict upon them one of the most grievous Church-Censures; and that without any Pretence of Fault committed. We cannot think that Uncharitableness gives any just Claims to superior Powers or Pretence; and therefore to encourage such a Disposition which is so evil in its Nature and fatal in its Effects, in an Age in which it so much abounds, to the great Reproach of Christianity, is, in our humble Opinion, as unreasonable and prejudicial as it is unequal. If it be contrary

trary to the Laws of Nature, of Nations, and of God; to condemn Men (altho' shrewdly suspected to be guilty of Crimes that deserve it) before they be heard in their own Defence; how much more so must it be to punish actually and grievously without the least Pretence of Fault committed? That an approved Minister's stated Preaching in one Presbytery should be safe, and his occasional in another, should be dangerous, is a Riddle to us which we profess we cannot see through. If a Minister preaches sound Doctrine, why should it be deem'd dangerous in or unsuitable to any Place? If not, why is he approved or suffered to preach in any? Are not Souls equally precious in all Places? and therefore ought not the Synod's Care be equally extended to all within their Bounds? Will not the same Gospel serve the whole Synod? And if any preach another, why are they received by that Judicatory, and suffered to preach in any of her Territories? If not, why are they hindered from Preaching occasionally and transiently which are invited regularly?

What is offer'd, as the Reason of the aforesaid Suspension, rather serves to condemn than justify the Synod's new Law, in our humble Opinion, *namely*, the Suspicion that one Minister hath, that his Brother's Preaching in such a Vacancy will cause Divisions and Disorders: For hereby the Synod so far approves of the uncharitable Suspicions of her Members of one another's Performances, which is a great Sin in itself, as to make it a sufficient Foundation or Warrant for their committing another, *viz.* their censuring their Brethren, and bereaving them of the Privileges which the King of the Church has expressly and designedly given them, and that before they hear them. And therefore, inasmuch as this Canon gives License to do Evil that Good may come; we think it plainly contradicts the express Word of God, *Rom. iii. 8:*

We beg Leave farther to observe, that we cannot  
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well reconcile these two Things in the Synod's Conduct in relation to the aforesaid Law, *viz.* that the Synod approves of all her Members, and yet in the mean time encourages them to suspect each other, and punish upon Suspicion. Now, seeing Justice and Charity are the Springs and Principles of Peace and Order; what is contrary thereto, must have a direct Tendency to destroy both. Of this Kind we take the aforesaid Law to be, for the Reasons before and after-mentioned; and therefore this Canon contradicts the professed Design thereof; instead of preventing Divisions and Disorders, it procures them; and so opposes all those Scriptures that establish the contrary.

The aforesaid Law gives Liberty to censure a Brother upon meer Conjecture. For, what other Knowledge can any of us have of future contingent Events, unless any Members of the Synod have the Spirit of Prophecy, which we do not think they will pretend to? But supposing they had the aforesaid Branch of the Apostolick Character, we see not how they could punish their Brethren for an Event, before it came to pass, an Event which might come to pass without their being any ways culpably accessary thereto.

This therefore leads us to observe, that the Reason annexed to the aforesaid Law, is expressed in ambiguous Terms, Divisions, Disorders, &c. which, as they follow upon Preaching, may be taken in a good or bad Sense: If these Words be taken in a bad Sense, for sinful Divisions properly caused by Preaching; then certainly it is sinful Preaching, that procures them. Sinful Divisions can never be the proper Fruits of Gospel-Truths; to say otherwise, is to pour Contempt upon the glorious Gospel. If so, then it is unreasonable to hinder the Preaching of Truth in any of our Borders, in order to prevent Divisions. And Truth, we are by the Law of Charity obliged to hope, will be preach'd by our approved Brethren, until we have good Reason to the contrary.

Can any Member of one Presbytery, know certainly before-hand, that a Member of another will preach false Doctrine in any of their Vacancies, more than one of their own Presbytery? If not, then he may with equal Reason hinder the Brethren of his own Presbytery from preaching in such Vacancies; and so they shall never be supplied; for, another may hinder him by the same Rule: If yea, then we ask how this can be without a Claim to Infallibility or immediate Revelation?

If a Fear of our Brother's preaching false Doctrine, meerly because he is fallible, will justify his being suspended from preaching for a Time, before he has preach'd it; then we query, if this, followed in its just and natural Consequences, will not silence this Synod and all the World with them? This Method of preventing the Preaching of false Doctrine, is, we confess, effectual to answer the End designed: But then it concludes or infers rather more than we suppose the Synod will allow of; for it destroys all Preaching entirely, except by inspired Persons.

But if there are other sufficient Foundations for the aforesaid Fear; then why are not the scriptural Methods of private Reproof, and publick Charge, before his proper Judicatory pursued? If there are not sufficient Reasons; then why is the aforesaid Fear followed, and made the Foundation of Censure; seeing it is unreasonable?

But if the aforesaid Terms are taken in a good Sense for these Disturbances which the powerful Preaching of the Gospel only occasions, in which respect our Saviour observes, *That he came not to send Peace on Earth, but a Sword, to set a Man at Variance with his Father, &c.* (See *Matth. 10. 34--36.*) and that *while the strong Man armed keeps the House, all the Goods are in Peace*; --- Then is the aforesaid Law very extraordinary and unaccountable indeed: For, wherever the Gospel becomes the Wisdom and Power of God, to the Conversion of  
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Souls, there it is generally oppos'd by the Devil and his Emissaries: These that are converted, do ordinarily endeavour to convince others of their secure Neighbours of their Danger and Misery (which is but their Duty;) this is apt to provoke the Children of *Belia'* to reproach the People of God; and in the Choice of a Minister, these Persons who have a better Knowledge and Savour of true Religion, may be also very cautious; which is also their Duty: Hence Divisions and Disorders may ensue. Now, if this Opposition of *Satan* and his Seed against the Power of the Gospel, be the Divisions intended, and Ministers must be debarr'd from preaching in particular Places, lest the Devil's Kingdom should be disturbed, and *Satan* himself vexed or drove out of Places where GOD has sealed their Labours for the same Reason; Then the Law we plead against, is most iniquous. But we charitably hope, that it did not appear to our Rev. Brethren, who passed it in this Light; and that they were inadvertently led into a Consent to the aforesaid Act, by the heavy Complaints and frightful undistinguished Terms of Divisions and Disorders: And we are perswaded, that now they will join with us in opposing this unequal Act, when the Divisions and Disorders pointed at in it, come to be particularly distinguished and specified by their proper Causes and remote Occasions.

But whatever favourable Sentiments Charity obliges us to entertain of the Intentions of the Formers of the aforesaid Act; yet we must in the mean time observe, that the Ambiguity of its Terms, gives Room for the aforesaid terrible Effects.

Suffer us, *Reverend Gentlemen*, again to observe, that we think it hard and highly injurious, that a Minister approved of by the Synod, when he is warned, &c. must forbear the Exercise of his Office in any Vacancy of another Presbytery, where he is providentially call'd; and if he would clear up his clouded Character, or  
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answer the just Request of the People, he must wait in his Travels far from Home, till a Presbytery meets, not that which he properly belongs to; and he hears their Decisions about his Brethren's Suspicions, or else their prophetic Determinations about what is not yet come to pass, *viz.* Whether his preaching in such a Place, will be attended with Divisions; yea or not. We hope you will not be offended, *Gentlemen*, when we assure you, that our feeble Powers are perfectly puzzled and non-plus'd, when we would labour to sound the mysterious Depths of this Act in all its Parts; but thus far we think we may safely say, That according to the Notions we have of it, its general Scope and Tendency seems to be to discourage utterly all occasional Preaching out of the Bounds of the Presbytery we live in, and to subject the Exercise of the ministerial Office to the capricious Humours of uncharitable, ill-natur'd Brethren.

We thought indeed, that when Ministers were ordained, they had a Right to preach Christ where they were providentially called, whether it was within their Presbytery-Line, or beyond it: But now we are learned the Contrary; for by this new Law they must have new Commissions from a Presbytery or Synod, if they happen in their Travels to cross their Presbytery-Line, or meet with a cross Brother. Besides there is something in this new Law imply'd, that is, in our humble Opinion, very injurious to ruling Elders and the Christian People, *viz.* That, according to it, they have no Power to invite a regular Member of another Presbytery to preach among them one Sabbath in his Travels: If any Member of their own gives Warning to the Contrary, thus one disorderly Brother is impower'd by the aforesaid Act, to trample upon the Rights of Ministers, Elders, and People: We call the supposed Person *disorderly*, because by unreasonable Jealousies he breaks the Law of Love, which obliges to hope all Things that are good of our Brethren, as far as it is reasonable,

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and to suffer long, and be kind: If his Jealousies be without sufficient Ground, he is disorderly; if it has sufficient Grounds, he is also disorderly, in taking such an unscriptural, yea, antisciptural Method with his Brother, as this Law directs to. We cannot see any Consistency between our Saviour's Law, mentioned *Matth.* 18. 15--18. and this of the late Synod; nor any Kindness, but rather great Cruelty, in accusing a Brother before an improper Judicatory, and that when unprepared to make his Defence.

Once more: The aforesaid Act seems to us, to contradict the generous and noble Temper of the Apostle *Paul*, who resolutely rejoiced that Christ was preached, tho' by some it was done thro' Envy, Insincerity, Strife and Contention, supposing to add Affliction to his Bonds. *Phil.* 1. 16, 17.

Neither are we able to discern the Consistency of the aforesaid Act with the Care that Presbyteries should have that their Vacancies be supplied; especially considering the Situation of Affairs in this Country is such that some Presbyteries are not able, without wronging their own Congregations, to supply the Vacancies in their Bounds; therefore, one would think, they should be glad of Help *en passant* from their approved Brethren in their occasional Travels. But the Contrary of this appears by the Law under our present Consideration, which casts unscriptural Hinderances in the Way of Help, and makes it extremely precarious, and even almost impracticable. But to proceed:

The *Second* Religious Law made by the last Synod, which we dissented from, is to the following Purpose, *viz.* That no Presbytery has (according to it) Liberty to examine any Candidates who offer themselves to them, in order to license or ordain them, before they be examined and approved respecting their Literature by a Committee of the Synod.

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That our Reasons against the aforesaid Law may be set in a just Light, we beg leave to premise the three following Positions, *viz.*

I. That there is a Parity or Equality of Power among Gospel-Ministers, is a Truth universally own'd by *Presbyterians*; a Truth very evident from the Commission Christ gave to his Apostles.

II. That a Presbytery, or the smallest Association of Ministers, have a Power from Christ to ordain, is also a Truth which the Scriptures fully vouch, *1 Tim. iv. 14. 2 Tim. ii. 2.* A Truth which the *Presbyterians* have universally maintained in their Defences, and conform'd to in their Practice: A Truth which gave rise to the *Presbyterian* Name. He who denies the aforesaid Positions oversets, consequently, in his Opinion, all Presbyterianism both in Name and Thing, and unchurches all the reformed Churches (strictly so called) He who owns them, will, in our humble Opinion, be obliged, in Reason, to own a

III. Position necessarily resulting from them; which is this, that Presbyteries have Authority from Christ to examine all Candidates (who regularly offer themselves) respecting all Qualifications that are necessary for the Ministry; for this the Power of Ordination, in the Nature of the Thing, necessarily supposes. If they may set them apart to the ministerial Work, they must judge of their Qualifications for it, or act by implicit Faith in their own proper Business, which is absurd.

Having offer'd the aforesaid Conclusions, we would reason against the aforesaid religious Law, which restrains the Exercise of that Power which Christ has given to Presbyteries, as to the Examination of Candidates, for a time, as to some whom they may approve of, and perpetually as to others whom, perhaps, they may not approve of; in the following Manner, *viz.*

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I. We think that the aforesaid Act is an unscriptural Law: We cannot find any Directions in the Scriptures that Candidates for the Ministry must be examined, and approved by a Committee of any Synod, before a Presbytery takes them under Examination in order to license or ordain them.

II. We look upon it to be an uncharitable Act: It seems necessarily to suppose a Suspicion of the Insufficiency or Unfaithfulness of their own Members, for or in the Performance of the Task Christ has assigned them, as its Foundation. Now, unless this Suspicion be pleaded, how can any tolerable Pretence of Necessity for the aforesaid Law be urged? And if it be, how can the Conduct of the Members of this Synod in sending such into the Ministry, approving them in it, and allowing them the Privileges of an associated Body or Presbytery, be justified?

III. We think the aforesaid Law is anti-scriptural: If the Scripture allows and enjoins Presbyteries to examine all Students who are of good Report (that regularly offer themselves) as has been before proved, then it is against the Scripture to impair or hinder the Exercise of said Power, unless the Possessors thereof consent thereto, or be judicially convinced of such Faults as deserve such Treatment.

If a godly Candidate, who is sufficiently qualified for the ministerial Work according to the divine Prescription, should scruple the Lawfulness of this synodical Law, and yet offer himself to a Presbytery, &c. they are obliged by the Law of Christ to receive him, *2 Tim. ii. 2. Rom. xiv. 1. 4. Rom. xv. 7.* But by this Law of the Synod they are obliged to reject him.

IV. It's unjust (in our Opinion) to impair a Power given by Christ to any, or to restrain the Exercise of it allowed by him, against the Consent of the Wills and Dictates of the Consciences of the Possessors, unless they be proved Guilty of such Crimes as deserve such

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Pc.

**Penalties.** To condemn and punish before any Accusation is offered, is an odd Way of Judging.

Farther, we cannot see how it can be reconciled to the Maxims of Justice, to oblige all Candidates to spend Time and Money (which some can ill spare in attending upon synodical Committees) when the Matter can be otherways well managed, according to the divine Direction.

V. The aforesaid Law is (in our Opinion) unnecessary: Why may not or cannot Presbyteries try young Men now, as they have done this Twenty or Thirty Years by past, even ever since this Synod was formed? If this Committee be so necessary, what a poor State must this Church have been in, 'til the last Year! and how defective must the Laws of Christ be, which have not a Word of this Committee in them, so far as we can gather?

VI. It is (in our Esteem) anti-presbyterian: This Law, by taking from Presbyteries their proper Business, and restraining them in the Exercise of their original Powers unscripturally, tends to render them uselefs, and so to destroy them entirely, and with them that Subordination of Judicatories dependent on them, without which the Presbyterian Government in its present Model cannot subsist.

According to the Presbyterian Constitution we conceive, that all the Ministers of the Gospel are equal one with another in all the Parts of the Pastoral Office; so that none have any peculiar Powers or Privileges beyond others: And yet particular Presbyteries, consisting of such a Number of Ministers, more or less, with the Elders of their several Congregations, as can conveniently meet together so often as Occasion may require, have full and complete Power for ordering all the Affairs of the Church within their Bounds. In a Word, they have Power to execute all the Parts of Government which Christ has appointed in his Church, (which, by the

the Way, is not inconsistent with their Liableness to be brought to Account by Synods, or larger Assemblies consisting of several Presbyteries, either for Errors in Doctrine or wrong Conduct in Practice) and consequently they have the whole Management of the Admission of Persons to the Preaching of the Gospel, who may and ought to apply to them for that End. Now, certainly, this Act we oppose, is an Abridgment of the aforesaid Right and Privilege; for, according to it, no Presbytery must try or license any Candidate, until they obtain the Liberty and Approbation of those who are constituted their Superiors in the Business; and such as these Examinants think fit to reject; they must by no Means admit: Whereas we can't be assured but that some may have a Sufficiency of Learning and Knowledge, of whom these Gentlemen may think otherwise. Possibly some of them might think very meanly of a Candidate, who has, perhaps, as much useful Knowledge and as improving Abilities as themselves, if he is not so well acquainted with some Metaphysical Niceties and sublime critical Disquisitions of the Schoolmen; tho' he might probably do as much to the Defence of Gospel-Truth, and the saving Instruction of immortal Souls, as themselves, notwithstanding of their other Speculations: Whence it is the more necessary for Presbyteries to preserve their just Rights and Liberties in this as well as all other Cases.

And to make it farther appear, that this Act is an Encroachment upon them, let it be observed, that by the same Method of Proceeding, all the Power of Presbyteries may be taken away; and so our Constitution of Government, in the present Plan thereof, entirely unhing'd: For, if the Synod can take away, at its Pleasure, one Privilege and proper Business of Presbyteries, what hinders but that by the same Power they may take away another, and another, 'til they take away the Whole, by the same Rule that this Act is

made? And we think, for as weighty Reasons, they might take the Licensing and Ordaining of Candidates intirely into their own Hands (it would prevent Trouble) and alio go through Stitch with all the other Branches of the Presbytery's Work, which they have an equal Right to with the former; and then we should have an End of Presbyteries altogether: And indeed if the Thing be taken away, why should not the Name go with it? We profess, *Gentlemen*, that we cannot brook meer Shams and empty Names of Things without the Substance.

Besides, we are at a Loss to conceive how it can accord with *Presbyterian* Parity, to set a smaller Number over a greater, with the Power of a Negative (against their Wills) in the Business of their proper Province, and that before they have any Opportunity to attempt the Performance of it. It seems to us to be a great Step to Prelacy: For what are the Members of the Committee, especially as to those who gave no Consent to their Claims, but a Combination or Convocation of Superintendants and Deputy-Prelates, to whose lordly Authority the inferior Clergy, the poor Curates, I mean the Presbyteries, are obliged to submit.

But to prevent being tedious, we must not add that the aforesaid Act is inconsistent with itself, and cannot well hang together. The specious Reason offer'd in the first Part, *viz.* to supply the Want of Colleges, clashes with the latter Part, which obliges even such as have had a College Education, to repair to the Synod's Committee.

Thus we have in as brief a Manner as we could, offered some of our Reasons against the Matter of the two late Acts of this Synod. We now proceed to offer our Sentiments about the Power from which they sprung, with the principal Reasons thereof, seeing it is to little Purpose to take away bad Branches while the bitter Root remains untouch'd; for so long as it continues, it will be apt, upon all Occasions, to produce as bad or worse again.

again. We will therefore, by divine Assistance, venture a Blow at the Root.

We humbly conceive that the aforesaid Acts in their present Form are founded upon a false Hypothesis or Supposition, *namely*, that a Majority of Synods or other Church-Judicatories have a Power committed to them from Christ to make new Rules, Acts or Canons about Religious Matters, on this Ground or Foundation, *viz.* That they judge them either to be not against or agreeable to the general Directions of the Word of God, and serviceable to Religion; which shall be Binding upon those that conscientiously dissent therefrom, under certain Penalties which are to be inflicted even upon those who judge the Acts they enforce to be contrary to the Mind of Christ, and prejudicial to the Interests of his Kingdom. This is in brief a legislative or law-making Power in religious Matters, and this we do utterly disclaim and renounce for the Reasons which we shall anon mention, and are pleased that we have our Synod's Concurrence therein in a printed Declaration, which was sent to *Ireland* some Years ago: That Declaration, which we apprehend worthy of a protestant Body, we purpose to maintain inviolably in our Practice as well as Profession. Now, we conceive that a religious Law may be said to be new in two Respects, *viz.* in respect of the Matter inserted in it, or the Penalty annexed to it, *i. e.* when any Thing is required or forbidden by it which is not required or forbidden by God in his Word, the Law is new. Again, a Law may be said to be new (as we conceive) when, tho' the Substance thereof be according to or contained in the Word of God, a Penalty is inflicted for the Breach thereof, which is not prescribed by the King of the Church.

Now the principal Reasons that incline us to believe that there is no legislative Authority in the Church of Christ, are these following.

I. If Church Judicatories have a Right to such a Power as this, then they have received it from Jesus Christ. This, we hope, will admit of no Dispute; for he is the great Head of his Church, the Government is laid upon his Shoulders. Again, if Christ has given them such a Power, he has somewhere signified the Grant of it in his Word. But the Place or Places of Scripture we cannot find wherein the Lord Jesus Christ authorizes the greater Number of a Church-Judicature to lord it over their fewer Brethren, and the Heritage of God under their Inspection, by making Laws of their own Devising over their Heads, enforced with penal Sanctions, and particularly that of Non-communication among the rest.

Neither can we find in the Word of God, any Passage wherein our blessed Redeemer Jesus Christ has enjoined his Ministers, and other Members of his Church, to submit or yield a blind Obedience to the Laws and Ordinances of a greater Number in a Church Judicatory, altho' they judge them to be sinful and contrary to the Good of his Kingdom. When either of the aforesaid Particulars is made evident from the Scriptures of Truth, then we will readily subject our Consciences to the Guidance of other Men, and yield undisputed Obedience to all their Decrees: But, we hope, never before.

II. The making of new religious Laws, seems to us to be an Invasion upon the kingly Office of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whose Royalty it peculiarly belongs to give Laws to his Church. Hence the Apostle James informs us that *there is one Law-giver (i. e. one only who is exclusive of all others) who is able to save and destroy: Subjoining, Who art thou then that judgest another, Jam. iv. 12. Col. i. 18. Christ is the Head of the Body, the Church, he is constituted the King of Zion. Now, if the Church of Christ has but one Head, one King, one Law-giver, how can any Man on Earth make*

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Laws in Addition to Christ's for the Government of his Subjects in religious Matters, without making the Church a monstrous Body, with many Heads, without commencing Kings in his Kingdom, or rather setting up a Kingdom of their own in Opposition to his? If making new religious Laws, as to their Matter, or adding new Penalties to old ones, be not Acts of kingly Power, we desire to know what is.

Likewise the Members of Christ's Church are, from this very Argument, dissuaded from yielding Submission to such a Claim of Power. *1 Cor. vii. 23. Ye are bought with a Price; be not ye the Servants of Men. Mark vii. 5. 6.--ix. Then the Pharisees and Scribes asked him, why walk not thy Disciples according to the Tradition of the Elders, but eat Bread with unwashen Hands. (To whom Christ replied) In vain do they worship me, Teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men. Here was an Act of the Jewish Synod concerning a Thing very innocent in its Nature, and yet we see of what dangerous Tendency it was in the Judgment of our Saviour. When the false Brethren would have brought the Galatian Church into the Bondage of the Jewish Ceremonies, the Apostle Paul would not give place by Subjection, no not for an Hour, that the Truth of the Gospel might continue with them, Gal. ii. 4, 5.*

III. The aforesaid Power of Legislation (or Law-making) in religious Matters, seems to us to be utterly inconsistent with the Perfection of the Holy Scripture; of which the Apostle Paul testifies, *That it is profitable for Doctrine, Correction, Instruction in Righteousness, that the Man of God may be perfect and thoroughly furnished to every good Work, 2 Tim. iii. 16. 17. Whatever good Work there is in the whole Sphere of Religion, the holy Scriptures afford sufficient Laws for the Performance of it; by these the Man of God may be thoroughly furnished and perfect; and can any Man desire more than Perfection? or can*

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there be any good Work in Religion, which is not prescribed by the Author of it? If so, then Superstition is justified, contrary to the many Passages of Holy Writ that condemn it. If not, then where is there any room for new religious Laws of human Invention?

If the King of the Church and Author of the Scriptures be Wisdom and Love itself, then certainly his omniscient Eye must pierce the Vail of Futurity, and perfectly behold all the various Difficulties which his poor Church was to grapple with through all the successive Scenes of its Duration here; and his boundless Love excite his unsearchable Wisdom to form every Law that was, is, or shall be necessary for its Direction in every of them. Now, if the Case be so, what need can there possibly be of new religious Laws made (at any time) by short-sighted, fallible, corrupt Creatures; and if it be not so, our Religion and Faith are vain, and we are yet in our Sins. To imagine a Necessity of new Laws in religious Matters, contains in it (in our Opinion) an ungenerous Reflection upon the divine Word, and the Wisdom, Goodness and Faithfulness of its Author.

IV. A Power of Law-making in religious Affairs, is (in our Opinion) inconsistent with Christian Liberty, which, we think, contains in it a free Use or Disuse of Things, in their general Nature indifferent, according to the best Judgment we ourselves can form of their Expediency or Inexpediency, from the general Directions of the divine Word applied to our Circumstances.

Undoubtedly there are many Things which are in their general Nature lawful to be done or avoided, which are not necessary by any Law of the Gospel, any farther than as varying Circumstances may render them expedient, as Helps for the Performance of commanded Duties, or inexpedient, as Hinderances. Now if a Majority of Church Rulers may fix and determine all these Things for us by Laws of their Invention, armed with Pe-

Penalties against those that conscientiously dissent, then we are in a poor Box indeed. If these Things that Christ has left free be not left so by Church Authority, then what shall become of the Liberty which our dear Redeemer has bought for us by his Blood, *1 Cor: vii. 23. Gal. 1. Being made free by so great a Price, wherefore should we become the Servants of Men,* and tamely suffer ourselves to be ensnared and enslaved by a Yoke of their Framing & Imposing. Are we not commanded to stand fast in the Liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. It has been frequently, and, we think, justly observed by the most eminent Defenders of our Persuasion, against the exorbitant Claims of another Church, *viz.* That it is not to be imagined that our merciful Redeemer would die to free his People from a Yoke of ceremonial Laws of divine Institution, and at the same time leave them exposed to the Will of their Fellow-Creatures, to be oppressed with a Multiplicity of their Inventions, which have been often as unreasonable as cruel.

Every new religious Law cuts off a valuable Branch from our Christian Liberty; and how soon they may be so multiplied as to bereave us entirely of that precious Privilege (in the Sense before mentioned) we know not: But this seems evident to us, that, according to the Law-making Scheme, our Liberty lies at the Mercy of Men, who may, if we stupidly couch under the Burdens they impose, soon destroy it.

V. The aforesaid Power of Legislation in Matters of Religion, Prudence, and Conscience, opposes and tends to destroy (in our Opinion) the antient Church-Discipline that Christ has appointed, by fixing new Terms of Communion. The Substance of that Discipline which Christ has appointed in his Word (as we conceive) consists principally in excluding from Communion such grossly erroneous or vicious Persons in Principle or Practice, as his Word points out; and receiving them again into it, upon their shewing the Signs of Penitence:

nitence : In short, the Terms of the Discipline of Christ are fixed and invariable, and should be inviolably observed by all Churches ; but the Legislative Power aforesaid, by coining new religious Laws, makes a new Term of Communion by every one of them, in Addition to those our Saviour had ordained, so that hereby the Discipline of Christ is gradually drawn off its antient Foundation, *namely*, the Laws of God, to the Lusts, Fancies and Traditions of Men, thro' which the former are sometimes made void ; for by their Traditions they are sometimes obliged to reject those whom the Laws of Christ oblige them to receive, those whom they themselves were wont to receive ; *e. g.* The Laws of Christ oblige them to receive to Christian Communion all those that are found in the main Points of Faith, and regular in Life, altho' they err in Circumstantials or lesser Points ; and to Ministerial all those that have the Qualifications which the King of the Church requires in his Word. *Rom. xiv. 1, 4. Him that is weak in Faith, receive ye ; but not to doubtful Disputations. Who art thou that judgest another Man's Servant ?* whereas the new Laws of Churches have excluded and do exclude such. Every Man, how pious, peaceable, useful and eminent soever he be, in all valuable Respects, if he scruples and opposes such Church-Canons as he thinks are dishonourable and detrimental to true Religion, tho' Christ receives him to Glory, and bids them receive him ; yet by these human Ecclesiastical Laws they will reject him, some from Christian and Ministerial Communion both, and some from Ministerial only. Thus a dreadful Foundation is laid for a Succession of Schisms in the Church of God, while such a Claim of Power is pretended to, and exercised, by which the Seamless Coat of Christ is rent and torn into an almost infinite Number of Parts. For, the Charter of Law-making (in our humble Opinion) is hard to be found in the Bible, and the Prudentials about which they exercise it, are often-

oftentimes difficult to be determined. Good Men are apt to have different Minds about them, and being of different Sentiments, and conscientiously inclined to act according to the best of their Light ; so long as there is Conscience and Courage on Earth, while the aforesaid Engine is mounted on the Wheel, a sad Scene of Debate and Division is opened.

In short : If we may be suffered to speak plainly, a Legislative Authority makes the Terms of Communion as variable as any Weather-Cock ; so that a Man is in continual Danger of being cast out of Communion, where it is exercised in its Rigour, unless he has a Conscience as pliable as Wax, ready to receive every Impression, or can alter his Sentiments out of Complaisance to a Majority of Votes, as fast as the Camelion its Colours. Which leads us to the

VI. Reason, which we humbly offer against a Legislative Authority in Matters purely religious, and it is this, That we think it an unwarantable Encroachment upon the Rights of Conscience and private Judgment ; because it determines for us, what properly falls within their Sphere, and obliges us to submit thereto whether convinced or not, or suffer certain Penalties, which Almighty GOD has not prescribed in his Word in such Cases.

That Matters of Prudence and Expediency under a religious Consideration, come within the Sphere of Conscience, is evident from this, That by doing what is prudent and expedient, much Service accrues to Religion, and by the contrary much Damage : Now, can any Man be a true Christian and not have a conscientious Regard to do and avoid what promotes and hinders the Interests of true Religion ? Again, we think it evident from Scripture, that God has given the only Right to every Man to judge for himself in the Particulars aforesaid. *1 Thess. 5. 21. 1 Cor. 11. 13. Rom. 14. 14, 22, 23. 1 Cor. 6. 12.*

The Right of private Judgment in general is equally apparent from the Principles of natural as well as revealed Religion; if every Man must answer at last for his own Actions, and the Misguidance of others will not clear him from Guilt or guard him from Punishment in following them, it is but equal that he should judge for himself also: The holy Scriptures frequently enjoin this Duty of examining what is proposed to us in religious Matters, and commend the Performance of it in the *Bereans*; and to what Purpose should we examine these Things, but to form a Judgment about them, and act accordingly? If we must act contrary to our Judgment, because of the Laws of our Fellow-Creatures, then our Examination serves but to encrease our Guilt and Punishment; for *he that doubts, is damned if he eat, Rom. 14. 23.* And if we must believe, that to be prudential and serviceable to Religion which any Set of Men make into Laws, meerly because of their supposed Authority; then certainly Ignorance is the Mother of Devotion; then implicit Faith and blind Obedience are sound and wholesome Doctrines; then in order to qualify us for thorough Subjection to our spiritual Governors, it will be necessary to pluck out our own Eyes, that we may see clearly thro' their Spectacles.

Neither does that plausible Apology of the Patrons of a Legislative Power, *viz.* that their Acts or Canons about Prudentials, are grounded upon and agreeable to the Word of God, or general Directions of Scripture, make the unhappy Case of those that are under such a heavy Yoke, a Bit the better, so long as the minor Party are deprived of the Right of Judging for themselves, whether these Things be so or not, and of acting according to their Judgment without Censure. This leads us to

VII. Another Reason against Legislative Authority in religious Matters, which is this, *namely,* That such a binding Power necessarily supposes one of these two Things,

Things, *viz.* either that Church-Judicatories are infallible in their Determinations, and so cannot injoin what is wrong; or that they have Power to legitimate an Error, and make that which was antecedently Evil, to become Good, by Enjoining it. A legislative Authority in the Church, must of Necessity be resolved into one or other of these two as its first Principle: But we are persuaded that both the one and the other will be disclaimed by us all, and consequently so ought this Power, which cannot be claimed consistently without them. That there is such a Connexion in this Case is most manifest; for if Church-Judicatories are not infallible, then they may err, either requiring that to be done which ought not, or forbidding that which ought; in neither of which Cases certainly are we bound to obey, unless their Authority is also such that it can alter the Nature of Things, or secure us from the Punishment we deserve for doing what is Evil, or neglecting what is Good. In a Word Legislators in Religion must be either infallible or omnipotent. This not only Reason teaches, but the Word of God confirms, *Jam. iv. 12.* We have no Certainty but that a Church Judicatory may injoin something very prejudicial to the Church of Christ, either through the Short-sightedness and Misapprehensions of well-designing Men; or it may possibly happen that a considerable Number are influenced by wrong Principles and Motives; and if Things appear to be so to others, must their Hands be bound up from doing their Duty in Endeavouring to promote the Interests of Christ's Kingdom; and so subject their Consciences, and the valuable Interests of Religion, to the Commandments of Men? For Persons to impose Laws of their own Devising upon others, without any Pretence to Infallibility, is (as we conceive) a very inconsistent Proceeding.

The Protestant Legislators in religious Matters, by owning the Fallibility of their Church-Judicatories, are obliged either to abandon their favourite Scheme, or as-

sert the binding Power of erroneous Laws ; but not being willing to do the former, they chose to attempt the Defence of the latter, *namely*, that Submission is due to erroneous Laws and Sentences. To make this the more plausible, they acknowledge that we ought to refuse active Obedience to unjust Sentences, but not passive, *i. e.* as we understand it, we must, according to their Notion, neglect the Performance of a Duty which God and Conscience enjoin, because Church-Authority forbid it. If the Case be so, then the Church has Power to oblige to Sins of Omission, but not of Commission. Then we ought to obey negative sinful Commands, but not positive. But we humbly conceive that this Distinction in the present Case is full nice ; for if we must obey Man rather than God in the one, why not in the other also, and so make thorough Work of it.

To this shocking Extremity does the legislative Scheme necessarily lead its Patrons ; for if they allowed that sinful Canons were null and void in themselves, altho' pass'd by a Majority of Votes, and gave Liberty to the minor Party to judge for themselves, and to act according to their own Judgment without Censure ; their darling Structure would crumble into deserved Ruin. But while they labour to maintain the contrary exorbitant and awful Claim of Power, their Doctrine tends to destroy every Thing that is valuable in the humane Nature, as well as to sap the very Foundations of the protestant Religion. And this is

VIII. Another Argument which we beg leave a little to insist upon. The Notion of a legislative Power in religious Matters, with the Necessity of submitting to its erroneous Decisions, seem to us to condemn the Reformation from *Popery*, and our Dissenting from the *Church of England*: For if it be necessary to submit to erring Sentences of Churches, then how could the first Reformers oppose the Authority and Revolt from the Jurisdiction of the *Church of Rome* ? and how can the  
Non-

Nonconformists, upon this Plan, vindicate their opposing the Canons of the *Church of England* (which they own to be a true Church) from the Charge of Schism ? If any Church have a Power of Legislation about Prudentials, they must of Consequence have Authority to judge and determine what are such, and so to oblige to the Observance of them, and the avoiding their Contraries under the Penalty of Non-communication. If the *Presbyterians* have this Power, then certainly the *Church of England* have it also : And in pursuance of this supposed Claim of Power, they have actually made a great many Canons or religious Laws establishing, under the Penalty of Non-communication, their Liturgy, Hierarchy, Cross in Baptism, and many other Usages, which they deemed very expedient to promote Order and Decency. Now, how can we, according to the aforesaid Scheme, justify our not Submitting to the lawful Authority of that Church ?

We think it very inconsistent to maintain such a Claim of Power, as would have forever prevented the very Being of all the reformed Churches in general, and such as condemns our Dissenting-One in particular.

It seems also to us inconsistent, to grasp after a Power for ourselves which we condemn in others, or to disclaim it in Word, while we practise it in Deed. We cannot think that any Church can need any Thing for its Support, which would overset its Foundations ; or that Truth can alter its Nature in a Succession of time: We suppose that what was true at the time of the Reformation, is so still. Again,

IX. We know not how to free all new religious Laws from the Charge of Superstition and Uncharitableness, whatever pious Designs the Formers of them may have notwithstanding : *For who has required these Things at their Hands, and why are they righteous over-much. Eccles. vii. 16.* Wherefore do they teach the Fear of God by the Precepts of Men, *Isa. xxix. 13.* and impose

impose their human Commandments upon their Brethren's Consciences, which tho' they have a Shew of Wisdom, are really the Contrary; because they are Additions to the unerring Laws of the Wisdom of the Father, and naturally tend to draw his People from an entire Subjection to him as the Head of his Church, *Col. ii. 21, 22.* Wherefore do they introduce a System of human Commandments when Christ has abolished the old ceremonial Institutions, which were of a divine Original, and thereby put a stumbling Block in their Brother's Way, contrary to the following Places of sacred Scripture, *Eph. ii. 15. Rom. xiv. 13, 14.* *Let us not therefore judge one another any more; but judge this rather, that no Man put a stumbling Block, or an Occasion to fall, in his Brother's Way.* To him that esteemeth any Thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. *But if thy Brother be grieved with thy Meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy thou not him with thy Meat, for whom Christ died.*

Once more we beg leave to observe, that the legislative Power aforesaid, is introductive of very great Evils and Mischiefs into the Church of Christ, and in particular, it opens a wide Door for the Introducing of an intolerable Bondage under human Yokes: Neither does it only open a Door for this, and so make it possible, nor yet only tend to it, and so make it probable; but it is what it has done in Fact to high degree, as the deplorable Experience of many Ages witness.

We are persuaded that a Claim of Power made by the Church-Rulers to frame Laws deem'd by them to be orderly, decent, prudent, expedient, gave Rise to Prelacy and Popery itself, and to all the burdensom Train of unscriptural and ridiculous Ceremonies which the latter of these Churches does now groan under, as well as to stated Liturgies, and other unhappy Usages, in which some Protestant Churches have too much copy'd after the *Roman Superstition.* These Things

are Yokes which neither we nor our Fathers were able to bear. If this Power be taken once for granted, who knows where it may stop in its Effects? We cannot see that we have any more Security at this day upon this Plan, in the protestant Church, to prevent the like Bondage again, than the Church had when the inspired Apostles left it. It's true it is probable we may not like the Yokes that others have made for us, and wreath'd about the Necks of Christ's Subjects in Ages past. But possibly we may be pleas'd with as bad or worse, which we either do or may make ourselves.

Again, this supposed binding Power exposes Persons to be persecuted for their Consciences; when any either of our Brethren in the Ministry, or of a private Station in the Church, cannot with a clear Conscience observe or submit to Church-Canons; then they are liable to be reprov'd and censur'd, and who knows to what Degree? Yea, it may even cause Schism and Separation itself, which lies at the Door of the Imposers who forced it, and whereof they alone are the Authors. What dismal Havock has been made in the Churches by this terrible Engine of legislative Authority, in anathematizing and excluding from Communion some of the worthiest Men in our Mother-Countries and elsewhere, is so flagrant in History, that we need not mention Instances.

When a Majority in a Church-Judicatory are suppos'd to have Power to coin Laws according to their own Fancy, whereby they may judge of a minor Party, only pretending in the mean Time some general scriptural Direction as their Foundation, as also their Usefulness, &c. which it's not possible to do in any Case, and has been actually done in Favour of the grossest Superstitions of the *Roman Church*; may they not then, according to this Scheme, wreck their angry Resentments upon, crush and oppress their fewer Brethren, just as they list, whom perhaps they could not justly censure, if they kept entirely to the good old Laws of Jesus Christ,

Such being the natural Effects of a Legislative Authority in Religion, we cannot think the Cause is good that produces them, or that our wise and good Redeemer would put an Engine of so much Mischief and Oppression into the Hands of Churchmen, thereby giving an Occasion to worry one another. On the contrary, does not our LORD inform us, how he resents it, when his Servants by Office begin to beat and smite their Fellow-Servants, and exercise a tyrannical Dominion over them, which is the common and natural Effect of Men's adding Laws of their own unto the Laws of Christ? The LORD indeed has authorized the Stewards of his House to censure the Violators of his own Laws; but not to bind where he has not bound, in Consequence whereof his faithful People may be oppressed.

If it be opposed to the preceding Reasonings, that according to this Principle, it is impossible to maintain a Decorum and good Order in the Church, but that all imaginable Confusions must be expected to ensue, without any Possibility of Restraint; and that, tho' Authority may be abused in some particular Instances, yet even bad Government is better than Anarchy, or no authoritative Government at all; and that, then there is no Occasion, much less Necessity for Synods, or other Ecclesiastick Judicatories, to meet at all, and so the whole Constitution which Christ established for ordering the Affairs of his Church, falls to the Ground. To this we answer;

1. That the Objection bears in its Bosom gross and grievous Reflections upon the Laws of Christ contained in the Scriptures, as well as upon the Lawgiver, *namely*, That that System of Laws he has given for the Government of his Church, is imperfect, insufficient to answer the End designed by it, without the After-Additions of his Subjects. And indeed the Objection bears hard upon the Honour of his Wisdom, Goodness, Faithfulness, and Truth, as if he either could not give his People sufficient Laws for their Direction, or had not done it when he says he has. In the mean time we charitably hope, that these Reflections are not intended by the Objectors; but they are most certainly the natural and necessary Fruits of the Objection itself.

2. We think the aforesaid Objection against the preceding Reasonings, is a meer *Non-sequitur*, or false Consequence. The Lord Jesus has given such Power and Authority to the Guides of his

his Church, as is sufficient for the Edification of his Body, without this Power of making Acts of their own Divising, as obligatory Laws. Particular Presbyteries ought undoubtedly to meet, to enquire into the Fitness and Qualifications of those who offer themselves to the sacred Work of the Ministry, and either to admit or refuse them, according as they find them qualified, and likely to do Service or Disservice to the Church in that Office.

They have Liberty and Authority also to deny Church-Communion too, and cast out of Communion such as by plain scripture Directions are disqualified for it, either by such fundamental Errors in Doctrine or enormous Practices as are inconsistent with true Christianity; and to inflict such Censures upon irregular Church-Members as God in his Word makes due to such Offences as they are guilty of.

In Cases of Conscience proposed to them, or Cases of Difference regularly brought before them from particular Congregations, they ought to give their deliberate Judgment, with their best Counsel and Advice.

They have likewise Liberty to agree and conclude among themselves upon such Things as appear to them to have a good Tendency to the Advancing of Religion, and are founded upon or agreeable to the Word of God; and so engage themselves voluntarily to the Observance of these Things, provided that they do not inroach upon the just Liberties of the People under their Charge, nor pretend to bind their dissenting Members to observe their Agreements, who may have a different View and Apprehension of them.

Likewise, it is reasonable and useful that Synods, consisting of several Presbyteries, meet together, whether Matters may be brought by Way of Appeal or Reference from particular Presbyteries in order to obtain the Judgment and Sentiments of a greater Number upon them; *for in the Multitude of Counsellors there is Safety*; and accordingly no doubt their Duty to take such Cases under their Consideration, and give their best Advice in them: But we think they should not proceed to any further Authority except in such Cases wherein God has given particular obvious Direction in his Word, which is to be exactly followed; and even then they do no more than show from the Scriptures what is the Mind and Direction of God in such Cases, and declare their own Resolutions to act according thereto, so far as they are concerned.

Now,

Now we conceive, that such a Method of Management in Church Judicatories is that which the Lord Jesus has only appointed ; and we think it is far better adapted to answer all the valuable Ends of Church Government, than that Strain of human Authority which we are opposing : And had the Pastors of the Church always contented themselves with that Power which Christ has given them, without Claiming more, it is hard to conceive how the Christian World could have been so generally corrupted and divided as it has been for many Ages, and is at this Day.

To conclude, we profess a hearty Charity for those Gentlemen who are on the other Side of the Question in this Debate. Doubtless Things appear to them in another Light. We have only, in the Course of our Reasonings, laboured to expose the Absurdity of an Opinion which we think prejudicial to the Interests of the Saviour's Kingdom : And if we are herein mistaken we are willing to be convinced by Scripture and Reason ; but whether we get Conviction or not by our Brethren's Arguments, we believe that the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace may be preserved notwithstanding a Diversity of Sentiment about lesser Things, if moderate Counsels be followed, and that mutual Forbearance be allowed, which the Gospel of Christ requires.

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